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Mayday, May Day: Critiquing Mayday 2000 as a Political ‘Racket’

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the earlier and defused the MayDay 2000 debacle before it became an embarrassment to our liberatory perspective.

**Together let us end representation, seperation, spectacle, ideology and illusion!**

power by winning converts from the current ruling ideology to theirs — no wonder they act like governments-in-waiting! Our role isn't to win converts, but to destroy power and make it possible for people to live free of it. We need to study what most immediately and concretely oppresses us we can destroy, then having done that, the next most immediate and concrete oppression, and by liberating ourselves we'll also liberate others. This isn't about an ideologically-imposed external 'cause', it's about our own lives and using our everyday lives as cover, just as the more avant garde German guerrillas did. We need to study the physical infrastructure and the legal / cultural infrastructure, how it relates and how we can pixie it most easily.

Without mass actions, we don't need mass funding, a corrupting and corrosive influence on EF!UK from its inception. If people insist on big actions, funding should be limited to what participants can raise amongst themselves, from their own resources, rather than what they can whistle up clandestinely from one big donor. That way, some level of popular participation, accountability and transparency will remain — and it'll be harder for demos to get to a monster scale where some can pretend to represent the motivations of other participants. If Chumba want to fund the movement, they should do so openly and without the ulterior motive of propping up archaic and manipulative ideologies or bribing others to do so when this is never going to make revolution. They should look beyond what the direct action / DiY movement is doing at one important thing we are saying: we aren't prepared to lead, nor should any free person be led.

Finally, EF!UK already has a rule of thumb not to co-operate with political parties — why they were sussed enough to refuse co-operation with the SWP over May Day. What's implicit in this critique of power needs to be bought out. If we rejected all representation, all peddlers of ideology and spectacle for what is immediate, we'd have picked up on the Leftist take-over from within all



MayDay 2000's hype may be a bit wonky, but it's already as unavoidable as that of its predecessors — multiple glossy leaflets through the post, listings in all the movement press, stickers all round the Tube, the carefully tricked-up 'must go' ambience, though no-one you know can really think why. You should trust your own instincts a little more and the anarcho-herd's a little less — this one's a con, always has been.

MayDay 2000 doesn't come out of Reclaim the Streets (RTS), Earth First! or anywhere else in the direct action / DiY milieu. It's prime movers are the Anarchist (Communist) Federation, old guard anarcho-Lefties more into promoting themselves and their ideology than revolution. Unlike June 18th and November 30th, it's not primarily a street event, it's a Lefty conference with the street party just used as a come-on to sell the conference and up their ideological cred.

The story behind MayDay 2000 is one of manoeuvring and manipulation and the lesson is not to let yourself be used as cannon fodder in someone else's power games.

## Splits, Spooks and Secret Bungs: Mayday '98

The first MayDay conference was in 1998, held at Bradford's 1-in-12 Club, then the heart of the Northern Anarchist Network. Its leading lights presented themselves as open-minded and undogmatic in the last issue of *Class War* they had input into and their magazine, *Smash Hits*, claiming that as their own class struggle politics had failed, they were open to exploring new ways of changing society. Mainly because of their newly-forged alliance with striking Liverpool dockers, Earth First!ers and Reclaim the Streets were invited to Bradford MayDay and listened to indulgently.

There was, of course, a lot more to all this than met the eye. The Greenies had been invited because workers turning to them for support instead of ouvrierists that had tail-ended them for months

showed how exhausted and unattractive ouvrierist politics was even to industrial workers. Even Greenies could mobilise numbers, enthusiasm and activity that the ouvrierists could only dream about — and the dockers were mainly interested in allies that could get results, not just give lip service. The ouvrierists needed the Greenies to survive ideologically into the 21st century and, given this, their invite to MayDay '98 can be seen as just another cynical Leftist attempt to resuscitate their exhausted ideology.

It's noteworthy who wasn't invited to MayDay '98 — the Class War Federation the Leeds lot split from and tried to shut down, Anti-Fascist Action who they split from when AFA got wise to their collaboration with local police and MI5 front Searchlight, and any other groups that knew about their collaboration with the State. The entire Northern Anarchist Network had been led by the nose for years by Searchlight asset Paul Bowman into a street war tricked up with local fascists that got all their pics on World In Action; local MPs whining for more secret state repression of 'extremists', Left and Right; and surveillance cameras installed at the 1-in-12 Club compromising everyone attending MayDay '98, amongst other events. Anyone principled enough to point this out was politically isolated and subjected to a vicious whispering campaign, not least using the networks laid down at MayDay '98.

