



imminent rebellion

Issue 1 - December 2003

Free To All

Society of Slaves

The media has done a good job. Try telling anyone they're not free, try going as far as telling them we're all effectively slaves, and they will probably think you are an idiot or worse. The media has got far too many of us believing that we're in full control of our own lives and that work is a necessary reality of life despite the obviousness of the truth. And in an ironic twist, leaders around the world constantly tell their people they are free and it seems many really swallow it.

It is my hope that this article will make it clear that we aren't free by any sense of the word, indeed that we are slaves and most of us are exploited, to show exactly why and how this is so. I will, however, leave the possible methods to achieve our liberation for another time.

The day to day reality for the vast majority of us is simply about surviving. Apart from the very rich, we have virtually no choice but to go to work (or school – the primer for work) each day, to work our asses off, get ordered around by bosses and come home to ready ourselves for the next day. Occasionally, a few make it big or get jobs they really enjoy and these are held up as examples to us all that if we only work hard enough we can get there too but for most people life is reduced to simply surviving.

Welcome to capitalism – the dominant economic system imposed on us all. Paraded around by those at the top as being a system based on freedom and choice and, so *they* say, since it bet communism we might as well just be happy with it. But capitalism only guarantees freedom and choice to those at the very top and for most it is the exact opposite – for most it guarantees exploitation and oppression.

Capitalism is not very complicated despite what some may have you believe. Essentially it is a system based on private property. Capitalism is much more than just the market – it is a system where a few who own the most essential things to our survival (like land, resources, factories, information and now even



Protesters against global oppression get gassed at the infamous Seattle WTO protests.

life) put before us a choice: work for them or starve.

The vast majority simply does not have the money to buy land to grow food on, or plantations to build homes let alone to have access to everything else necessary for their survival but a small amount of people do. This situation gives that elite considerable power over everyone else – if we wish to live (ie. use the resources *they* own) we must agree to the terms of that elite. That elite, also known as capitalists (but parasites will do just fine!), force those without to work for them. The capitalists take virtually everything the workers produce for them and give back only a small amount – and in a “free market” (which is so espoused by the corporate media today) that amount is usually only enough for those workers to stay alive and return the next day to work for them again.

In past times, people have been forced into slavery and exploitation through shackles and whips but today it is through the threat of starvation.

The force required to maintain this slavery is provided by the state. The state and capitalism are not separate – they are

essentially the same thing. The state promotes the illusion that it is quite separate from capitalism. Indeed, it promotes the illusion that it is actually there to provide security and guarantee people's rights. But the state and capitalism developed together, with the state enforcing capitalists' ownership of private property from the start. The state has always provided capitalists with the force to allow them to exploit the vast majority of people with its police, its armies and its so-called “justice system.”

Nation states go to great lengths to secure the interests of the capitalists – from repression at home with often bloody consequences to sending droves of its young people into other areas of the world to fight and die. All the while it strives to maintain an image of serving the people, instead of ruling them – the farce that is representative democracy has probably been the most successful of these with its aim being to get people to think they have a real say all the while policies remain essentially unchanged or worsen.

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Editorial

WELCOME to the first issue of *imminent rebellion*. The name *imminent rebellion* is, I think, optimistic that change is coming soon in these desperate times.

We created this 'zine to fill the gap left by *Thr@ll* and *The State Adversary*. I think both of those 'zines provided a great platform for communication and debate amongst New Zealand anarchists (which is currently lacking), and also created an "anarchist presence" within Aotearoa, and we want to continue that with *imminent rebellion*.

imminent rebellion is aimed at New Zealand anarchists but is also designed to be accessible by other non-anarchists. We hope it to start getting the debate going amongst ourselves so that hopefully we can start to get some answers and, of course, translate those answers into change. We would like to see the focus of this 'zine to be on analysis and debate with some news and project updates thrown in their for good measure.

Those who have contributed to putting this 'zine together come from a variety of backgrounds – anarcho-communism, anarcho-feminism, anarcho-syndicalism, radical ecological perspectives and even some primitivist tendencies too – and in the interest of developing productive and meaningful debate *imminent rebellion* will strive to be an open forum to all anarchist and even some broad left perspectives.

