

SQUALL

radical quality journalism

march/april 2000

- Terrorism Bill - liberty corrosion
- The Beach - Hollywood erosion
- Cannabis - out of the closet



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Information



Explorer

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RADICAL QUALITY JOURNALISM

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SQUOTES

"That the Home Secretary, taking into account the strong expression of public perception in this regard, consider what steps can and should be taken to ensure that serious complaints against police officers are independently investigated. Investigation of police officers by their own or another Police Service is widely regarded as unjust, and does not inspire public confidence."

Recommendation 58. Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report.

"There are so many people with so little talent making so much money"

MEL C. Spice Girl.

Cover photo: Tribe of Doris Festival by Timothy Allen

THE STATE IT'S IN

A view over the UK from SQUALL central



Dome is dead donald duck

If this country loses its ability to laugh at itself then gawd help us. For whilst TV documentaries, chat shows, and idle column inches reverberate with the notion that mainstream England has no identifying culture anymore, the ability to laugh at ourselves should be preciously guarded from similar extinction. Fortunately, we're not short of good material.

It is in this vein we postulate that the project designed to show the world exactly what new Britain is made of, has wound up demonstrating that our renowned aptitude for comedic farce is one of the few remaining mainstream characteristics in good shape. Indeed, for all those who value British humour, this must be the blessing extracted from the curse of the Millennium Dome. A bit of an expensive gag at £818 million (£758 million plus the recent £60 million emergency bail out) but the money's been spent now, despite our protestations, so we might as well get a chuckle out of it.

Indeed, if a satirical script had been written beforehand, then the reality would surely have surpassed it for comedic content. For if this huge Victorianaesque folly crammed with corporate logos (many of which are US in origin) represents the 'new Britain for the new

millennium' then oh dear, maybe Ally G aint enough to keep us smirking through the winter blues. And if the Dome's faltering set of exhibits were supposed to wow the masses like the Festival of Britain did in the relatively pre-technological years of the 1950's, then, ooh missus, what a spectacular custard pie in the face of Britain plc. Richard Branson was certainly having a chortle when the London Eye Ferris wheel sponsored by British Airways, succumbed to technical failure when only a few feet off the ground. The Virgin hot air balloon hovered over the prostrate wheel sporting the huge message: 'BA CAN'T GET IT UP.'

They still couldn't get it up by the time the actual millennium celebrations came around the wheel didn't turn and even the lights went on the blink. And so having proved such a leviathon flop, the grand hyperbole farts its pompous way into the graveyard of expensively bad ideas. "The building of the Dome has brought jobs and residential development and it has made a real contribution to the growth of the area," offered Dome minister, Lord Falconer, by way of excuse. Just a moment, we were told the Dome at Greenwich was supposed to show the world what Britain was made of, not just offer some local investment to an area hardly

short of a few bob. Little of the jobs or investment helped poorer inner city areas like neighbouring Lewisham. On the other hand future housing development on the site will certainly make money for British Gas. They generously loaned the toxic land on the pretext that the British taxpayer (for we are all thus) would pay to clean up and then hand it back as prime development land after the millennial hot air had expired. If jobs and housing investment is a worthy reason for having spent so much money on a dead duck, then imagine how many jobs and houses could have been secured if the millions had been spent specifically on this purpose. Even Lord Norman Tebbit couldn't raise any nationalist interest in a project first initiated by his own party: "What we have got inside seems to be the most awful, Disney style second rate trash. It would have been better to have had something about the UK and what the British people have done." Oh come off it Norm, one of the two McDonald's in the Dome was the thousandth McD burger bar in the country. Something for all free market capitalists to be enthusiastically proud of surely? Indeed, the Dome's obvious parallel with modern day shopping centres, complete with Boots, Marks and Spencer, McDonald's and 'activities for all the family', ought to have at least endeared it to those who love such formulaic commercial monoculture. For although business genius is by far and away the most officially applauded form of 'genius' in Britain plc these days, could it be argued that the Dome was successful at presenting even this unwholesome view of social progress?

Having cost £758 million to build (a figure which excludes the further millions spent on associated ventures), we are told the Dome will now be sold for around £100 million. If losing a cool £658 million on a one year investment is supposed to demonstrate the best of British business nous, then the world is surely splitting its sides.

"Don't listen to the people who write about

it, listen to the people who go there," pleaded Lord Falconer at the beginning of Feb. OK mate how about Cecily Engle, ordinary punter with family: "It took an hour's queuing to see the Body zone at the Dome the other weekend with our daughters, a wait we justified to ourselves because we felt it would be educational. We were right. Putting my three-year-old daughter to bed that night, she asked me: 'Mum, do I have escalators in my legs?'"

Of course farce doesn't work so well if the performer makes desperate pleas to be taken seriously, as indeed both Blair's crew and the Millennium Experience Company has done up to now. Therefore it is more than appropriate that a gimmick merchant from Disneyland, Paris, has been flown in to try and save us from further unmitigated financial disaster. By appointing Pierre-Yves Gerbeau - jus call me PY - the UK government is giving up the pretence that the Dome at Greenwich is anything other than a Mickey Mouse project; a laughing stock. So gone is the attempt to portray this botch of uninspiring corporate advertising as 'the best of Britain'. From conception to grave, it was never ours. All puff and no chest. The Dome's corporate sponsors are exploding top buttons with alarm over the British public's indifference to their Millennium mall. With their concerns being made known at the highest political levels, the hapless Britisher Jenni Page is sacked as chief executive of the Millennium Experience Company, and a Frenchman hired to try and make a silk purse out of a pig's ear. Pronto. And the Dome will continue to tread its comedic path, more honest to its true worth, as a disneyesque attraction hastily remarketed to suck up a few face saving dollars from this Summer's foreign tourists. Meanwhile the rest of us unconsulted British citizens may choose to place our dignity elsewhere, echoing the empty aisles with laughter and trying not to stifle our winter mirth with thoughts of what could have been achieved with £818 million.

SQUATTED MANSIONS



Jane Sutton and her two-day-old baby daughter occupy one of the 53 flats in Oval Mansions, due to be evicted by Lambeth Council. Oval Mansions, a series of eight Victorian tenement blocks overlooking Oval Cricket Ground have been occupied since the 1970's by a community of creatively active squatters.

The Mansions hosted an Arts council funded art gallery in the nineties exhibiting the likes of Gillian Wearing (Turner prize winner) and Mark Wallinger. Ian Dury is amongst a number of musicians who have lived in the flats. The Oval Mansions community still run a regular film club.

