



# imminent rebellion

Issue 2 - February 2004

Free To All



## Breaking Free...

**Where to now for the Anarchist Movement of Aotearoa?**

### Also in this issue...

A rap-up from the Anarchist Tea Party

What anarchism means to me...

An introduction to collectives and consensus processes

Summary of the Social Forum Aotearoa

# Editorial

KIA ORA! Welcome to 2004 and welcome back to the second issue of *imminent rebellion*, an anarchist 'zine based in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The first issue was a huge success despite it being a bit of an experiment – I think we managed to get out issues to every centre in New Zealand and even to several places overseas!

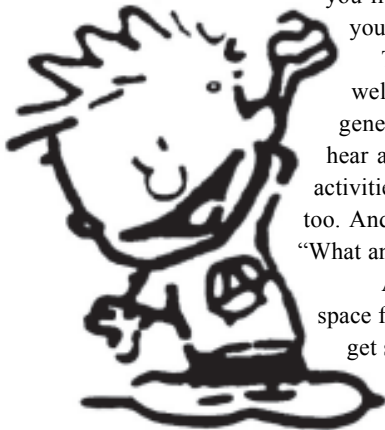
The *Anarchist Tea Party* at the beginning of December last year was exciting and went very well (see the summary of how it went on page 3). It was refreshing to see all the new anarchist publications popping up throughout Aotearoa while I was there – let's hope it continues!

As for this particular 'zine, I've been really impressed with the various contributions that have come this way. I want to emphasise that this 'zine is an open forum for all anarchists and so the content is totally up to you! Besides, if this is going to be a sustainable project then it is contributions, more than money, that are essential to its survival, so keep them coming in!

The focus of this issue is on a "where to now?" look at the anarchist movement in Aotearoa. We hope this will get people thinking and offer new insights about what can be done to get us closer to our liberation.

Also present in this issue is a section that we hope will become a regular called "What anarchism means to me..." where anyone

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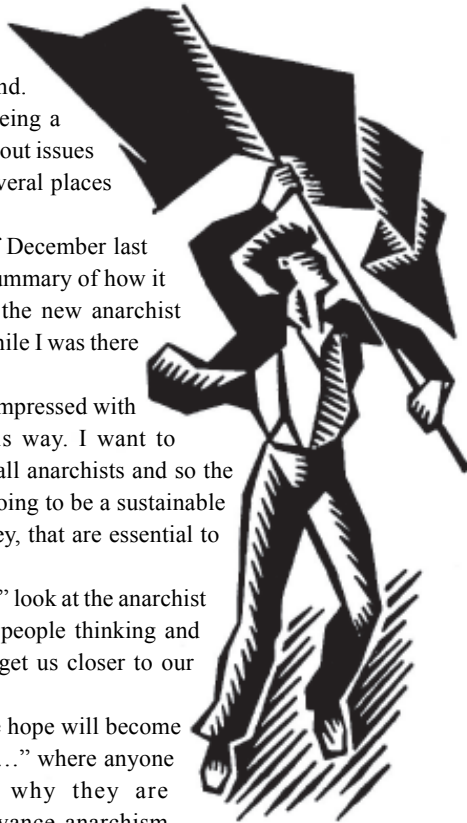
is free to explain why they are anarchists, what relevance anarchism has to them on a personal level and their own hopes and aspirations.

You'll have noticed that in both issues so far we've reserved the last page for subversive art of some sort. We want to really encourage contributions of subversive art from anarchists all over Aotearoa just waiting to unleash their artistic impulses. Who knows? – maybe you'll run into someone who's screen-printed their shirt with your creation!

There's no particular focus for next issue – anything is welcome! Hopefully some of the ideas from this issue will generate some interesting debate. We're also really keen to hear about what people are up to and what sort of projects or activities they're involved with so feel free to write about that too. And we'll be looking for someone to write for the section "What anarchism means to me..." so don't be shy!

Anyway, I guess I'd better shut my trap and leave some space for the rest of the 'zine! We hope you enjoy issue two and get something meaningful out of it!

- Torrance



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### About this zine...

We are fighting for our freedom. We seek for the rhythm of our lives to no longer be subordinate to the whims of the parasites. We passionately seek the removal of all obstacles to our liberation – capitalism, the state, patriarchy, racism and every other vestige of control and authority – and the day will come when we will joyfully embrace the destruction of this prison. We want this not just for ourselves but also for those around us because only as equals can we experience relationships in their full. In a word we seek anarchy. We hope against hope that maybe this time a 'zine like this will go some way towards making those deepest of urges within us a reality.

### Contributions...

*imminent rebellion* relies on your news, articles, photos and letters. If you want to see us around more often simply send us something to publish.

### Subscriptions...

If you want to make sure you don't miss out on an issue of *imminent rebellion* send us your mailing details, and enough cash (or a cheque made out to "imminent rebellion") to cover mailing. \$10 will cover 5 issues in NZ.

### Donations...

*imminent rebellion* is free and we're poor - got the picture? So if you'd like to send some cash our way it would be really appreciated. Cash, stamps and cheques (made out to "imminent rebellion") would all go a long way.

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## This Issue's Quote...

There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

- Mario Savio

# The Anarchist Tea Party

FROM the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2003 about 70 people from across Aotearoa and abroad attended the *Anarchist Tea Party*. Overall I feel the conference went really well, with it giving birth to some very promising projects, and I left feeling very optimistic.

The conference was hosted at Maramaiti, an incredible intentional community currently in the beginning stages, adjacent to the Whanganui River. The place is being created mainly thanks to the effort put in by Lucia, Geoff and Liam who currently live there. Most of the conference took place in the woolshed which is in the process of being transformed into a "marae-style" area while people slept in tents scattered around the property. Cooking was done collectively (thanks to all those that helped prepare such great food and thanks to Steven for the homebrew!) and a commitment was made to have the conference itself run by those in attendance.