For this first issue we decided get right back to basics with an article outlining the core concepts of anarchism and some other introductory articles as well. While future issues will not be as accessible to non-anarchists we decided that this first issue should.

As always, we are looking for donations (in the form of stamps, well-concealed cash or cheques made out to "imminent rebellion"). And unless you're in contact with a major anarchist group (Christchurch, Dunedin or Wellington) and can ensure you'll be able to get your hands on future issues of *imminent rebellion* it's probably a good idea to subscribe – see the inset on the right for more details.

Finally, unlike most starting 'zines that kid themselves that they're going to come out regularly we're not going to promise anything. While we'd like to see *imminent rebellion* come out roughly bimonthly our content is dependant on you so if you want to see us regularly we need you to contribute stories, news, photos and send us letters too. Whilst anything anarchy-related is welcome, next issue we'd like to focus on the condition of the anarchist movement in Aotearoa and what people think are ways forward – so send us your thoughts!

See ya all soon!

- Torrance Hodgson



This Issue's Quote...

Anarchists are opposed to violence...The main plank of anarchism is the removal of violence from human relations. It is life based on the freedom of the individual, without the intervention of the police. For this reason we are enemies of capitalism, which depends on the protection of the police to force workers to allow themselves to be exploited...We are therefore enemies of the State, which is the coercive, violent organization of society.

— **Errico Malatesta**, *Umanita Nova*, August, 25, 1921

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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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The Anarchist Tea Party

"To educate, inspire and motivate."

FROM the 4th to the 7th of December *The Anarchist Tea Party* will be running at Marama-iti, just outside of Wanganui.

The Anarchist Tea Party title is to try and get away from the whole 'conference' thing. Originally it was being called an 'Anarchist Jamboree' (as in the Scouts thing because of all the practical stuff) but we settled for tea party because it gave it an old world feel (Boston Tea Party) and sounded more informal, subversive and fun.

The Anarchist Tea Party is primarily an opportunity to get together, learn from each other and create lasting networks. We want to move away from the strict theory 'stuff' and look more at ourselves/Aotearoa and what we were doing about capitalism.

The Anarchist Tea Party is being held at Marama-iti – a large anarchist space just outside of Wanganui. Being stuck in the middle of nowhere prevents some of the major failings of past conferences where people go off partying and shopping and miss out on heaps plus it means we have to hang out more, especially after hours when the real networking happens.

The Anarchist Tea Party Details:

- Starts on the 4th of December, with the first workshop scheduled for Thursday afternoon, and runs through till the 7th.
- It is situated at Marama-iti, 784 Papaiti Rd (10km up the left bank of the Whanganui River and is a large woolshed on the right-hand side – there'll be a black flag hanging out for you).

• There are also pickups on the 4th from Moutua Gardens, in Wanganui, at 12, 3 and 6pm (the road is hitch-hikeable but slow!).

• Accommodation: The shed is available but mattresses are limited – it's advisable you bring a tent. The property is safe for children and we would love to have them involved. • Amenities include power, water and long drop but no shower.

• Food will be purchased on the day, will be prepared by all of us and will be vegan to allow for all.

• Total cost for the conference is \$30 (but contact us if that's a problem) and that will include food.

Contacts:

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Society of Slaves

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This exploitation has, of course, not gone unnoticed. From the start it has been resisted. Just a few major instances of resistance include the Paris Commune of 1871, the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Spanish Civil War of 1936, the French revolt of 1968 and the countless forces of resistance around the world today trying to stem the tide of globalisation and neo-liberal policies. New Zealand too has



had its share of resistance like the 1951 Waterfront Lockout. But the state and its forces have so far beaten us back each time – the parasites are not willingly going to give up their positions of power.

The aim of these rebellions has always been a free society where there is no exploitation or oppression. The root of the problem is authority and the centralisation of power which allows this exploitation in the first place – and that does not just include capitalism and the state, but patriarchy, racism, homophobia and every other vestige of control. Those rebelling sought and still seek an egalitarian society where free people live as equals and come together voluntarily to meet each others desires – in a word, anarchy.