Although 32 squatters argued that they had been in occupation for over 12 years and were entitled to claim ownership under adverse possession rules, only six flats succeeded with the legal arguments. Judge Roger Cook ruled that another 53 squats had not proven their ownership claims and one is still in dispute. The judge said that the squatters could not prove continuous occupation by any one individual resident and rejected their argument that they had lived there as an identifiable community for well over 12 years.

Photo: Timothy Allen

PRISON POPS UP

The UK prison population could rise from 67,800 to 80,300 within the next seven years according to latest

Home Office figures released at the beginning of Feb. Continuing his Tory predecessor's legacy of incarceration measures, Jack Straw's accent on punishment

has meant that three new prisons are now planned to cope with the numbers with further extension work to be carried out on existing prisons.

FRESH FOOD, ROTTEN PRICES

Supermarkets ripping us off with organic pricing

British supermarkets are attempting to cash in on the boom in the sales of organic food by charging excessive prices according to a new survey.

The survey conducted by Dr Anna Ross, senior lecturer in economics at the University of the West of England, found that a standard organic basket of shopping cost 71 per cent more than ordinary foods at Tesco, 65 per cent more at Sainsbury's, 62 per cent more at Waitrose and 60 per cent at Somerfield. Whilst acknowledging that organic foods cost a third more to produce than ordinary groceries, the survey reveals that the extra prices put on by the major supermarkets were double the extra cost of production.

As reported in SQUALL Download 2, organic sales are the new boom area in British shopping with sales predicted to reach £1 billion by 2002. Tesco have just spent £250,000 on research at the University of Aberdeen looking into ways of farming organically on a larger scale "to cope with the increased demand". Sainsbury's on the other hand have now taken over the entire agricultural control of the Caribbean island of Grenada specifically to grow organic produce.

"When people suggest that the price will fall as demand increases they are missing the point," commented Dr Ross. "Supermarkets are able to exploit huge consumer demand with excessive price hikes on organic food."

TWO JAGS KNOCKS BACK TENANTS

Prescott plans demise of social housing

Social housing may never be the same again if John Prescott succeeds with new plans to bring council rents up to market levels and transfer housing stock over to Housing Associations and housing companies.

Plans being drawn up by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions include raising social housing rents up to market levels and placing homes under the control of 'non-profit making' companies and housing associations.

In January Glasgow City Council, previously the largest landlord in the country,

transferred its entire stock of 100,000 homes over to a collaborative guardianship of housing associations and private finance. They claim that the only way to bring the housing stock up to standard is to introduce private finance which will be encouraged by guarantees of a portion of the rents. A further 23 councils have said they plan to transfer a total of 270,000 homes over to the new system.

Prescott's plan to raise social housing rents up towards market levels is widely acknowledged to be an incentive for private investment.

You cannot hope to bribe or twist, thank God! The British journalist.

But, seeing what the man will do unbribed, there's no occasion to.

HUMBER

WOLFE

1885-1940

TOP POT TRIO WERE NOT BRASS BANNED



Cannabis festival co-organiser found 'Not Guilty'

Photo: Ian Hunter

Shane Collins, the co-organiser of last year's Cannabis Festival on Clapham Common, has been found not guilty of "permitting dancing and amplified music without necessary licenses". Collins had been singled out amongst other named organisers for prosecution by Lambeth Council, after council officers reported witnessing music and dancing at the event.

In excess of 10,000 people attended the event on May 1 last year, provoking no complaints from local residents, no arrests and even a council commendation on the quality of the clean up operation. However, one council officer reported witnessing 40-50 people dancing, whilst the second officer said 200.

In the final part of the trial, which took place on Jan 20 at Balham Magistrates Court, Collins' legal brief argued that the music played at the event remained "incidental" and "ancillary" to the main event and did not constitute a breach of entertainment licensing. Lambeth Council's prosecution team attempted to argue that a three piece jazz band, which played to an almost empty tent before the event had started, constituted public entertainment. They further argued that four brass instrument-players apparently heard in the vicinity of the SQUALL tent, constituted a "brass band" providing public entertainment.

Kier Montief, Collins' barrister and the editor of radical legal newspaper 'The Law', pointed out to the three magistrates that a brass band

requires at least six instrumentalists.

"Therefore," he argued, "Not only does my client have no knowledge of these allegedly wandering trombonists but in no way could four brass instrumentalists be referred to as a brass band." The council also argued that dancing had been seen in one of the bars and in an information tent.

Just three weeks before last year's Mayday event took place, Lambeth Council's licensing committee decided by six votes to five not to grant an entertainment licence to the organisers even though the park had been booked and paid for. As a result two main stages and several sound systems had to be cancelled at short notice. In addition, the publicity of the event had to be altered to accommodate the change.

Before delivering their verdict, Balham magistrates heard that every stipulation laid down by public events law, including health and safety, toilets and clear up had been fulfilled by organisers. The leading magistrate at the hearing was the only one of the three to speak during the four and a half hour hearing. Her two utterances were: "What exactly were the instruments being played by the jazz band?" (No one knew) and "We find that there was no public entertainment on the day and that Mr Collins is not guilty."

This year's Cannabis Festival is due to take place on May 6, this time at Brockwell Park in Brixton, south London.

NEW WEBSITE IMAGE BANK FOR UK SUBVERTISERS

A new UK website, launched on February 20, aims to provide a massive database of subverts, cartoons, and spoof banners covering a wide range of radical issues. No trade mark will be safe from the re-designers hands now that www.subvertise.org have arrived according to the network of art activists who have set up the image bank.

"Subvertising is the art-form of the post-corporate millennium," asserts Daphne Locke, one of the artists behind the project. "It is the 'writing on the wall', the sticker on the lamp post, the corrected rewording on the billboard and the



spoof message on the T-shirt. But it is also the mass act of defiance of the street protest. The key process involves redefining and reclaiming our environment from the corporate beast."

Subvertise.org has been launched initially by the Gaffers Radical Arts Collective and I-Contact Video Network in Oxford, but they now intend to build a global network of contributors. Non-commercial websites and hardcopy magazines will be able to use the spoof banners and altered adverts for no cost in a similar scheme to that run by the Canadian group Adbusters. (www.adbusters.org)

THIN BLUE LINE'S BIG FAT LIES SHIELDED BY RED TAPE

Jack Straw censors damning European report on police malpractice and accountability in the UK

A Council of Europe investigative report into torture and death in police custody has finally been published in the UK after heavy Home Office censorship.

The Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) visited the UK back in September 1997 and submitted its subsequent report to the UK government in March 1998. However, the heavily censored report referring to 'serious questions about the independence and impartiality of the procedures presently used to process complaints about police misconduct' was sat on by the British government and only finally published on Jan 13 this year.