A very diverse range of topics were covered over the weekend including facilitation and consensus meeting processes, feminism, deschooling, non-monogamous relationships, a

"where to next?" look at the anarchist movement in Aotearoa, finding common ground amongst anarchists and those on the left, discussing the media resources available to us, the philosophy behind Linux, de-colonisation, natural contraceptives, living outside capitalism, networking... the list goes on.

A lot was accomplished over the course of the few days we had available to us and despite some early criticism that it was going to be very "lifestyle" orientated I think it achieved a good combination of both the personal and the political.

The last day was spent primarily brainstorming for projects and networking. Of particular interest to me was the commitment to develop a communication network across Aotearoa to make it easier for people to get in the loop and get involved, to know what others are up to (and help out if they're interested) and to just generally facilitate organisation and action around Aotearoa. Other projects include setting up a mutual aid network (fungus network), pirate radio in Wellington and elsewhere, creating an annual Aotearoa anarchist guidebook (containing information about contacts, various organisations, planned actions, and skills like consensus decision making), building a support network and the setting up of discussion groups among other things.

Being situated all in one place meant spending time together



outside of the more structured conference timetable itself and this also led to a lot of networking and discussion as well. This more informal type of interaction of just getting to know others, developing contacts (and friends!) and in some cases committing to projects is a really valuable thing to have happen and I hope future conferences are aware of this too.

I think the *Anarchist Tea Party* came at a really opportune time where some were feeling quite disillusioned with the anarchist movement. I left feeling a resurgence in the anarchist movement was taking place, and seeing all the projects happening at the moment and those in the works was a really positive experience. It was generally agreed that we need to make conferences like this a more regular event and as I write this, preliminary plans are already underway in Christchurch to host another conference in 2004.

It's now up to us to ensure that we keep the momentum generated at this conference going.

- Torrance



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Anarchism is About

# Struggle

I HAVE been asked to write something on the future of the anarchism in this country. I must admit to being highly cynical and depressed about the state of anarchism in Aotearoa. The Anarchist movement remains a small and largely irrelevant movement.

It seems to me that the current movement is repeating the same mistakes we made in the 1990s when I first got involved in anarchism in Wellington and Christchurch.

Today's anarchist movement seems to be mostly an inward looking counterculture alternative lifestyle movement. For most of the movement, there is no sense of being part of a long tradition of resistance and struggle going back a hundred years. Anarchists were active in all the major struggles in New Zealand last century, from 1913, the unemployed movement in the 1930s, the 1951 lockout, the anti Vietnam war movement, etc.

The current anarchist movement in this country started in the 1990s, with most of the main activists coming from a background in punk or the McGillicuddy<sup>1</sup> movement. These anarchists were active in the unemployed rights movement of the early 1990s, and the protests against the 1991 Iraq war. We were very keen, convinced we were right and that we didn't need to learn anything from older folks, especially if they weren't anarchists.

The 1990s anarchist scene in Christchurch fizzled and died, as most people gave up on radical politics, left town or went mad. In the north island, it wasn't quite so bad but, after a few years, a lot of the active people either left politics altogether or went into the green party (two current Green MPs and half a dozen of their current parliamentary staff came through the 1990s anarcho/McGillicuddy scene). Most were just passing through looking for a good time before they had to think about jobs, kids, careers etc. Some realised they weren't getting anywhere and left anarchism for the green party, "single issue" campaign groups, went mad, or they became old and grumpy like me.

So what went wrong and led to most of the

active people giving up on anarchism? Obviously in any political movement there is a high rate of burnout and eventually a lot of people will move on to other things after a while. But I think there were a few factors that made the anarchist movement even more prone



to losing people than usual.

The Christchurch anarchist scene thought the established left groups at the time were a bunch of boring old farts who couldn't possibly have anything interesting to say to us. While we occasionally went to a few of their demos and other events, we certainly didn't offer them any help or take part in the organising. Instead we organised our own anti McDonalds demos which were advertised by word of mouth to our anarchist freinds. Not surprisingly we didn't get many new people to these small events. Years later, when some of us actually talked to these boring old farts we discovered that a lot of them knew more about anarchism and radical politics than we did and were very dedicated and experienced activists (quite a few were still boring old farts though!). In Wellington it wasn't quite so bad as some of the central people in the Committee for the Establishment of Civilisation (CEC) were heavily involved in the peace movement, but there was still a lot of sectarianism towards the rest of the left.

Most of the anarchist movement was based on the punk/hippy subculture. While there was usually no deliberate attempt to exclude 'normal' people, anyone who had kids, a job, a normal haircut, or listened to Dire Straits, did not feel welcome in our circles. We met mostly in grotty flats, listened to punk music and looked down on anyone who was 'straight'. Anyone dressed in normal clothes who stayed on in spite of all this was then suspected of being an undercover cop!

We were not interested in anarchist theory and we didn't consider ourselves to be part of the left. We thought we were "neither left nor right, but out in front" (a slogan currently being used by the green party). A few individuals did develop an interest in anarchist theory or history but it was never something that was considered important for the whole movement. As a result, anarchist groups were incapable of having informed discussions about politics, which seems pretty silly when you think about it.

In short, the basic problem was that the anarchist scene was based mostly on a youth subculture social scene, not politics. It was far easier for a teenage punk or hippy to get involved in our scene than for older political activists to meet us. Anarchists saw themselves as separate from the rest of the radical political movement. If we want anarchism to move forward and have an influence on society, we have to get out of the ghetto.

Anarchism didn't come out of nowhere, it was born out of class struggle. It came about from the ideas and actions of millions of people fighting for a better world. If the anarchist movement is to remain relevant, it has to be based in, and part of, a mass movement.

Last year tens of thousands of people took to the streets to oppose US Imperialism and war. The anti war movement was the first experience of radical politics for most of those people. Yet anarchist ideas had a very low profile. The Anarchist Roundtable in Christchurch was the only organised anarchist group to make an effort to take part in the anti war movement. The Anti GE movement is

another example of a movement with mass support, but with almost no visible anarchist involvement. There are various individual anarchists who are heavily involved in these and other campaigns, but my point is these people are involved as individuals and so have very little influence on the direction of the campaign, and most of the people who call themselves anarchists are not involved at all.