Most involved weren't so naive they didn't know this at the time. They were told. They pressed on with it because they put power before principle. Behind the Leeds lot stood a wealthy and influential anarcho-Leftist network centring on AK Press and Leeds-based Chumbawamba, flush from recently signing to EMI. Both Chumba's Alice Nutter and AK's Dean Plant knew Bowman well, Plant from early-1990s anti-poll tax campaigning. Chumba underwrote the Bradford conference, and the book fair and publicity there were largely down to AK, always keen to rack up another marketplace for their anarcho-wares. Plenty of the participants including RTS and Brighton-based eco-zines *SchNews* and *Do Or Die* were covertly bunged thousands of pounds by Chumba in an at-



— and it being used to legitimise anti-terrorist legislation designed to end open civil disobedience in UK.

## The Moot and After: Wwhat're We Going to do Now?

When Anarchist Federation, Black Flag and Aufheben types went to the winter 2000 EF! Moot to present their fait d'accompli, they left huddled and pasty-faced with it rejected as take-over tactics. EF!ers weren't prepared to accept their dictatorial, manipulative style, their elitist propagandising or their gesture politics demonstrations.

Though it's good to see EF! can defend itself from this sort of attack (assuming future attackers will also need their co-operation), this incident has opened more fundamental questions about what sort of alliances and actions are appropriate as far as EF!ers are concerned in making revolution. People objected when MayDay 2000 took over the representation of a big street party, but must now question why anyone should presume to represent others motivations in participating in such actions (largely to do with immediate, non-ideologised, pleasurable experiences of one sort or another, IMHO). The point is that the majority of participants in any big event are largely passive, voiceless and directed — why this sort of mass action was so attractive to Leftist racketeers in the first place. Similarly, MayDay 2000 were so arbitrary in their selection of date to make it obviously empty symbolic protest, but don't most street parties border on this, protesting abstract 'capitalism', 'globalisation' or which ever buzzword is current (pick which ideologues you want to attract!) rather than specific manifestations where we can make concrete differences?

Most EF!ers at the Moot decided to organise local street parties instead of supporting one centralised in London, not half an answer to the questions raised above. The anarcho-Leftists want

and the new DiY milieu generally. When this led to criticisms of the patronising 'mug and jug' nature of their own ideological proselytising, critics were told there wasn't time to discuss anything more than implementing the pre-decided programme, ie. more of the same quasi-Leninist arrogance. This objection didn't apply to the Neoist Alliance's Fabian 'Fuckwit' Tompsett, who wasted half a meeting absurdly arguing anarchism is fascism without being shut up or kicked out, but then this Holocaust denial apologist and secret state asset is a pal of AK and their Black Flag proxies and is honest enough to openly attack Greenies rather than concealing these sentiments enough to trick 'useful work' out of them. The sum total of all these criticisms was that the tag-line for MayDay 2000 was amended from 'anarchist' to read 'anti-capitalist', a measure of how carefully they were listening to them, especially when these were considered "the same thing". It had to be pointed out to them that anarchists are also anti-State / anti-hierarchical. The obvious deficiencies of MayDay 2000's definition were shown up when overt Leninists tried to jump on their bandwagon. They excluded Workers Power as opportunists (ie. ideological competitors), but didn't exclude themselves for playing exactly the same game at RTS's expense.

The conference is one thing — a cut-rate version of the SWP's utterly unoriginal 'Carnival against Capitalism' May Day conference, but otherwise indistinguishable from it — but the street party's something else. No doubt because Chumba saw street events like J18 and N30 as 'the latest thing', MayDay 2000 announced they'd be staging one on 1st May to the mainstream media, then presented this fait d'accompli to Earth First!ers in the expectation they'd organise it for them. They expect to claim credit for any ensuing disorder whilst all EF!ers will get out of it is cracked heads. There's also the small matter of such disorder achieving little — May 1st being a bank holiday, there's no real target and N30 Euston shows the cops know how to contain and control this stuff now even if there were



tempt to buy the direct action movement. Local Chumba beneficiaries in Leeds were primed with the 'tyranny of structurelessness' ideology the ouvrierists used to supersede rival 'lifestylists' in the late-1980s in the hope that they'd establish formal structures in EF!UK so it could be easily taken over in classic Lefty style. EF!UK's anti-centralising ethic held, so the ouvrierists had to content themselves with secretly funding the cliques their proxies were publicly criticising in an attempt to tie strings to the direct action milieu that way. Certainly, we've never seen any of them critique Chumba or AK since 1998, nor have they published anyone else's criticisms of them.