Every nation state under investigation by the CPT has the power of veto and censorship on subsequent reports but it is the first time in the Committee's history that a host government has elected to exercise that right. Even

with large sections swiped out, the report makes damning reading.

Describing the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) as "ill-equipped to carry out the watchdog role in which it has been cast", the report notes that "there is little public confidence in the PCA's independence because "in the vast majority of cases the investigating officer will be a police officer from the force about which the complaint is being made". The CPT noted that of the 10,243 complaints lodged against police in England and Wales during 1996/97 only 0.4 per cent even resulted in disciplinary proceedings. In the same period only a single Metropolitan police officer was convicted of an offence against a yearly background of around 6,000 complaints.

As prominent defence barrister, Raju Bhatt, told SQUALL: "The Police Complaint's authority is discredited and is a discredit."



Demonstrators gather outside the US embassy in London, January 2000, to protest over America's refusal to return a six year old Cuban boy found at sea in the Florida straits.

Eilan Gonzalez was taken from Cuba by his mother, after she was persuaded by her boyfriend to board a boat illicitly ferrying Cubans to Florida for cash. The boat sank in a storm and both

Eilan's mother and her boyfriend died, leaving Eilan clinging to an inner tube. Anti-castro movements in the US are now conspiring with politicians to keep Eilan in America despite pleas from his father for his son's return to Cuba.

This anti-Castro coalition of politicians and interest groups is strong in Florida and well-funded by right wing corporations like Bacardi.

They are claiming that Eilan's future in wealthy America is preferable to his return to his natural father in Cuba. Now stalled in legal processes, Eilan remains on US soil as an ideological battle is waged over his future. His great aunt and great uncle, who are Cuban exiles living in Florida, have been wheeled out to lend distant genetic credence to the anti-Castro movement's legal arguments.

During his stay in the US, Eilan has been given designer clothing, playstations and coca-cola and carted to Disneyland and numerous political conventions. Cuba demands his immediate return and has slated American attempts both to keep Eilan and to corrupt the child's mind by showering him with allures and parading him as a political pawn.

www.granma.cu/ingles/index
Photo by **Ian Hunter**.

DRUG COMPANY TESTS ON LEFT-WINGERS

French drug company in advanced employee scrutiny

A leading French pharmaceutical company has been exposed for vetting the left wing sensibilities of prospective employees.

Servier, France's third largest drugs company with an annual turnover of £900 million, uses ex-members of the French intelligence services (DST and DGSE) to gather information necessary to weed out non-whites, gays, Jews and anyone with the merest hint of left wing sensibility. With every job applicant required to fill in a detailed form with personal details. According to a retired army colonel and former employee of the Servier: "That gives the investigators a good start. If any of the brothers or sisters or parents are teachers, for

example, that could indicate leftist sympathies."

Leaked documents reveal that a German woman was hired by the company because "...her family's origins are military and aristocratic" whilst a Swiss woman was turned down because her husband was African.

In this latter case the document states: "This black, who was able to enter Switzerland thanks to the marriage has not been marked by civilisation." The National Commission on Freedom and Data in France alleges that the company has 50,000 dossiers relating to job candidates' sexuality and are currently in the process of determining whether the Servier can be taken to court for illegal practice.



Transgenic cows being removed from the Canadian consulate building near London's Trafalgar Square, on Jan 24. The action was part of a protest called by a coalition of groups to raise concerns about the January's biosafety protocol talks in Canada which designed to regulate the global trade in genetically modified organisms (GMO's).

Campaigners are particularly worried

about a group of GMO exporting countries within the talks who call themselves the Miami group. Headed by the United States, the Miami group also includes Canada, Australia, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay in a trade coalition keen to prevent the talks imposing any effective environmental regulation on the global market in GMO's.

Photo by **Nick Cobbing**.

CHIPS ARE DOWN FOR GM CORPS

Now US farmers are turning against GM seed

Direct action against genetically modified crops in Britain has now creating big ripples in the United States. More than a dozen US corporations, including McDonald's and Coca-Cola, are facing a revolt from shareholders concerned about policy on GM foods.

According to The Investor Responsibility Research Centre, an independent Washington organisation which monitors corporate and shareholder behaviour, the GM issue has figured among shareholder concerns for the first time and is described as "the biggest example of 'social issue shareholder activism'" since company boards were taken to task for their dealings with South Africa under

the apartheid regime. By the time anti-GMO activism caught on in the UK, the issue was already being described as a concern "after the horse has bolted". However, US activists have picked up on the British direct action movement's stance over GM food. According to a recent market survey, the planting of genetic crops by US farmers is set to fall for the first time since the start of the dramatic rise in 1996. The American Corn Growers Association has upheld claims by Worldwatch, an environmental group, that the global acreage of all GM crops (mainly corn and soya grown in the American midwest), is set to fall by 25% on last year's figures.

MORE BOTCHED MOX BOXES SCOTCHED?

Japan says 'No' to UK nuclear fuel



dodged Japanese maritime riot police to protest at the shipments as they arrived in Japan at the end of last year. The consignment was to have been the first of many prepared by BNFL at Sellafield in Cumbria and shipped

The consignment of MOX nuclear fuel units controversially transported by ship from the UK to Japan last year (see Squall Download No.1), has been rejected and will be shipped back. Kansai Electric Power of Japan say they no longer want to use the fuel following revelations that safety documents were falsified by employees of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) working at the MOX unit production plant at Sellafield in Cumbria.

Greenpeace International spearheaded environmental protests over the hazards of transporting nuclear material (enough to make 60 atomic bombs) half-way across the world in only lightly armed ships. SQUALL's photographer aboard Greenpeace's MV Sunrise, reported how crew members

to Japan. However, after sifting through thousands of documents, hardcore Japanese anti-nuclear campaigners discovered safety procedures had been faked and broadcast the news far and wide.

In the week following the arrival of the MOX units, Japan suffered its worst nuclear power plant accident in its history, significantly raising the profile of safety concerns over nuclear power in Japan. Much to BNFL's frustration, the Japanese government firmly responded to public disquiet in Japan by rejecting the fuel units. The entire lucrative ten year deal is now in serious doubt.

Photo: Nick Cobbing © Greenpeace

LOTTERY WITHIN TENT

Another £60 million for dome

A £60 million grant of National Lottery money has been given to the New Millennium Experience Company to ease cash flow problems caused by poor ticket sales. The grant was widely criticised by charities.