When I received the advertising posters and leaflets for the recent "Anarchist tea Party" gathering in Wanganui, I was disappointed to see no mention of the current war in Iraq, the anti GE movement, the foreshore/sea bed issue, and other current political issues.

## **We have to set up anarchist groups that meet regularly, discuss politics and take part in local grassroots political campaigns.**

Instead there were workshops on tree climbing, herbal contraception, living outside capitalism (on the moon maybe?) and non monogamous relationships. While I am sure some of this might have been fun and even interesting, it is not going to change the world. And that is what anarchism is about - Changing The World.

The poster for the event had a well known quote from anthropologist (and certainly not an anarchist) Margaret Mead – "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has". It's a nice slogan, but it is simply not true.

If we are talking about really changing the world, by getting rid of capitalism (and I hope we are), it will not be a small group of citizens, it will be through the efforts of the international working class. This is an important point. Anarchists, by ourselves, will never change the world. The ONLY way to get rid of capitalism is through the actions of millions and millions of working people.

The job of anarchists is to take part in mass movements and struggles, alongside ordinary people. In those movements we will come up against both reformists and authoritarian tendencies, and we will have to argue with them and hopefully convince people that anarchist ideas are useful ideas for achieving a better society.

Inward looking lifestyle politics will not change the world. It might be fun, but it is a total waste of time. Out there in the real world, our enemy, the ruling class, is busy planning wars, destroying the planet, and exploiting us all. The good news is that people are resisting. Right now, there are thousands of people around the country, interested in how we can change the world and get rid of this sick capitalist system that is giving us wars, genetically modified "food", racism, environmental destruction, low wages and generally making life miserable. These people can be found at anti war meetings, in local anti GE groups, and other political events. The Greens are there too, and the marxists, and the liberals, but the anarchists aren't there, or we are there in very small numbers and are not saying much.

If we want to change the world we need to be in the thick of the fight, part of the mass movement and proving that our ideas are relevant and useful to the struggle. It's not

enough to organise one or two events a year. We have to set up anarchist groups that meet regularly, discuss politics and take part in local grassroots political campaigns. Only then will anarchist ideas be taken seriously by people fighting for a better world.

A good example is the Anarchist Round Table in Christchurch. ART has regular meetings, a written set of aims and principles and takes part in protests and other stuff in Christchurch. This may not sound like much but unfortunately its pretty rare in the anarchist movement here for any sort of collective to last more than a few months. If we can't even get ongoing local groups established in the main centres, we are going to have a hard time convincing the rest of the world that we can organise without governments and capitalism!

The fact is we are not getting anywhere, and we need to drastically rethink what we are doing. After all, going round and round in circles without getting anywhere does not make you a revolutionary.

*Footnote: 1. Clan McGillicuddy was started by some Hamilton hippies in the 1970s. Its main activity was doing weird street theatre and engaging in pacifist battles (hitting each other with rolled up newspapers and flourbombs). Its political branch, the McGillicuddy Serious Party, ran candidates in general elections to poke fun at the political system. It abolished itself in 2000. Ironically, many of its members now work for the green party.*

**- Mister Grumpy (Mister Grumpy is a long-haired vegan hippy who lives in Wellington)**



**18th January 2004:** Around forty activists from around the county descended on Waihopai Valley, near Blenheim, for the annual Waihopai Spy Base protests.

After the camp had ended a dozen activists loaded up a trailer and vehicles with large rocks and logs and headed to the roadside entrance to the base. A barricade was quickly created against the gate and a banner was hung that read "No NZ Support for Bush's Wars". The activists were able to leave before any security arrived.

The dumping of the rocks and logs was described as a symbolic action. The purpose was to create a nuisance for the next shift changing, but more so to highlight the fact that New Zealand contributes to America's wars by supplying information that is intercepted at Waihopai. The action was also aimed at marking a resurgence in direct action that will continue to focus on Waihopai, as well as New Zealand's other spy base, Tangimoana, near Palmerston North.

The rest of the weekend included a rally and march in Blenheim, and a visit to the base. 'Uncle Sam' spoke to the crowd outside the inner security fence followed by naked protesters who created a peace symbol. The whole weekend was to increase public awareness about what Waihopai does, and to demand that the base be shut down.

**- Aotearoa Indymedia**

# Core Values, Not Pet Issues: Moving Anarchism from the Fringe

MANY of us who consider ourselves “Anarchists” have special issues about which we feel strongly, and which we campaign about actively. This is certainly admirable, and these specific issues also provide an avenue for many who were previously uninterested in politics to gain understanding, skills, and broader ideals for which to fight. These specific issues however, are not the core of Anarchism.

Anarchism must be broader, and deeper, than a mere banner under which a multitude of “lobby” groups seek solidarity. This is because Anarchism is specially positioned at present to make a real and revolutionary change in our society - one that could potentially create a society where the people could finally exercise real control over such issues. However, it is only positioned in this way if it is capable of gaining popular support as a viable philosophy upon which a society can be built - it is the core ideals of Anarchism that must be brought to the people, not the movements current members stances on specific issues. An authentic Anarchism is not “winning” on a handful of pet-issues but removing the structures of authority, control, and exploitation that allowed them to occur.

Many people, both anarchists and potential anarchists, feel uncomfortable with what can appear, on the surface at least, a “life-style” discourse in New Zealand Anarchism. Many individuals hold the central views of Anarchism but reject actual “Anarchism” as such because it appears to them to be merely a radical eco-lobby group.