Anarchy quite literally means “no rulers” and has nothing to do with its negative connotations cooked up by the media. In place of rulers there would be direct control of our own lives. Horizontal, non-authoritarian decision making processes would replace the whims of the parasites. Having being pushed almost into oblivion in modern capitalism, communities would reappear and people within those communities would cater for their own needs, not those of elites. Private property would be replaced with communally owned property used for the needs of all. Police, only being necessary in oppressive and exploitative societies, would cease to exist and other more rehabilitative measures could be employed by

communities to deal with anti-social behaviour. Most importantly, people would not be forced to just survive from day today but would be free to make of their own lives as their desires led them.

As anarchists we continue the struggle for our liberation, for that day when this system will be overthrown. We know that any lasting change that could bring about anarchy would have to be based on popular struggle – a small vanguard leading the rest of society into freedom would be self-defeating and would do nothing but perpetuate authority and the centralisation of power. If we are to be successful our means and ends must be in line with each other – those who use authoritarian means (such as those who seek to create a “workers state”) will be left with nothing but oppression and exploitation. Change must therefore come from the grassroots level. We seek to make people aware of what's going on and what they can do about it and hope that they will resist alongside us. Let us take our lives back from them!

At this stage of history, either...the general population will take control of its own destiny and will concern itself with community interests guided by values of solidarity and sympathy and concern for others or alternately there will be no destiny for anyone to control. - Noam Chomsky

- Torrance Hodgson

Anarchy: A Maori Perspective

BEING Maori, identifying with Mana Maori and believing in the principles of anarchism is a seemingly huge paradox, full of insurmountable contradiction.

Maori who are part of the struggle for Tino Rangatiratanga (Maori sovereignty) see their political and social ideal in the return of Mana Whenua, the control over their own physical (fisheries, land, forests, seas) and intangible (Te Reo Maori, health, justice, beliefs) resources and the working in partnership with the colonial government on issues affecting the nation.

How can this reconcile with the political and social ideals of anarchism, where every person is free to organise themselves and their lifestyle as they please, in co-operation with others and the environment; without oppressive hierarchical or discriminatory structures, especially as the traditional Maori structure of society is hierarchical, patriarchal, oppressive and sexist?

Hapu and iwi were ordered into rangatira (ruling class), tutua (commoners), and taurekareka (slaves). Power was handed down from the chief to his eldest son, although if he was a bad or inadequate leader he could be usurped by one of his younger brothers. Women, if a member of the chief's family (sister, daughter) were accorded the mana of the ruling class, but did not become chiefs. They were used as bartering objects to build stronger alliances with other hapu and iwi. This enforced marriage/slavery often led women to choose suicide as their only option. Women were also prevented from being involved in some tasks because of menstruation, which was considered unclean and capable of rotting vegetable crops and spoiling food.

There are many aspects of traditional Maori culture which work contrary to basic anarchist principles: Maori were a warrior race, who actively sought to invade other communities, killing, brutalising and enslaving the inhabitants, destroying their homes and crops and stealing their possessions.

Yet there are some aspects of Maori culture which are living examples of anarchist co-operation – the concept of whanaunatanga, the extended family, was the basis of all Maori society. The hapu was simply a larger whanau with a leader (chief) and iwi were related hapu to a common ancestor. The whanau was usually made up of three or more generations, who worked and lived together for the good of common existence. Each generational group had a particular role to play, and each role was recognised as equal in value for the good of the whanau.

Adults made up the regular labour force of working the gardens, maintaining the buildings, cooking, making clothes, fishing, hunting, and any other heavy labour work, including war parties. Having and raising children was considered the primary function of the whanau and their care was left mainly to the elders, who were greatly esteemed for their knowledge and life experience.

Everybody took responsibility for the children regardless of who the parents were. This collective responsibility is demonstrated through the language where matua applies to mother, father, aunt and uncle, and tuakana, teina, tungane and tuahine applies to brothers, sisters and cousins.

Overall the whanau and the hapu worked collectively for the benefit of everyone, crops were collectively worked and shared amongst everyone. Fishing and hunting successes were also shared. Each hapu worked for themselves, and traded with neighbouring communities if necessary or desirable.

One of the most important and significant aspects of Maori culture is the relationship of the people to the land. Maori cosmology forms the basic premise of the creation of the world and its people and prescribes the way people must behave and relate to the earth and its resources. Many stories and myths describe exactly how to fish, plant, and catch birds while still respecting environment's need of time and space to recover.