According to Andrew Watt, head of policy at the Institute of Charity Fund Managers: "When people buy lottery tickets, most assume the money will go to charity. It is a

very moot point whether the Dome can be described as a charity. Many regard lottery money as public money, so it's slightly disingenuous for people to say no public money is going into the dome. People expect lottery money to go to a good cause. Most people would probably not regard the Dome as a good cause. It is a misuse of donated funds."

GET YE BEHIND US CELERA

*Fresh from providing an alternative take on the Seattle WTO talks for Channel Four News, comedian **Rob Newman** returned to the UK with something else on his mind.*

CALLING ALL SQUALL READERS IN THE US

Two human-genome mapping projects are involved in a bigger head-to-head than the Space Race. The joint UK/German/Japanese project in a Cambridge lab versus its bastard child, Celera at the Incyte Institute in Rockville, Maryland. If Celera finish first, the US private sector will 'own' the patents on human beings, whereas if the Cambridge crew finish first the research will be at the free disposal of medical science. At the moment the Cambridge lab publishes its interim material on the web for free, whereas Celera keep their work to themselves. If Celera finish first then their power over medicine and health care will be a catastrophe for about six billion people. All indications are that Celera will win because, as their chief Carl Vintner cheerfully admits, they are nicking all the Cambridgeshire lab results off the net and so by-passing all the really difficult stuff. "Most of our work is just correlation," says Vintner.

London calling to SQUALL readers in the USA. Here's a few direct-action ideas for any of you who can get to Rockville, Maryland.

- Have your truck 'breakdown' in Carl Vintner's driveway around about 7am.
- Recruit Maryland's basketball defensive, blocking players to zone out the Incyte entrance.
- Get in front on Incyte drones in a Wal-Mart checkout queue and insist on paying for your toxic trolley-load in quarters and coins of the Spanish realm.
- Hunky hard hats'n'body-oil!!! Strip to the waist and take your eleven o'clock Diet-Coke

break outside the Incyte windows. Finish break at five.

- Bespectacled women, carry a stack of books and 'bump into' Celera scientists. As the drone bends down to help you pick up books, remove glasses, shake out hair etc. etc. just as he says: "Oh, I see you like Richard Dawkins. Fancy a coffee?" Either we slow 'em down or we mess 'em up.

The Cambridge lab results freely published on the net are simple permutation lists of adenine, guanine, cytosine and thymine. The 'map' is just pages and pages which read like this: AAT/GTC/TTA/CGG/TGG/CCG Knowing these codes are being downloaded by Celera, I suspect some hacktivists may wish to add their own research finding to the publicly posted results before Celera get their hands on them. If, for example, a helpful hacktivist added this: ACA/ACA/GAA/AGA Then the Celera project might find they have successfully mapped the guitar-chord genome for 'Complete Control' by The Clash.

A de-Celera-te campaign may enjoy surprising popular support from Maryland citizens themselves. Maryland State was just about to legally dis-associate itself from US friendliness with the Nigerian military dictatorship, when the Clinton administration sent State Department officials to their town hall to tell them their proposed law was - can you guess, readers? - in violation of WTO rules. There is anger in the home of the chocolate chip cookie.

REEFER GLADNESS



Ian Hunter

A recent MORI poll suggests that 80 per cent of Britains now want a more relaxed approach to cannabis. Not so surprising that the UK now has the highest incidence of cannabis use in Europe.

With an immanent report from the Police Foundation, recommending the 'depenalisation' of cannabis use, here's a taster of some of the recent flurry of comment and revelation.

BILL CLINTON may pretend he never inhaled but a new book on the life of his deputy, Al Gore, reveals that Clinton's sidekick and possible replacement as US president, used to chuff like a trooper. Gore's old friend and colleague, John Warnecke, says that he and Gore, "smoked regularly, as buddies. Marijuana, hash. I was his regular supplier. I didn't deal dope, just gave it to him. We smoked more than once, more than a few times, we smoked a lot. We smoked in his car, in his house, we smoked in his parents' house... We smoked at weekends. We smoked a lot."

WHEN ALEX SALMOND, head of the Scottish Nationalists, was asked whether he'd ever smoked cannabis, he replied: "Yes but I never exhaled."

AS A CABINET MINISTER whose portfolio includes national drugs policy, Mo Mowlam had every reason to tow the official line on

cannabis. Respect due then for her admission that not only did she smoke Marijuana when she was a student but that she had inhaled too! "I never cancel anything in or anything out," replied Mo Mowlam when asked about the possibility of a decriminalisation of cannabis use.

BBC NEWSREADER JOHN HUMPHREYS, When asked about his own past, stated: "None of your business, in short. I can't quite see why we should be excited as to whether somebody puffed on a spliff at the age of 20 or not. I'd be slightly surprised if most students hadn't. In fact I'd probably treat with a certain scepticism any 40 or 50-year-old who'd been to university and said they'd never so much as had a puff on a spliff."

A SURVEY OF THE 81 MPS who joined the House of Commons in 1997, revealed that 22 of them had tried illegal drugs. David Prior,

now Tory deputy chairman said: "I associate my experience with drugs – soft ones – not with Mick Jagger or Aldous Huxley, but with passing my law degree and working in a bank. You can wear a pinstripe suit and be utterly conventional and still roll a joint."

PUBLICIST MAX CLIFFORD didn't see what the fuss was about either: "I know people that take it. I know politicians that use it – so what? To a lot of people it's a form of relaxation and if you are under tremendous pressure, if you find something that doesn't harm you or anybody else then good luck to you. Most of the people I've represented took cannabis."

KEITH HELLAWELL, Tony Blair's faltering drug czar, finally came out of his useless closet to assert that maybe cannabis is not as bad as Jack Straw makes out: "By far the greater proportion of arrests are for cannabis and I am looking for a change on that... the hidden truth about drugs in Britain is that we need to discriminate between different drugs and the relative harm caused and then talk openly about the difference we can make. The focus is going to be on the drugs that cause the major harm."

SOME DRUGS which cause a "greater harm" than cannabis were testified to by Dr George Ventners, chairman of the British Medical Association's Scottish committee for public health medicine: "We want to encourage debate on this issue and should examine the evidence that has existed for a long time, rather than people leaping to prejudice. There is much more damage done by smoking and alcohol than by cannabis."

A SERVING POLICE CHIEF has, for the first time, been brazen enough to tout the decriminalisation issue in public. In a report published recently by Cleveland Constabulary and endorsed by their chief constable, Barry Shaw, it says: "There is overwhelming

evidence to show that the prohibition-based policy in place in this country since 1971 has not been effective in controlling the availability of, or use of, prescribed drugs. If there is indeed a 'war on drugs' it is not being won; drugs are demonstrably cheaper and more easily available than ever before. If prohibition does not work, then either the consequences of this have to be accepted or an alternative approach must be found. The most obvious alternative approach is the legalisation and subsequent regulation of some or all drugs."