Others, for instance some members of the Libertarianz, share the core values of Anarchism but are fearful of an attack on their negative freedoms (like the freedom to wear leather or eat meat) and so turn to a free-market model as a means of providing basic choice, deciding that the exploitative nature of that system is preferable to loosing their basic liberties. The movement must



demonstrate to people like these that Anarchism respects both society AND the individual. “Libertarian Socialism” rejects the exploitative free-market AND the overbearing bureaucratic “nanny-state”. That is the message that must be spread to the uninitiated if we wish to gain popular support - not our positions on important but ultimately personal issues.

Questions of the usage of technology, combating Neo-Nazi groups, GM agriculture and medicine, Veganism etc. are important

issues, but ones that could be debated and dealt with best from within the framework of a truly democratic, free, and participatory society (and some of course will disappear under such a system). To promote Anarchism via specific positions on these or other issues risks the appearance (and indeed the reality) of pre-empting such debates: “We want a free society where communities and individuals can control their own lives and participate equally - provided they conform to OUR stance on X from the outset”. Anarchism must provide new positive freedoms without, as has been one of the fatal flaws of other “left” experiments, attacking peoples negative ones.

An authentic popular revolutionary movement can't risk fracturing itself around specific issues of choice when there is a genuine existing consensus on the core beliefs of Anarchism: a fair and democratic society organised from the bottom up, free of gods and rulers. And likewise, a movement currently relegated to the fringe of politics but with such awesome potential can't risk alienating masses of potential supporters by drawing unnecessary lines in the sand about such specific, personal, and complex issues.

Free the people so that THEY can decide how they want to live.

- Rob McGrail

## Social Forum Aotearoa 2003

THE *Social Forum Aotearoa* ran in Porirua from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2003. The *Social Forum Aotearoa* is the first of its kind in New Zealand and is a localized version of the *World Social Forum*. The *World Social Forum* dates to 2001 when it was first run in Porto Alegre in opposition to the *World Economic Forum* which is designed to be an opportunity for the parasites to discuss how they can exploit us more efficiently and effectively. The aim of the *World Social Forum*, and therefore the *Social Forum Aotearoa*, has been to

“search for alternatives to the dominant model” in the hope that it will be “the beginning of a new period in the struggle against human submission to the interests of capital.”

I think this year's forum was a bit of an experiment in terms of actually running the event. While it is clear that there had been a lot of effort setting it up I also think there are some lessons to learn. It quickly became apparent from the beginning that there was going to be little input from those who had attended the forum as to how it would proceed. And talking to others it

seems the creation processes leading up to the event were similarly exclusive. This resulted in what I felt to be a rather rigid timeframe to work within and a situation where I felt the audience was far more radical than the speakers themselves which led to most talks being boring and repetitive.

A feature of these social forums from the beginning, however, has been the inclusion of “open spaces.” These are wonderful opportunities for people who have come along to the forum to set up their own workshops or discussions. I



# Anarchy Without Adjectives

“When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion.” - Ethiopian proverb

WHAT kind of Anarchist are you? An anarcho-syndicalist? Anarcho-communist? Anarcho-primitivist? Individualist? Veganarchist? Militant? Pacifist? Black? White? Tall? Short? Does it really even matter?! Without trivialising the important differences between the different kinds of anarchism, is it not all just the same thing? Well, no, not really.

Let's assume that an Anarchist revolution is imminent. What would the end product be? Without doubt, a society with significantly more freedom. The question is in organisation. This is where opinions begin to differ. I couldn't possibly try to sum up the almost infinite number of possible post-revolution situations in the space of this article, not that it is necessary.

There is a general consensus among the modern anarchist community that the means of a revolution dictates the end product. A blood-thirsty hoard of gun-toting socialists descending upon the elitist

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**Our ideologies may be different but we all approach this from a fundamentally similar methodology: non-hierarchical grassroots change.**

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bureaucratic institution of parliament, violently seizing power 'in the name of the people', and then forcing their socialist doctrine upon New Zealanders would create nothing more than a military dictatorship. This is what differentiates

authoritarian socialism from Anarchism. As anarchists we strive for social change brought about through grassroots approaches, not by simply changing one oppressor for another.

True anarchy will only ever be realised if the revolution is consented to by all those liberated from the shackles of servitude. But passive consent is not enough, the oppressed masses must take part in the struggle. What can be more satisfying than knowing that your freedom is yours, struggled for and earned by yourself. One cannot be liberated without their consent and intention - if they become involuntary members of an anarchist society, have they not become slaves to anarchy?

As anarchists, we of all people must tolerate slavery of any kind the least.

In other words, before a revolution that will produce a lasting, working situation can occur, all must consent to first the end product, and second the means by which the revolution will occur. And let's make no mistake about it - the only realistic revolution compatible with anarchism will be a **social** revolution. Not just a transfer of power from one party to another, but an entire redistribution of power to each and every person. And not a revolution advocated by a small group, but actively enforced by an entire community - a grassroots revolution. Impossible? No.

Our ideologies may be different but we all approach this from a fundamentally similar methodology: non-hierarchical grassroots change. Rather than dwelling upon our differences, let's

realise our similarities, and find the wealth of common ground between us so that we may become more than a divided mass of factions. With cooperation instead of competition between anarchists, anarchy could become bigger than any of us had ever imagined. We must then take our ideas, our opinions and our love of liberty, and spread them to every corner of society. Open discussion with those

that doubt us will let them see that maybe we're not as unreasonable as we're portrayed to be.

Don't let yourself be told that anarchy is utopian. It is not unreachable. In a hundred years, humanity will look back at us and won't believe that we accepted slavery and servitude for so long, when freedom was there just waiting to be grabbed. But before we can move forward, before we can even begin to struggle against oppression, we must be able to work with one another. The struggle continues.

- Chris Deaker



found this was probably the more exciting part of the forum and since most of these were smaller and more participatory the level of discussion was more in line with those present. Topics ranged from “Lessons from the Peace Movement,” “The GE Debate After the Moratorium” and “Universal Income Systems” to “Bioregional Sustainability” and “An Introduction to Permaculture.” Of course this didn't mean all went off without a hitch – some organisers approached these “open spaces” more as lectures and others had such a variety of people in attendance that

it made it difficult to progress very far on topics. But overall I think the “open spaces” were the most valuable part of the forum and I definitely hope they play a more prominent role, as opposed to the keynote speeches, in future forums.