People's relationship with the earth is one of child to parent, where Papatuanuku is revered as the giver of sustenance, provider of life, as well as the receiver of a person's body for protection and comfort at death. Every living thing: plants, trees, animals, and even inanimate things eg. rivers, mountains, waka, wharenuī have a mauri, an essential life force which is respected and valued. Any handling of these things required chants, rituals and expressions of appreciation and concern for its well-being.

This principle of respect and value of the earth is still an essential part of Maori identity and many practices are still maintained, especially with fishing and the collecting of flax and other natural resources for making cloaks, kete etc. This area is one maintained predominantly by Maori women.

Working with our natural resources rather than against them is a basic premise of a successful anarchist society.

A culture is not a static institution but a living, growing response by a self-identified people to their changing environment. But a people whose culture is threatened by imminent

absorption (destruction) will hold steadfastly to its remaining ideals and practices in an effort to protect and preserve itself.

Maori culture was nearly wiped out by colonial invasion. Maori people were decimated by a combination of introduced disease and government sponsored genocide; the Maori population declined by 60% in only 20 years.

The assault against our culture forced Maori who had the knowledge of our cultural ways into staunchly keeping them alive through rigid practice and rejection of change. This 'cultural freeze' is a self-protective response to a threat of destruction and the very real fear of being 'pakehified'.

Maori feminists have struggled for years against a barrage of accusations of 'having gone the Pakeha way' or that feminism is a Pakeha thing and anti-Maori. Yet Maori women continue to struggle not only against white New Zealand patriarchal dominance, but also Maori patriarchal dominance, believing that "unless Maori feminism is harnessed and the sexism of society, including Maori society, challenged, the successful attainment of the goals of Maori development will elude Maoridom".

A society under siege had no room for development, only self-preservation. There is no way Maori culture will change or grow unless guaranteed by white society security from interference or integration.

So, how can this contribute to anarchism's movement towards free, non-hierarchical collective communities? I have already given a few examples of some aspects of Maori culture which relate directly to many anarchist's ideas of anarchist society. There are many more, such as holistic healing and real justice and rehabilitation for victims and offenders.

Many ways of doing things inherent in our culture and which were suppressed by the colonial government and its institutions, correspond with many anarchist principles.

But only through the restoration of Tino Rangatiratanga to Maori people will our culture have the freedom to grow. And only through cultural growth will Maori society be able to discard the oppressive and hierarchical structures of the past and develop into a free and egalitarian society.

- Metiria Turei (Originally printed in 1993 and reprinted with Metiria's consent. Metiria may, however, no longer hold the above views especially considering she is now an MP for the Green Party)

A Brief History of Anarchism

ANARCHISM is a movement that has grown out of peoples' struggle against the tyranny of the state and the oppression of capitalism. This movement was largely eurocentric but spread from Europe as capitalism did to all parts of the world.

Anarchism began in Paris in 1789. The brutalised and poverty stricken workers of Paris rose up and chopped off the heads of the aristocracy to the clack of knitting needles. The anarchists were known as the 'enragés'. They didn't rise up once but continually only to be suppressed by a series of dictators and finally by Napoleon Bonaparte. This was documented by Marge Percy in her factual novel *City of Light City of Darkness*.

As the 19th Century wore on bloody revolutions followed one after another. Countless millions died directly as a result of starvation or deprivation. Characters such as the anarchist Michel Bakunin spent most of their lives jumping barricades or prison walls. Europe was capitalism's first colony but as capitalism went global so too did the resistance. France had a special role in this resistance. Once again the workers of France rose up against the state and capitalism in 1871 to create the Paris Commune. The Paris Commune was only destroyed after an orgy of blood letting by French troops. Sixty thousand people were shot in the streets. The only reason the murder stopped was because the soldiers ran out of bullets and night fell as it did over all of Europe for ten years.

One prominent communard and anarchist at the time was Louise Michael. Deported to a penal colony in Kanaky (New Caledonia), she assisted the Kanaks against the French colonists by cutting telegraph wire and preventing the movement of troops. There is a small museum devoted to her in Kanaky.