The report also notes that the illegal nature of the drugs trade causes further unnecessary risks to drug users because of uncertainty over quality and purity.

RECENT HOME OFFICE figures reveal a record high of 128,000 people arrested for drugs in 1998; a 13% rise on the previous year. This sharp increase includes a 30% increase in heroin, a 32% increase in cocaine and a 36% increase in crack. Despite the dramatic increases in hard drug arrests, 76% of all arrests were for cannabis.

A REPORT BY THE POLICE FOUNDATION

part sponsored by the Princes' Trust is expected to recommend that cannabis be 'depenalised' when published in March. The Prince of Wales has invited Mo Mowlam and Keith Hellawell to speak at a conference about the subject.

THE US DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

recognise that the UK is now exporting marijuana. In a report prepared recently by US intelligence officers monitoring the European drugs trade, Britain's emergence as a marijuana exporting country builds on the UK's growing reputation in the drugs world for growing superior weed.

THE EU MONITORING CENTRE FOR

DRUGS, estimate that 40 million European citizens have smoked cannabis.

FRONTLINE COMMUNIQUE

**2:30am, Jan 1, 2000 AD,
Newcastle upon Tyne, England.
Whilst the official millennium
events celebrated UK plc,
underground free parties were**

**still deemed unacceptable.
Phil Rigby reports from
Newcastle on the riot squad's
new year present to the
geordie ravers.**

Newcastle is buzzing as thousands of revellers take to the streets to celebrate the dawn of the new millennium. A council organised event on the Quayside has just ended and hundreds of partygoers are looking for where to go next. On the outskirts of town, an 'illegal' rave has been building up to its climax. The venue for this party is an old disused railway workshop, the very building in which Stephenson first built his 'Rocket'. A good 400 people are dancing and partying, everything is fine.

A collective of approximately 25 people had spent the previous 3 days preparing the building to make it safe and usable. Fire exits were available and well marked, fire extinguishers had been bought and placed at every exit, stewards equipped with torches and walkie-talkies were positioned around the venue. Even safety lighting had been installed especially for the event. There was a first aid team organised and water was freely available, but the police weren't to know any of this.

A patrol car had discovered the party, and called for assistance. A full police riot and crowd control unit was already on standby, and was dispatched to the

scene of the 'crime'. AT LEAST 30 police officers with batons and dogs stormed the building, stopped the music, and herded the bewildered dancers off the dance-floor and out into the street.

With a few hundred people now objecting quite strongly to having their New Millennium celebrations ended in such a fashion, the police started to get nervous. When it became clear that some of the party people were going to get 'nasty' by shouting and, in some cases, swearing, the police decided to employ riot control tactics, forming a wall of officers to sweep down the street, with dog handlers in front, driving the crowd down a tunnel underneath the Central Station. This too, was found to be slightly distasteful by the crowd, who objected more strongly than ever. This unwillingness to co-operate now really upset some of the officers in the front line. With adrenalin pumping, they enthusiastically administered some real 'justice' to the closest of the group and set dogs onto the people who were just out of reach. One lucky young girl in her early twenties, about 5ft4inch in height and eight stone in weight, fell on the

ground as she tried to run away, and found herself fighting off both the teeth of a psyched-up alsation, and the fists of a 14 stone police officer.

The majority of the crowd dispersed quickly now, visibly shocked by the 'style' of policing on display. Several arrests were made, and one person who was dragged off in cuffs (after being arrested for suggesting an officer was 'way over the top and should pick on someone his own size') now alleges he was assaulted by his arresting officer once taken to the police station. (He wasn't actually charged with an offence.) He is now looking to press charges.

Is this the way to punish people for dancing in an unauthorised venue? Does partying in the wrong place really warrant violence and intimidation? We think not.

The party was organised by a collective called 'Rabble Alliance'. The idea was to have a free alternative to celebrate the New Year without £100 tickets and £4 pints. The rules of the event, clearly on display around the building, stated:

"Respect the venue and leave it in a better state than you found it. Don't disturb the neighbours. Look after each other. No drug dealing."

THE BEACH - COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY

Filmmaker and writer, **Neil Goodwin**, reveals how Leonardo DiCaprio's latest Hollywood offering has ripped up paradise.

"There's no way you can keep it out of the Lonely Planet, and once that happens, it's countdown to doomsday."
(The Beach by Alex Garland)

Maya Bay on Phi Phi Le Island in Thailand may never be the same again. As the chosen location for 20th Century Fox's £40 million film adaptation of Alex Garland's 'The Beach' - its British film crew headed by Andrew Macdonald and Danny Boyle of 'A Life Less Ordinary' fame, have enraged local environmentalists by sacrificing one of Thailand's most protected and beautiful beaches to the Great God Box Office.

Hollywood's perception of an idyllic tropical hideaway had no room for endangered plant species such as the Giant Milkweed and Spider Lilly, integral parts of the Bay's natural defence against sea erosion. These were scrubbed up and removed to a nursery; the plan being to piece the fragile Eco-system back together again like so much Lego once the shoot was completed. In came 60 alien palm trees. In came the bulldozers to level a 100-yard stretch of sand dune for a pivotal football match scene.

As I sat there reading how local environmentalists, wearing DiCaprio masks, occupied one of Thailand's most beautiful

National parks to prevent it from being turned into a travel agent's beach fantasy, I'm thinking: Are you sure you mean Alex Garland's 'The Beach'? You know, the best seller that on one level could be read as a critique of mass tourism and the commercial vandalism it brings to the world's most beautiful locations? It just couldn't be.

In order to film on Phi Phi Le Island, Fox, well let's just say 'benefited' from a loophole in Thai law. Normally, productions are only granted permission to film in a Thai national park if they satisfy all of the requirements of Article 16 of the National Park Act (1961). The act was put in place "to protect and conserve existing natural resources so that they remain in their original state, not to be destroyed or changed, for the continuing benefit of the state and the people' However, Fox discovered that Article 19 of the National Parks Act (1962) allowed them "to decorate the site of Maya Beach and to plant coconut trees in order to support officials in the improvement of a tourist attraction".

Smoothing the way further, Fox agreed to put up a US\$250,000 bond to the Royal Forestry Department (RFD), against any negative environmental impacts directly caused by filming on the island, and offered to donate US\$108,000 to the RFD for them to spend on environmental projects. Enter a US\$10



million boost to the local economy, and plenty of short-term employment opportunities, and Article 16 was history. The film crew went ahead with its 'perfect beach' and Leonardo "I consider myself an environmentalist" DiCaprio flew in to begin work on the film early last year.