The *Social Forum Aotearoa* has the potential to provide a great place for networking and discussion and for some this opportunity to interact with people from much broader spheres is essential for a movement which at times is often inward-looking. Discussions were already in place by the end of this forum as to how things

will change next time round to become more participatory and ultimately more relevant to those attending and I think it is worthwhile to give next years forum another chance.

Visit <http://lists.riseup.net/www/info/socialforumaotearoa> to subscribe to the email list and help set up next years forum.

- Torrance

# Visions of Liberation

AS WE enter 2004 the anarchist movement of Aotearoa is experiencing a new level of energy. With the recent disillusionment with the Green Party and the Alliance many are coming back to the anarchist movement and are meeting up with a new wave of anarchists. As a result we've seen a merging of fresh new ideas and perspectives with knowledge and experience. But we are still small and while our energies are limited it is vital that we have some clear vision of where we are going. I hope to outline my own ideas about what we can do with the hope that this will inspire others to develop visions of their own and together we can all get that little bit closer to achieving our liberation.

I think there are two main areas that we need to consider. Firstly, we need to focus on a small number of projects or actions that will be the most rewarding as well as the most strategic. While our resources are limited it is essential we neither spread ourselves too thin, where we risk people burning out, nor that we focus on things that are simply impossible at this present point in time as we must be able to see some degree of success to keep momentum going. Secondly, we must develop the infrastructure necessary to allow for those actions and projects to occur and for the movement in general to continue growing. It is this latter point that I will deal with first.

To an outsider the anarchist movement of Aotearoa is disjointed, has no profile or presence and is very difficult to get involved with mainly because it does not do a heck of a lot – that is, of course, if they can identify any movement at all. Even within anarchist circles this feeling is not much different. People operate within very cliquey groups, there are few projects currently

underway and of those that are in operation little knowledge of them exists. Though it is not all doom and gloom as this may suggest. These problems are not inherent to the movement or the people involved, but largely just structural. If we develop the right structures we can get past the majority of these problems.

I think the most important structural component that we should develop is strong and vibrant grassroots groups. It is essential that we focus on developing active, exciting and accessible (this last point being especially important) groups at the local level. Anarchists have always known that a movement must be developed from the bottom up but all too often we bypass the local arena for the national and then wonder, when that's all over and done with, why there's nothing to fall back on to continue the momentum. I think there is a real need for groups that act as general forums open to all anarchist and radical libertarian types. Forums like that facilitate communication at the local level, create a presence and visibility and also act as catalysts for projects and actions. From these open forums more specific groups could be formed around particular needs, projects and actions.

These local groups also have the potential to provide another important function: acting as nodes within a much wider network. I think we are in real need of a large-scale communication network within Aotearoa and perhaps even with some of our close neighbours

(Australia for example?). We need something through which we can keep in touch with people and groups outside our immediate localities, something through which we can distribute information and the like and

something through which we can initiate projects beyond our local scene. I don't think this network needs to be an organisation in itself but could be as simple as some sort of formalised protocol and commitment between local groups.

I believe these two simple steps – the setting up of open groups at the grassroots level and then the networking of them between locales – sets the stage for a much more active, organised and visible anarchist movement. But the question still remains, what then? There are three core things that I personally think would be worthwhile focussing on: developing autonomous communities; creating and pushing more of our own media; and focussing on a campaign of direct action.

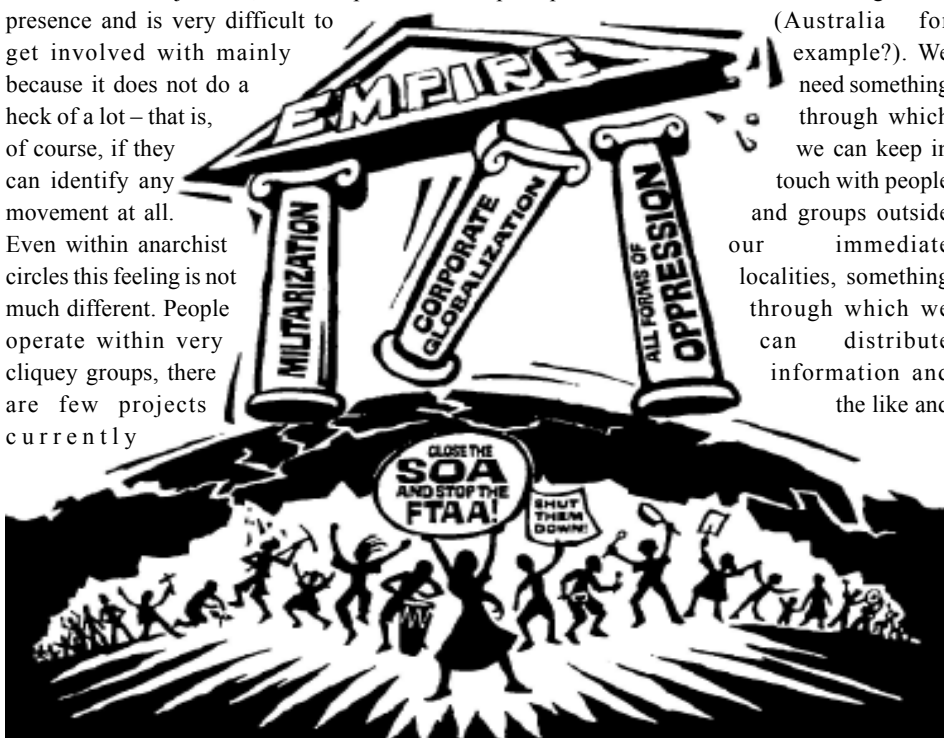
Autonomous communities or intentional communities are groups of people that deliberately come together to live and work collectively along anarchist lines. Some will immediately accuse this as being nothing more