Meanwhile the anarchists fought back any way they could. Organised opposition was impossible. Bombs and assassinations, for which the word anarchist later came to be popularly associated with, became common. Not only the rich and powerful of the European elite were targeted but savage prison guards, police officials and employers became victims of anarchist revenge after the commune.

This put the shits up the ruling class. They looked for a way out, a safety valve. Slowly they allowed workers to organise in unions and co-operative societies. Unfortunately for the rich and powerful these organisations were infused and inspired by anarchist militants. Within a few years they were once again taking on the ruling class. These were the years of



The Spanish Civil War of 1936: Pictured are members of the CNT, Spain's largest workers union at the time, arming themselves to fight the fascists.

revolutionary unionism or syndicalism. This movement didn't spread from France as some academics maintain but grew up spontaneously in many countries. It was largely a response to the globalisation of greed. China, Japan, Latin America, the United States, Australia, South Africa and even New Zealand had large and influential anarchist syndicalist movements. Anarchists played a leading role in most of these movements.

In Europe this movement gathered momentum with massive insurrectionary strikes before and after the First World War. The revolutions in Germany and Russia were both defeated and ended in tyranny. In Spain the Spanish anarchists had been preparing for revolution for 60 years. Finally in July 1936 they were able to put the lessons of all these years into practice for three short years. Libertarian or anti-state communism became a reality for half of Spain only to be defeated by the combined forces of Fascism (from the likes of Franco and Hitler) and Stalinism.

The years after 1936 saw the decline of the organised anarchist movement and the rise of Stalinist Communism. State Communism is a stage in capitalist development. The communist states developed the infrastructure necessary for the reintroduction of free market capitalism. This is evident in Russia where the new elite is about to replace the old communist officials. The Chinese communist elite are presently trying to manage the handover as efficiently as possible but will no doubt also fall victim to the new entrepreneurs.

So what happened to the anarchists? Those who survived fascism and state communism began to reorganise. Anarchism began to revive

as an organised movement in the 1960's. This movement culminated in the near revolution of May 1968 once again in France. Faced not with major poverty but instead grinding boredom and a growing sense of powerlessness, millions of workers went on strike and occupied their workplaces while DeGaul was in Germany contemplating a military coup. Once again anarchists played a leading role in this movement along with revolutionary marxists such as the situationists.

The anarchist movement that exists today dates from this era. There has been a continuous movement since that time. The movement is no longer eurocentric – capitalism is now international and so is the resistance.

So what is the point of knowing our anarchist past? Perhaps history has two major lessons. The first is that we only get one chance at revolution and if we don't take that chance we will pay a heavy price. The second is that we better know what we want to replace capitalism with. Anarchism is not inevitable and to use that old anarchist slogan 'Building the new world in the shell of the old' has a new relevance.

Knowing our past is also important because it's ours! It doesn't belong to a corporate brand and isn't a commodity to be bought and sold. It is something that we can identify with. Being aware that the struggles of the past were by people like us, with faults much as our own, is part of a culture even here in Aotearoa. We have a culture of resistance, a revolutionary culture. When we realise this we will be stronger for it.

- *Frank Prebble*

Anarchism and Feminism

THE Women's Liberation Movement has displayed strong libertarian tendencies in ideology and organisation. Much of the way in which we perceive our oppression, and how we organise to fight it has become anarchic in both theory and practice for years. We now need to become consciously aware of the connections between anarchism and feminism, and use the framework for our thoughts and actions in order to be more effective, in order to create a future we sense is possible, we must realise that what we want is not change but total transformation for it is women who now realise that revolution cannot no longer mean the seizure of power or the domination of one group by another – it is domination itself that must be abolished.

How has the Women's Liberation Movement been Anarchic?

Radical feminism states that women are oppressed in a male dominated society. Male dominance is the oldest, most basic form of oppression, and the patriarchy maintains its insidious control over our lives economically through the system of capitalism and politically through the state and its many repressive institutions – the family, the education system, the church, etc. Anarchism calls for the destruction of all forms of hierarchy, and the dissolution of power. Radical feminism takes the analysis one step further because it shows up all forms of hierarchy and leadership for what they really are – oppressive structures of male power and dominance.