"As promised, the film crew tried to return Maya Bay to its original pristine condition by removing the coconut trees, replanting native plants and dotting the beach with bamboo stakes to hold the sand dunes in place," says Pennapa Hongthong, The Nation's environmental correspondent in Bangkok. 'But the scene is far from natural. Native plants like the Giant Milkweed, Sea Pandanus and Spider Lilly, which were removed from the beach in a nursery for months, were unable to survive as their roots were cut. The glistening white sand, which once attracted tourists, was swept away by storms because there were no plants to hold it in place. The fences of bamboo, which the film crew put in place, were not a suitable replacement.'

But whatever the true extent of the damage, and readers can view progress reports by logging on to www.iq.edu.au/~pggredde/, surely the desire of many thousands of backpackers to retrace Leonardo's footsteps once the film goes on general release, will unleash yet more environmental degradation onto that island. The production's Thai co-ordinator, Santa Pestanij, has already envisaged "the creation of a new tourist attraction".

Such has been the fate of Khao Phing Kan island or, as the tourists like to call it, "James Bond Island", the location for Christopher Lee and Roger Moore's showdown in 'The Man with the Golden Gun' some 25 years ago. Today it is jam-packed with 52 souvenir stalls, all of them selling the same cheap trinkets. In one corner is a small toilet block. Every day a

large flotilla of long-tailed boats disgorges thousands of backpackers. Every day hundreds of couples stand back to peeling back with dueling fingers raised (she Scaramanga, he Bond), the rocky outcrop of Tapu Island, where the Man with Three Nipples concealed his deadly ray gun, slumped in the background. As Richard, The Beach's central character put it: "If these assholes ever found out about our island they'd take just one night to spoil it."

Unfortunately, an advanced guard of backpackers has already begun to find out about Phi Phi Le (or 'Phi Phi Leo' as it is starting to become known). Day-trippers are being lured away from neighbouring Phi Phi Don, with its dozens of bungalows, cafes, shops, exchange booths and hotels, by local tour operators keen to cash in on the movie. Visitors will soon be able to wade ashore wearing Top Man and Top Girl's much anticipated 'The Beach' range, and pause awhile to take in Leo's spoken vocals on 'Beached', a new track by ORBITAL. Indeed, latest reports coming into SQUALL testify to the appearance of hundreds of posters on the island and in surrounding areas announcing a 'DiCaprio Tourist Trail'.

So now that it appears that the 'countdown to doomsday' has finally begun, what are we supposed to make of this Eco-war torn production? As we enter the 21st Century and begin to face up to the challenge of protecting what little remains of the planet's pristine wilderness from the ravages of corporate greed (logging, oil exploration, mass tourism etc. etc.), one would hope that the very idea that a film studio can dismantle parts of a precious natural habitat in the name of entertainment would send alarm bells ringing in cinemas across the world. (Fox's Beach excursion has certainly alarmed the world of movie making. According to Santa Pestonji, at least six other foreign

productions have switched location from Thailand to Australia or Malaysia to avoid similar controversy).

No doubt to many a young girl, the temptation of seeing Leo in the raw will be impossible to resist. But I would hope that for the rest of us (the inquisitive one's who thought the book was reasonably hip and now wonder whether DiCaprio's gone and made a pig's ear of Richard), we go with our conscience and boycott the thing. Or at the very least, watch it round a mate's house on TV in about five year's time.

The Beach opened in London on February 11.

SQUOTES

"I must have seen more than 500 very sick patients who are hypersensitive to electromagnetism and lots more who are more moderately affected. Just as our bodies have evolved to respond to light, sound or heat, they have evolved to respond to the earth's magnetic field. The increasing number of man-made fields [mobiles/VDU's etc] is creating an electromagnetic smog which interferes with this and which I believe is very damaging to us all in the long term."

DR JEAN MUNRO. Breakspear Hospital, Hemel Hempstead UK.

NEW DEALS DOWN ON THE FARM



The Exodus Collective of Luton have been making a name for themselves as a movement for people-led social regeneration over the last eight years. Now a multi-ethnic housing estate, on which many of them were born and live, is coming together in a New Deal for Communities partnership which could secure £50 million of government money.

Jim Carey and Tim Malyon catch up with the Collective.

Pics by **Nick Cobbing** and **Tim Malyon**

"It is ordered that the defendants must not do any of the following acts: holding, causing to be held, organising or permitting the holding of, or participating in, or otherwise assisting in any manner whatsoever, any entertainment, party, concert or other gathering... at any time between 9pm 31 December 1999 and 11am on 3 January 2000 (inclusive)."

So read the message of millennium goodwill sent to three key members of the Exodus Collective by South Bedfordshire District Council. But, with entry prices going through the roof for millennium new year events, Exodus persevered with their annual free party festivities in a disused warehouse near Luton. Thousands of local people danced in the next millennium, without being fleeced.

As regular SQUALL readers will be aware, the Exodus Collective have claimed headlines for reasons far wider than their well attended raves. Throughout their eight year history they have also attracted a reputation for the stance they make on behalf of human rights and community regeneration. Tenants since December 1992, Exodus bought Long Meadow Community Free Farm on the outskirts of Luton in December 1999, all 17 acres. The Collective were loaned £105,000 by Triodos Bank and £50,000 by ICOM, the Industrial Common Ownership Movement, interest to be paid from the housing benefit of those living on the land.

Sandwiched between the M1 and the main London to Bedford railway line, the farm was once used as a rubbish tip during its years of dereliction. "You can grow plants that will take the pollutants out of the air and the soil," says long time Exodus member, Arms. "You've gotta extract positives out of negatives. If we can do it here, we can do it anywhere." Arms embodies this principle, having served nine months for being "pissed and fucking angry" during the Marsh Farm riots. He's now in the forefront of planning for the farm and has built a home with his partner and two children at HAZ Manor.

Constructive planning is also being put into effect at Housing Action Zone (HAZ) Manor, a former derelict old people's home rebuilt by Exodus, initially using money from the dances then by pooling housing benefit. Squatted in 1994 then licensed from Luton Borough Council, HAZ Manor now houses forty people, with a communal creche, workshops and permaculture garden.

Most recently a New Deal work placement was being planned for the Manor. Exodus went through an extensive process of certification involving the Employment Service, Luton's Barnfield College, the County

Training Group and The Training Network, all of whom supported the idea.