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**It is essential that we focus on developing active, exciting and accessible groups at the local level.**

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than lifestyleism, and indeed that potential exists (as with anything), but I see these sorts of communities as being the beginning to the old idea of "building the new world in the shell of the old." Revolution exists in the present, not in some mythic future, and it is crucial that we start figuring out how to live on our own terms now. Besides allowing us to learn a vast array of skills about living and working collectively and providing ourselves with a potentially self-sufficient base, I think there is a real possibility that autonomous communities could act as centres for further resistance. They are in themselves, of course, a form of resistance against the dominant systems but they can be, and usually are, simply accommodated for if this is as far as they go. We must go beyond where many stop. Autonomous communities can provide things like radical libraries, skill-shares, food-not-bombs, community gardens, workers co-ops and act as social centres through which anarchist ideas, and more importantly anarchist methodologies, can be disseminated. I think they could provide support for getting non-





legitimate communities off the ground (ie. squats) which, by their very nature, subvert the very essence of capitalism (private property). Ultimately they could get involved with helping existing “communities” take back control over their own lives which would seriously threaten this system of oppression and domination and no doubt would be met with resistance. At least in this way I think we would be fighting for something positive instead of being continually reactive the actions of the powers that be.

The second area that I think is crucial to continue working is in creating our own media. *Anarchist Black Press*, *Little Guy With Big Hopes*, *imminent rebellion*, and especially *Aotearoa Indymedia (W(I)ndymedia* included) are great examples of current projects. These publications provide an excellent space for communication, encouraging debate and the hashing out of new ideas. So long as the aim of these publications is to develop active grassroots participation, as opposed to reinforcing the passivity that comes with mass media, then I think these all have the potential for change. I think it would be a step forward to get more centres putting out localised versions of *Indymedia* as well as getting more

support for those other already existing anarchist publications.

Finally, I think it's time we focussed on some sort of campaign across Aotearoa as *anarchists*. I think anarchists are among the most active among extra-parliamentary activists but the least recognised because in working with more liberal types we are largely stifled in what we can and can't do. The result has been many anarchists have invested huge amounts of time, energy and resources into petitions, marches and other symbolic actions, all of which are so easily accommodated within this system, forsaking one of the most important parts of anarchism: direct action (action that seeks to achieve an aim directly because of that action without the mediation of government, the media, etc.). I think it's time we took up a campaign (no borders, animal liberation, GE-free, Tino Rangatiratanga, etc.) that embodies anarchist values and take part in that as *anarchists* (and not some compromising version of anarchists). Developing a culture of direct action would be enough in itself, I think, but we may even win!

I am personally really optimistic and enthused right now about the possibilities

ahead for the anarchist movement and I think that feeling is spreading but optimism alone isn't going to beat the state or overthrow capitalism (among the host of other things that need to change!). If we place the energy and resources we have now in the right places we will have even more available to us in the future. I think we must develop the right infrastructure, by creating a network of local groups, to allow us to grow, facilitate communication and encourage action which I think should focus on autonomous communities (which act as bases of resistance), an expanded and more thorough grassroots media and a committed campaign of direct action. I believe this would set the stage for seriously challenging this system and allow the anarchist movement to grow and make significant advances. This is, however, just my own vision, and ultimately it is up to each of us to decide what we think is the best way forward and carry through with that vision. That is, I think, one of the greatest strengths of the anarchist movement.

- *Torrance*

## What Anarchism Means To Me...

WHAT brought me into radical politics was the viciousness of the new right, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s. All the suffering, alienation, depression, abuse and so on caused by the draconian neo-liberal reforms of the period made me think something was terribly wrong with society. So I questioned it more, warily became involved in radical politics, and came to the conclusion that capitalism and its system of class exploitation was largely behind all this unnecessary misery. Anarchism is an expression of this class anger I feel, and that is why I see anarchism as primarily a class based movement, even if it has a broad anti-authoritarian back (it is also a movement against sexism, racism, the state, ecological destruction and so on.)

All too often people reduce anarchism to an abstract ideal which is divorced from everyday struggle. They see anarchism in stark black and white terms: anarchism is good, authority is evil. The strategy of most anarchists is to convert people to this

ideal or to recruit people to an anarchist identity or lifestyle which people have to conform to. This semi-religious strategy appeals to a few people, which is undoubtedly valid and good for them, but the problem is that it simply does not appeal to most. Indeed, this strategy can at its worst lead to an elitism whereby those who don't share this ideal or lifestyle are dismissed as “sell outs” or “bogans” or whatever.

Instead of the ideological approach outlined above, I think anarchism originates in the struggles of the oppressed. Ultimately the relevance of anti-state communism or anarchism is dependent upon the level of class struggle in society. Class struggle is part of our lives. Struggle against the imposition of capital and the commodity goes on everyday at work, at school, at home, at shopping centres, anywhere and everywhere. Sometimes this resistance is quiet, almost invisible; sometimes it is overt and explosive. Far from being passive, working class people revolt against work everyday: we goof off at work, we go slow, we phone in sick, we steal on the job, and

sometimes we go out on strike. Once these minor rebellions blossom into open revolt, anarchist communism – a world without classes, money and the state – will become possible and realisable. This struggle prefigures a joyous society in which life is not determined by the commodity and wage-work, but by the co-operative endeavour of fulfilling our own needs and desires.

Sure, the level of class struggle in Aotearoa is low at the moment. But there is much potential for revolt. Many people in Aotearoa are really pissed off by having to work longer and faster for less pay. The imposition of the harsh neo-liberal regime by the boss class has revealed to many of us the ugly side of capitalism. Capitalists pocket soaring profits while the living standards of 80% of us are cut back. If this class anger is translated into overt resistance, anarchism will become more relevant.