Our lives are governed by patterns of dominance and submission, and nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than the nuclear family. As well as being the basic unit of production and consumption for capitalism, the family serves as the main patriarchal tool for authoritarian conditioning and repression. For it is in the family that we learn to obey our fathers which provide a model of all our relationships in society – at school we obey our teachers, at work the boss and in church we obey the patriarchal God. We grow passive and frightened, having well learned the lesson of unquestioning acceptance of the system that holds us in its power. As women, our passivity is doubly reinforced and we are encouraged to dutifully bear our oppression and to silently take all the shit that men pour on us everyday. The basic concept of anarchism is that people take control of their own lives, and begin to actively question their exploitation, attacking it at its root cause. This is happening as women no longer accept their predestined role, and

challenge the patriarchy in all its forms. In attacking all forms of domination and hierarchy, anarchism confronts the authoritarian attitudes within people, and presents an alternative world view based on cooperation and wholeness.

Fundamental to our ideas of oppression and liberation is the fact that the oppressed person is the one who can best understand and articulate her oppression – any women, regardless of her political involvement knows only too well the pain of her experiences as a woman. The revolution for anarchists is the transformation of society by people taking direct control of their lives. We anarchists don't want to liberate people – we want the people to liberate themselves.

The concept “the personal is political” is not new to anarchism. Anarchists have often organised around the realm of daily life, negating the idea of politics being out there and removed. In our small women's consciousness raising groups we came to understand our oppression, our common experience, and to see the connections between our lives and the way society is organised. The tool we used for making these connections was the small, non-hierarchical group. This brings us to the specific details of how the feminist movement has been anarchic in practice.

Practice

In actual practice within the women's movement feminists have had both success and failure in abolishing hierarchy and domination. I believe that women frequently speak and act as intuitive anarchists. That is we approach or verge on a complete denial of patriarchal thought and organisation – our impulses towards collective work and small leaderless groups have been anarchist but in most cases we haven't called them by that name. And that is important because an understanding of feminism as anarchism could springboard women out of reforming and stop gap measures and into a revolutionary confrontation with the basic nature of authoritarian politics.

One of anarchism's most fundamental ideas is that the means should reflect the end, and in the women's movement we have attempted to ensure that our ways of organising were consistent with our ideology. At the basis of our movement we formed small non-hierarchical groups. Through our consciousness-raising groups we began to come out of the isolation which society had forced on us, and to understand our oppression as a

social class. We began to see the connections between male power over all facets of our lives, and the other forms of domination and exploitation which exist in our society.

Learning to work collectively within our groups meant that we began to take control over our own lives, and become autonomous, decision-making individuals. Concerned that our structures were not inimical of the authoritarian patriarchal forms that surround us, we preferred cooperative work, consensus decision-making, rotation of responsibilities and sharing of knowledge, and skills. Using the small group as a starting point our organisational forms have grown from below, rather than been externally imposed. Anarchism implies that political organisation must grow out of people's experience, and be relevant to their needs and this cannot occur if bureaucratic structures are laid down from above. Spontaneous direct action has occurred and the movement is diffuse and varied. Women have been able to initiate and take action on their local scene, while communication networks enable generalised action when needed.

Many of our actions have been the creation of small women oriented projects aimed at providing alternatives to patriarchal institutions, while others have sought to help those women who are victims of male violence (rape crisis centres, women's refuges etc.). Our alternatives (women's communities, bookshops, magazines, music, printing presses etc.) have been ways of challenging the patriarchal state, and living the revolution now by creating embryonic revolutionary forms.

We must not lose sight of our vision for hope is women's most powerful revolutionary tool; it is what we give each other each time we share our lives, our work and our love. It pulls us forward out of self-hatred, and the fatalism which keeps us prisoners in separate cells. If we surrender to depression and despair now we are accepting the inevitability of authoritarian politics and patriarchal domination. And finally, we must be prepared to question everything – even our most basic assumptions.

- Margeret Flaws (Abridged. While this was written at the outset of the feminist movement it is just as relevant today as then considering the women's movement was largely co-opted by authoritarian types shortly after this was written and has, as a result, only gained token and superficial changes.)