Then on September 18 1999, the Collective took part in an episode of BBC 2's 'Living With The Enemy'. The theme of the programme was cannabis legalisation, which Exodus supports as an essential first step in establishing a realistic national drugs policy. With BBC cameras recording the exchanges, former Chairman of Cambridge University Conservatives, James Hellyer, came to live at HAZ Manor and debate drug issues. He lasted just three days before disappearing to inform local police of the cannabis smoking he'd witnessed. Although Luton Police took no action, on 26 September Bedfordshire Chief Constable Michael O'Byrne used Exodus' position on cannabis to question the Collective's application for "the use of public funds or public resources."

On September 27, the Employment Service's district manager, Dave Sutherland, sent Exodus a letter terminating "plans for providing New Deal Options on sites occupied by the Exodus Collective" because of their "open support for the legalisation of cannabis" and press reports "alleging widespread smoking of cannabis at HAZ Manor". Replying to the ban, Exodus pointed out that there was no smoking in the workplace and "the personal use of marijuana at home by some residents at HAZ Manor does not represent a Health and Safety risk to the project".

A regional Employment Services spokesman told SQUALL: "Exodus had quite clearly come out as being a group of people that were supporting the legalisation of cannabis... if they're actively promoting and supporting something which the government doesn't agree with, for us to give public money to that organisation to deliver a contract would have been a problem." The confrontational obstacles were mounting.



Then out of the blue it came. Almost by chance, residents of the Marsh Farm Estate discovered that Government regeneration funding under the New Deal for Communities (NDC) scheme had been earmarked for Luton. An area of between 1000-4000 households would be selected to receive up to £50 million over the next ten years and the criteria for securing the money strongly stressed the visions and decisions should be resident-led.

The estate was an obvious choice, with 31% of its available workforce unemployed (national average 4%) and a recent history of riot and social unrest. On the positive side, twenty two per cent of the 9430 residents come from ethnic minorities although, as rastafarian and long-standing resident, Levi, observes: "I've seen lots of graffiti here, but never racist graffiti."

With Xmas and Millennium celebrations cluttering an already tight deadline, an embryonic umbrella group of Marsh Farm residents and community groups, including local churches, tenants associations, sports societies and the Exodus Collective, went into overdrive to develop the estate's presentation and succeeded in securing the bid.

Now, with a potential £50 million to facilitate their visions, the residents and community groups of Marsh Farm are already coming out with radical proposals which may yet change the face of community regeneration in the UK. One suggestion includes the purchase of a 120,000 sq ft disused industrial warehouse situated in the middle of the estate with a view to converting it into a multifunctional community centre run by the Trust. Also, at the beginning of February, representatives of the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales visited the estate to conduct a feasibility study into the use of wind turbines and solar panels to provide low cost electricity for estate residents; free for pensioners. "Windpower for the people" trumpeted the local paper.

Having only won the right to bid for the money, Marsh Farm now enters the crucial phase one of the scheme. By April 14, the estate's residents and community groups are required to have established a fully representative Marsh Farm Community Development Trust capable of interfacing with local authorities, business and service providers. It's no small task for an area of some 4000 households, neither formally defined by pre-existing council wards nor previously represented as a whole, working to a tight, some might say ridiculous deadline.

However, using a small part of the £10,000 made available by the NDC for the initial consensus building process, Marsh Farm residents have opened a community office in the old Co-op supermarket which had long

stood idle with its grey steel shutters down. This vital component is designed to address a common problem of excluding residents unfamiliar or uncomfortable with formal meetings. To counter such community 'turn-offs', the old Co-op is now a drop-in centre where residents - young and old - can come in their own time to present their visions for their estate's regeneration or to view ideas already under consideration. The people they will be talking with won't be bureaucrats but fellow Marsh Farm residents staffing the office on a voluntary basis. The office is now buzzing with activity.

Exodus plan to transfer Long Meadow Community Free Farm and HAZ Manor housing schemes to the jurisdiction of the Marsh Farm Community Development Trust. "We're trying to find a way to give it back to the people so that it stays that way for eternity," explained Steve Sovereign, an Exodus Collective member and Long Meadow Farm's representative on the emerging Development Trust. The Collective have already part raised and part attracted £11,000 of separate funding to open a recording studio in a youth club on the estate. Management of the studio will be passed over to the Development Trust once it is up and running.

Meanwhile Lord Andrew Howland is currently negotiating with Exodus over the selection of a suitable piece of his 135,000 acre Bedfordshire estate to be freely loaned for their outdoor raves: "Certainly if someone said to me, do you have a problem dealing with Exodus, I would say we had problems when we didn't talk," Lord Howland told SQUALL. "But they are very easy to talk to, they talk perfectly good sense and I would recommend someone talking to them rather than doing it on a confrontational basis."

It has been a long hard road for Exodus to reach this point. The possibility that they will



promptly transfer their hard won assets over to the emerging Marsh Farm Community Development Trust is one which may surprise many. But Exodus support for the new initiative is unequivocal.

"We didn't struggle to take land to make it private to us," affirms Exodus spokesperson, Marsh Farm resident and father of four, Glenn Jenkins. "We've had 'community free' on the name from day one. Long Meadow Community Free Farm will be an autonomous unit serving the estate and owned by the Marsh Farm Community Development Trust. All the early indications are that bottom up, do it ourselves, is gonna work on Marsh Farm. And when it works on Marsh Farm it's gonna glow like a candle in a dark place so other estates can emulate the same way."

Additional information on the Exodus Collective can be found at www.squall.co.uk

RAISING TERROR

The Terrorism Bill currently speeding through parliament with barely a smatter of mainstream dissent looks set to be one of the most liberty-corrosive pieces of legislation for decades. **Si Mitchell** examines the implications of Jack Straw's latest attempt to remove the last of our residual rights of protest.

"Somehow the threat to the stability of the state has given way to threats to the corporate estate. That will be the basis for the new definition of terrorism. That is a desperately dangerous path to go down."

Alan Simpson is one of the few British politicians to be genuinely shaken by Jack Straw's introduction of the most overtly political law and order legislation since Hitler's proscription of the Jews.

The 2000 Terrorism Bill, currently whistling through the House of Commons and likely to be law by April, has generated little in the way of Parliamentary outcry (unlike its 1974 predecessor, The Prevention of Terrorism Act) despite proposing to outlaw various fundamental democratic rights, including the right to possess or pass on information. The Bill is text book 'divide and rule' stuff which will criminalise dissent and marginalise dissenters by threatening their wider support base with unlimited fines and lengthy jail sentences.

Home Secretary Jack Straw has given terrorism "a more modern definition" to combat "both the current and future terrorist threat". All this and new "special" powers for the police breaching existing British and international law.