- *Toby Boraman*

# Collectives & Consensus

AS WE seek to “be the change we wish to see”, many radical groups, and especially anarchist groups, attempt to operate collectives based on consensus processes. Consensus processes embody many of the core values we seek: equality, respect, mutual acceptance and the free exchange of ideas. However, being brought up in a society antithetical to these values means we cannot simply expect consensus processes to come naturally. Indeed, in countless situations I have been in, consensus ceases to exist in all but name and the token “so no one objects?” at the end. I hope this article will make people more aware of what makes a successful collective and how to operate based on consensus.

I think the best place to start is to address what exactly we mean by consensus decision making. The underlying idea of consensus is that everyone’s opinion in a group deserves consideration and decisions must be, in the very least, marginally acceptable to all (and hopefully more than just that!). This differs from other types of organisations in that decision-making processes aren’t based on a win/lose approach, but that the group as a whole must collaboratively seek to find solutions that all can be happy with.

A popular misconception is that consensus decision-making occurs just at the end of a meeting with the vote. Instead, consensus is a process built into the very structure of the collective. To allow for decisions to be truly based on consensus everyone must be given the freedom to express their own ideas about an issue without intimidation, coercion or anything else that may stifle the free exchange of ideas. Those ideas must also be considered fairly and equally. This means, as a given, a group operating on consensus must be without hierarchy or authority (in particular, attention must be paid to informal

hierarchies). It also means that respect for each other and everyone’s opinions is essential. If any of these fundamental concepts is undermined, then consensus has been subverted.

Most collectives that operate based on consensus hold regular facilitated meetings. At the beginning an agenda is collectively set for the meeting and the group then proceeds down through the different items on the agenda ensuring each item is fully discussed with the aim of reaching a decision that is acceptable to all. If no objections are raised when the facilitator calls for them, the decision is passed. If objections *are* raised, the objection is heard and the collective undertakes to find alternative solutions. It is important to consensus that objections are used judiciously and not as a power play, but even more importantly that individuals feel that they *can* object and that dissent is in no way suppressed in the interest of the smooth running of the group. A common misnomer is that things revert back to the status quo if consensus seems difficult to achieve, but this is not the case as if someone wishes something to change clearly consensus doesn’t exist to begin with.

As already mentioned, most consensus based meetings have facilitators. Only in small groups of five people or less, where everyone can easily take on the roles of a facilitator, is it not so important. Facilitators do not lead or dominate meetings. They do not have any more influence over the decisions than anyone else. In fact, it is

often wise for the facilitator to contribute less than others to the discussion itself. Facilitators are there to guide and assist the group on its path towards making a decision. As a role a facilitator is concerned not with taking part in the discussion and decision-making but with the group dynamics in order to allow both of these things to occur smoothly. A good facilitator does a number of things: they keep the group focused towards finding solutions; they continually give feedback on their perspective of the group dynamics with



the aim of clarifying the group’s position; they make sure everybody gets to speak if they want to and usually take care of the speaking list; and they stay aware of the emotions and energy levels in the group and address them if necessary. In many instances the facilitator can take part in the meeting just as everyone else but they must be careful to keep both roles separate and, as already said, it’s often a good idea for the facilitator to keep participation in the meeting minimal.

In larger groups it is often helpful to have co-facilitators or distribute the roles of facilitator across several people. Having separate roles like a scribe (to take minutes), a spotter (to spot raised hands and keep a speaking list), a ‘mood minder’

## Red Flags to Guard Against in Consensus-based Processes

Consensus processes can be undermined by anything that restricts the free exchange of ideas or stops those ideas being considered equally with others. It is up to every member of a collective to be willing to challenge behaviour that undermines consensus. The below list is just a few red flags to look out for that I thought were particularly common.

1. Acting exasperated that someone would waste the group’s time with trivialities.
2. Demonstrating contempt for other people’s ideas or their right to express them (ie. by scoffing, ridiculing, or belittling) or using outright intimidation such as staring down or acting as if one is (barely) suppressing indignant rage.
3. Discrediting someone by slandering them behind their back or creating unsubstantiated rumours and gossip.
4. Acting hurt, wounded, put upon and possibly walking out.
5. Making oneself indispensable by not allowing anyone to have access to information, skills or resources they would need in order to help.
6. Expressing reservations with a proposal before it has been fully explained by the proponent.
7. Scoffing at adherences to process, in particular in times of crisis.
8. Suggesting that task-rotation should be done away with in the name of efficiency.

and finally a stripped down general facilitator role or some combination thereof can allow the meeting to flow better. Splitting the roles of a facilitator can also be one way to combat facilitators if they seem to be controlling a meeting. Another way is by rotating the role of facilitator around people (important with any formal role) so that everyone has a chance to develop the skills and to stop any degree of power hoarding.

The need for a facilitator to have a clearly defined role illustrates another important aspect of successful collectives: guidelines. Guidelines, or "rules," are essential for consensus in that they can ensure an open forum for discussion and stop the formation of informal hierarchies. They are also extremely important to deal with conflict resolution as it is during those times that we are most likely to be led into forgetting our most basic anarchist principles or even basic logic. It's not uncommon, however, for anarchists to flagrantly ignore rules or guides simply because they are anarchists, especially in smaller groups. While it is important to reserve the right to reject rules when we think they are unjust it is just as important to develop some sort of collective understanding about basic anarchist or consensus principles. When guidelines have been collectively developed through consensus they usually have a lot more integrity than, say, rules made up by an elite.

Guidelines are very important for dealing with conflict. Conflict is not something to be avoided, instead it is absolutely essential to hashing out concepts and plans and building some sort of real consensus. An absence of conflict is almost always a sign that dissent, or even honest input, is being suppressed. Politeness, which should not be confused with respect and consideration, is anathema to building consensus. A collective that operates on insincere affection and frowns on grumpiness stifles consensus. But while conflict is essential and "unpleasant" behaviour a normal part of a functioning collective, members must also be aware of bad behaviour deliberately aimed at manipulating outcomes. Guidelines that ensure open discussion but emphasise respect are important.