## How the fed Got to be King of the Hill

The Anarchist Communist Federation have been around since the early-1980s and claim to be the bearers of a British anarchist-communist tradition dating back to Victorian times. If that doesn't sound Lefty enough to you, note how they could never bring themselves to unite with the Class War Federation — also anarchist-communists — just because Class War are livelier and less dogmatic than them. Despite this, they claim they'll work with anyone and the 'must go' hype around MayDay '98 called their bluff and forced them to Bradford. There are ACFers in south Yorkshire in with the Bowman clique who've behaved disgracefully towards other anarchists and even others within the ACF, but we think the Fed's main motive for getting involved was the backstairs influence and dosh, and they were prepared to play a 'long game' to get the lion's share of it.

The Leeds / Bradford 1-in-12 Club lot certainly weren't up to holding the MayDay '98 network together. Their continuing collaboration with the secret state meant they couldn't even deal effectively with fascists on their own doorstep (the street war being make-work for the spooks), and a reputation for continually ma-

nipulating others for ulterior motives tainted them. As they'd said their own ouvrierism was bankrupt but actually believed the only point of the MayDay '98 network was to revitalise ouverierism, meaningful debate in *Smash Hits* was impossible and it collapsed. The ACF were happy to serve as a pipeline for news of Bowman and his cronies' indiscretions and eventually even politically-illiterate AK and Chumba got the point and shifted their patronage to the ACF who'd also — much against their nature and handicapped by their unwieldy and archaic ideology — been striking up informal links with RTS, just to show their patrons they could 'get the goods' that way.

The ACF celebrated their ascendancy by unveiling their new collective identity as the 'Anarchist Federation' at the October '99 Anarchist Bookfair. Lest you mistake this for the non-sectarian, all-inclusiveness the Leeds lot tried to sucker people in with at the start of the MayDay scam, this 'federation' is no more than the ACF under a new name. The ideology hasn't changed, it doesn't encompass more individuals or groups, though now those groups are expected to fall in behind them. The rival Northern Anarchist Network is denounced as "Marxist" even though many are as anarchist-communist as the former ACF (eg. the ex-CWers in Leeds / Bradford) and they appeared perfectly happy to work alongside them for the previous two years. Chumba funding has given the Fed the opportunity to arbitrarily classify some groups as 'in' and others as 'out' regarding their own favour and through it, access to the anarcho-Leftist power complex. There have been other competitors for Chumba's patronage — the wannabes of the Scottish Anarchist Federation centred on the Neoist-controlled Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE — not!) spring to mind — but it was the sect formerly known as the ACF that were sneaky, subservient and rigidly ouvrierist enough to win the Chumba-dumbos and their political advisors at AK over.



## Cracking the Whip: Mayday 2000

Power is nothing unless it is exercised. Also at the 1999 Anarchist Bookfair, the Anarchist Federation first proposed MayDay 2000, a key mark of their ascendancy. Sure enough AK proxies the Solidarity Federation / Black Flag fell in behind them, as did the Class War Federation, no doubt glad to come in from the cold that Chumba's previous favour for their rivals in the North consigned them to.

Tapping into RTS's international anti-globalisation network and putting a reductionistic ouvrierist spin on the anti-capitalist rhetoric RTS put about for J18, MayDay 2000 sent delegates to a post-Seattle N30 meeting in Canada and proposed 1st May as the next world day of action against globalisation. Although International Workers Day is an attractive enough date for people from their ideological tradition and would boost their conference internationally, it was a significant departure from previous world days of action inasmuch as they'd been selected to coincide with dates the WTO were actually meeting. Even this practice had been criticised as giving those outside the country concerned no opportunity to act directly against the WTO meeting, but the choice of May Day eliminated even this direct action component, reducing the whole to empty protest. Later criticised for setting this arbitrary date, MayDay 2000 blamed some trade unionists in Canada for proposing it.

Equally high-handed was their organisation of the conference and call for (futile) mass street action to boost it. A two-day programme was laid down to sell 'ordinary working class people' simple-simon anarchist ideas, then the books (AK's marketeering cut), then the cult heroes in the form of a Q&A panel discussion, then maybe a bit of excitement in the form of street action. Because they didn't have the resources to make all this happen without the assistance of activists from outside their own circle, MayDay 2000 had to make some display of openness — to the old RTSers, EF!ers,