Moving the Goal Posts

Taking their lead from the popular press, who liberally label anyone not overjoyed with creeping global destruction as eco-terrorists,

New Labour have redefined terrorism as: "The use or threat, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause, of action which – a) involves serious violence against any person or property, b) endangers the life of any person, or c) creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public.

Simon Hughes MP was a lone voice trying to secure amendments during the Bill's committee stage: "The Bill changes the definition of terrorism as understood by the man or woman in the street." Hughes refers to the Oxford Dictionary description of: "The use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims."

The bones of the new definition is taken from the FBI's own anti terror legislation with property taking precedence over democracy. Both government and big business have made no secret of how much the cost of direct action irks them.

Barrister Ralph Smythe of the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Legal Affairs, has been one of the first to criticise the Bill. "The differentiation between those taking action for moral reasons and those doing so for naked greed is illogical and shows how the obsession with the invisible hand of the market has clouded the minds of those responsible for the Bill," he says. Unfortunately all agents of the state are exempt, and though the state itself is not, the chances of a successful prosecution are slim.

Parliament - An act of terror

Straw's own logic may go some way to explaining the proposals. "If we look back over the past 25 years, we can see that the [anti-terrorism] powers have been used proportionately," he says, without reference to the Guildford Four, the Birmingham six or the 98 per cent of people detained under the existing Prevention of Terrorism Act who proved innocent of any crime. He claims that there are "adequate non-violent means for expressing opposition and dissent".

Smythe points out that the 'life endangering' and 'health and safety' aspects of the Bill could be used to prosecute activists building fortifications at protest sites, that would be seen as posing risks both to themselves and their bailiffs.

However, it is likely that animal rights activists will be the first domestic dissenters to be pursued under the Bill (being closest to what the public perceives as terrorism). The consultation document which preceded this Bill explicitly noted some of the activity which the bill intended to prevent: "Animal and environmental rights activists: high cost of damage from attacks on abattoirs, laboratories, breeders, hunts, butchers, chemists, doctors, vets, furriers, restaurants, supermarkets and other shops." Not wishing to appear extreme, Straw claimed that the activities of Greenpeace would not be classed as terrorism. However the environmental group's involvement in pulling up GM crops would fall foul of this law.

The authorities' inability to understand non-hierarchical organisation (and their inability to get conspiracy charges to stick) has generated a clause aimed at anyone "directing" an activist organisation. 'Organisation' is defined as any group of people meeting to discuss a potentially 'terrorist' act and 'directing' can be at any level (booking a room? facilitating a meeting?). The

maximum sentence is life imprisonment.

According to Smythe: "A combination of dirty tricks, provoking of riots and slick media manipulation will be used to divide the radicals from the liberals." Dirty tricks in the form of propaganda, damning press articles and incitement, played a major roll in Northern Ireland, against the striking miners and are becoming increasingly prevalent against Reclaim The Streets and anti GM activists. (see 'RTS press complaint about Sunday Times arms allegation' SQUALL Download Issue 2)

Under the 'possession for terrorist purposes' and 'collection of information' clauses anyone accused of having information "likely to be useful" to someone preparing a terrorist act will have to prove either that they didn't have it or that they had reasonable excuse to possess it. Failing to do so could mean a sentence of ten years. The Corporate Watchers' Address Book or the Genetix Snowball Handbook have been cited, by the Bill's opponents, as prime examples of incriminating literature, and campaigning journalists are likely to be targeted with these clauses. (Journalists will also be hit by the 'duty to disclose information' clause which obliges them to hand over any information they come across in a professional capacity – as well as acting as a potential gag, this is likely to make activists less keen to talk to the press, leaving an information vacuum, no doubt to be filled by government spin.)

The mere threat of becoming incriminated by accepting correspondence or literature from any campaigning group may well be enough to make potential 'liberal' supporters deliberately avoid becoming informed. As every despot knows, fear is the greatest censor of ideas.

Straw's desire to "tackle fundraising and support networks" by scaring people away from activities they are entitled to do in a democracy is open to challenge under the 1998 Human

Rights Act (HRA). The HRA will incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law. By introducing contradictory legislation, the government may be leaving it up to the judges, who will set the legal precedents, to see which is more important – democracy or control.

A section of the Terrorism Bill states that “wearing an item of clothing or displaying an article to arouse reasonable suspicion that he/she is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation” could lead to arrest and a ten year sentence and unlimited fine. If the Home Secretary sees fit to ban the ALF, will everyone in vegan shoes or an animal rights T-shirt be arrested? If he bans RTS, will all stilt walkers get collars felt? (Might need the flying squad for that one.) The banning of a hardline Islamic group could lead to some serious compromising of the police’s already questionable impartiality.

As the ‘terrorism’ under the Bill can occur in the UK or overseas, anyone involved in solidarity with movements from abroad may find themselves prosecuted (particularly under pressure from foreign governments that Britain may be trying to keep sweet). Critics are already listing Gandhi, Mandela and Jesus Christ as historical figures you would not have wanted to have been caught supporting. Today, campaigning for the liberation of Tibet may go unpunished. But will backing less ‘comfortable’ causes such as Palestinians fighting for recognition in the West Bank, or opposing Western sanctions against Libya be as readily overlooked.

Ralph Smythe says: “If you’ve been involved in any campaign they start using anti-terrorist powers against, you would not be being at all paranoid to expect a visit from the police and a free trip down the station.” Though opposition to the Bill is growing, it is unlikely to be blocked or receive significant amendments (several have

been proposed including bringing the Bill into line with the ECHR and removing the reverse proof burdens and the references to property).

In Britain the more cynical commentators are suggesting that this Bill has little to do with any potential terrorist threat and more to do with silencing dissenting voices that are beginning to muster some serious support. Blair is still reeling from the embarrassment of going against the wishes of 70 per cent of the population over GM foods.

The final article of the Universal Declaration says that no state can “perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights set forth herein [the Declaration]”. Straw says his Bill is “simply protecting democracy”. Though the establishment’s historians probably won’t record it, those that defy the 2000 Terrorism Bill may well go down as the real protectors of democracy.

To keep up to date with the passage of the Bill and opposition to it check:

<http://www.blagged.freeserve.co.uk/terrorbill/index.htm>

A fuller version of this article appears on the SQUALL features page at **www.squall.co.uk**

Text of UK Government Terrorism Bill -

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmbills/063/2000063.htm>

Home Office Terrorism Bill web page: **<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/oicd/terrbill.htm>**

The best way of being kept up to date with the campaign is to subscribe to the email list. You can do this by accessing the web page at - **http://tb_campaign.listbot.com/**

Liberty - **<http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/>**

Contact the Home Office to protest against this legislation. **<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/webwork/contact.htm>**

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