So that everybody can speak and get their points across it is often helpful to have some guidelines associated with speaking. Speaking lists are a common feature of consensus meetings. They allow everybody to get a chance to speak if they want to, especially those who are more inclined to be quiet or can't always speak up in time. Prioritising those who are quieter and bringing them to the top of the list can do likewise. Though if speaking lists are applied too rigidly they can stifle discussion. Often by the time someone gets their turn to speak the topic of discussion has changed and the result is the topic of discussion goes back and forward and loses

continuity. It is important to take into account ordinary interaction and not to dictate actions that are awkward and artificial and often a combination of speaking lists and natural dialogue works best. Interrupting is a common human fallacy but it is rarely appropriate, leaving people feeling as though they must rush to get their points across before they are interrupted, and efforts should be made to avoid this. Long-winded droners are also all too common. While they can sometimes be accommodated they can cause meetings to become very long and I have often seen decisions go through without consensus simply because meetings have dragged on. It is important the members of a collective make an effort to keep to the point and, while they should not be silenced, long-winded droners should be made aware of their verbosity.

Ensuring open discussion also requires everyone can actually participate and it's not uncommon for collectives to overlook the individual circumstances of members. Children, work, member's financial situations and especially a lack of access to email (where decisions are often made) all affect how members can participate in a collective and this issue must be openly addressed.

Collectives that operate based on consensus are open to a particular vulnerability: they operate on the assumption that all members are making a good faith effort to work cooperatively, honestly and in support of each other. This expectation of good can leave a group open to manipulation, even despite the best guidelines. In egalitarian groups it is up to everyone to ensure the smooth running of the group. Everyone must be prepared to ensure the group continues to operate based on consensus and to challenge power structures. A successful collective also requires active participation from all and those who leave decisions up to others can subvert consensus just as much as someone who takes on a position of power.

Having been brought up in a society based on competition, power structures and mistrust we have no culture of working collectively or of consensus processes so it is up to each of us to make sure that we, and those we work with, are well informed. Developing guidelines and practices that ensure equality, respect and open discussion are essential to reaching consensus and having successful collectives. Mastering the basic workings of consensus makes collectives far more effective at achieving their goals and allows them to move forward.

- *Torrance (This article was based on a workshop held at the Anarchist Tea Party and run by Maria McMillan as well as an online book called Collective Book on Collective Processes available at [www.geocities.com/collectivebook](http://www.geocities.com/collectivebook).)*

## Meeting Template

Below is a possible template for how a meeting could progress. This template is quite exhaustive and depending on how well people know each other certain aspects of this would be dropped.

- 1. Setting up of room**
- 2. Welcomer**  
Someone delegated, possibly from the last meeting, to welcome people as they come in.
- 3. Introductions**  
This is really important even in groups that know each other but is often overlooked. From simply doing a round of names (with the right to pass!), to checking in with everyone and getting things off people's chests so that the rest of the meeting can run smoothly. It can also be helpful to have something social beforehand to get everyone comfortable.
- 4. Apologies**  
It is essential to keep absentees in the loop so that despite individual circumstances people can still take part in decision-making.
- 5. Ground rules & collective processes**  
Never assume everyone knows how to work in a meeting based on consensus.
- 6. Delegation of roles**  
Depending on the size and goals of the group these roles can include: facilitator, spotter, mood-minder, scribe, time-keeper and welcomer.
- 7. Agenda setting/goal setting**  
Develop a list of the goals or particular agenda items that the group wishes to get through during the meeting. It can be helpful to prioritise this list and place time limits on different sections. Also remember to report back from the last meeting.
- 8. Meeting**
- 9. Rap-up**  
This can include some final remarks that people may just want to get off their chests, reiterating decisions and delegations and planning the next meeting. It is often important to briefly discuss how everyone felt the meeting went as well.



# Anti-GE Troops Set for Action

AS MOST of you are already aware, the beginning of 2004 began with a direct action camp aimed at sharing, discussing and downright *doing* practical, non-violent actions that can be employed within the movement to keep New Zealand (and the world) free from genetic engineering (GE).

From the 2 - 4 of January activists from around the country gathered at Mountain Valley School near Motueka to attend the camp organised under the banner of the 'Peoples Moratorium Enforcement Agency' (PMEA), a title initiated by those who attended the 'tent city' outside Parliament.

The success of the camp was that it was hands-on, and predominantly practical in nature, the mood of the camp seemed to be 'enough talking, more action'. Workshops were held on a wide spectrum of direct action methods and skills, from stencilling to supermarket actions, legal matters to blockading, and right through to crop 'decontamination'.

Just to give you a taste, I learnt that the bottom of a banana box makes a great boarder for your stencil, while the box also acts as a neat disguise, that your cell phone can be traced even when its turned off, and that sitting in a tight circle, facing outwards with arms and legs entwined will take longer for the police to rip

apart than, say, a line of people standing up. I learnt how to build a tripod and use lock-boxes, and the importance of not getting fingerprints on ANYTHING (so don't wear latex gloves). I could go on, but I suggest getting hold of the 'Dig For Victory' handbook for all your direct action needs (available soon at [www.peoplesmoratorium.net](http://www.peoplesmoratorium.net)).

Regional discussion groups were also formed in order to brainstorm and plan possible actions in particular areas. Although such regional 'clusters' may have been forming already it was useful to have the regional groups then come back to the wider group and share information and ideas. Hopefully these clusters will continue to meet and carry out actions, and lay the grass-roots foundation for GE activism in the future.

Regarding the subject that is commonly called 'crop pulling', the camp benefited from



having several overseas visitors who shared their knowledge and experiences with the group. With the obligatory disclaimer out of the way, we heard first hand experiences of crop pulling and its overwhelming success. And while the circumstances are significantly different in New Zealand than in Europe; with 'laboratory' or field trials rather than full-scale commercial release, the end result is not – let's get rid of this fuckin' GE!

- Claire Dann