Attacking at the Roots

Developing Thorough Analysis and Action in the GE-Free Movement

ON October the 29th, the moratorium on open air genetically engineered crop growing was lifted. Despite widespread popular opposition to the release of GE crops and an active GE-free movement, the government has gone ahead with raising the moratorium.

Most arguments against growing GE crops have been about their safety in our food and our environment – at least these are the arguments that have made it into the mainstream media. While such claims are potentially valid, they don't cut to the root of the issue. The fundamental driving forces pushing for GE crops (and all biotechnology in general) is seldom commented on. I believe that the GE-free movement's close ties with a political party, namely the Greens, and the elitist corporate body that is Greenpeace have played a large part in stifling the development of proper analysis of, and thus action against, the forces at play here.

Action and debate has been mainly consumer-orientated. The dominant objections against GE food have been about its safety and consumer choice. As a result, GE-free activists have lobbied government and supermarket chains to bring in labeling measures while others have pushed for no release until more is known about GE food and its effects. In response to this the government has brought in much more stringent testing by ERMA (Environmental Risks Management Authority) and to allow GE crops into the environment on a case by case basis. The actual effectiveness of ERMA aside, such responses have in part stemmed the tide of what could have been a much larger opposition to genetic modification of our food.

Several cases of more radical action have also taken place but these have been sadly lacking. The first crop trashing in Aotearoa was a Green Party publicity stunt and the only other crop trashing was quickly denounced by the Green Party. With the GE-free movement so closely tied to the Greens this effectively stunted any other radical action.

Being dominated by a political party, a corporate body and middle-class liberals, the GE-free movement's critique has been weak. This critique has totally missed the point that GE food is a brave new development in capitalism. Capitalists, in search of even greater profits (and thus more widespread oppression and exploitation), have been forcefully pushing into the new biotechnology market. Genetically engineered food represents a potentially massive portion of that market.



New patenting laws mean that by making small changes to the underlying genetic code of life capitalist corporations can come to own that life. Plants and crops that could previously be grown by virtually anyone now come under the control of the parasitic class and give them yet another lever with which to exploit us. Already in the United States, virtually every facet of the production process of food is controlled (from the land on which the crops are grown, the machinery used to grow them, the chemicals used and finally the harvested crops) and now this allows corporations to totally control the crops used from the beginning. In areas with less corporate control of the production process, like New Zealand, companies like Monsanto have other tricks up their sleeve: from terminator genes which stop natural seed production (thus putting an end to individuals being able to collect and replant seeds forcing them to buy new seeds straight from the corporations each year) to crops which only work with a specific herbicide (ie. Monsanto crops will only work with Monsanto's "Round-Up").

Effectively this corporate control of one of the very essences of life – food – will result in further centralisation of wealth, the dispossession of peasant farmers from their land and just basically the furthering of capitalist control over all of us.

We should not confine our demands to the limits put on us by capitalism. Of course, to dig deeper means we have to become independent of the Green Party and Greenpeace because a more holistic critique of GE food

ultimately involves a critique of both of them. While there are already many with such a critique they are sidelined by those dominating the movement (the Green Party and Greenpeace).

Ultimately the GE-free movement needs to question the exploitative nature of capitalism itself, particularly the issue of private property. The crux is that the genetic makeup of food and life needs to be owned by everyone (and by everyone I don't mean the state either), not to be owned for the profit of a few. Of course, this is only possible under a genuine classless (and therefore stateless) society where land and the "fruits of the earth" are owned communally by all. We have to get rid of capitalism if we are going to avoid the dangers of GE.

The GE issue is a vital issue. It shows the stark reality of life under modern capitalism: we get unsafe food imposed on us just because capitalists have found a new market to extend their global control of us and life in general. If we are to continue our opposition to GE we must discard those things that limit us and not waste our time with the superficial, and ultimately defeating, games of the Green Party and Greenpeace. To move forward we have to make it blatantly obvious the forces at work here, how they tie in with the bigger picture (ie. capitalism) and then go on to specifically target them with direct action. Only then can we hope to make any substantial gains.

- Torrance Hodgson (Based extensively on the article Radicals or Reformists by Toby Boraman)

ARE THE BOSSES INDISPENSABLE?

