

UNDERCURRENTS

The Magazine of Radical Alternatives and Community Technology

Xmas without Television



TELEVISION is one of the most pervasive and time-consuming forms of modern technology. Yet, unlike nuclear power, microprocessors or supersonic transports, television has seldom been the object of action or even of serious analysis by activists working towards greater democracy and self-management.

Jerry Mander in his book *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*¹ has gone a long way towards rectifying this lack of analysis².

Mander built himself a conventional, but highly successful, career in advertising. Then things began to change for him. In the late 1960s, in San Francisco, he began to be called upon as a media advisor by protest groups. Then he was hired by the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth and other groups to write advertisements about ecological issues. The response of the conventional clients of his agency to these ecological advertisements and his own perception of the results of these efforts, led Mander to leave advertising and begin his investigation into the effects of television.

Mander's four arguments against television are:

1. that television reinforces the trend towards living in an artificial environment, cut off from direct knowledge of the world and susceptible to the implantation of arbitrary realities;
2. that television is technologically and economically suited to domination by corporate giants;
3. that television produces neuro-physiological effects which are probably unhealthy and which condition people to accept autocratic control;
4. that television technology is inherently more able to convey some types of information than others—and it is at its most effective when transmitting simplified linear messages, especially advertising.

These are criticisms of the technology of TV, and should not be hard to digest for readers familiar with previous critiques of technology³.

Mander states that 'Most Americans, whether on the political left, centre or right, will argue that technology is neutral, that any technology is merely

Just imagine: Christmas without The Sound of Music, Walt Disney, Larry Grayson or the Queen. But would television be any better if the programmes were less imbecilic? Jerry Mander thinks not. He argues

Life Without

a benign instrument, a tool, and depending upon the hands into which it falls, it may be used one way or another'. The central point of his book, he says, is that this belief, about television as well as other technologies, is 'totally wrong'.

It does not require long memory to remember the days when it was commonly believed that nuclear power plants, and even nuclear weapons, were intrinsically 'neutral'. Even today a common attitude to nuclear power is that it would be acceptable if it were made safer, with higher standards for reactor safety, stricter safeguards against proliferation and so forth. A similar idea—still adhered to by some socialist groups—is that nuclear power is dangerous under capitalism but all right under workers' control.

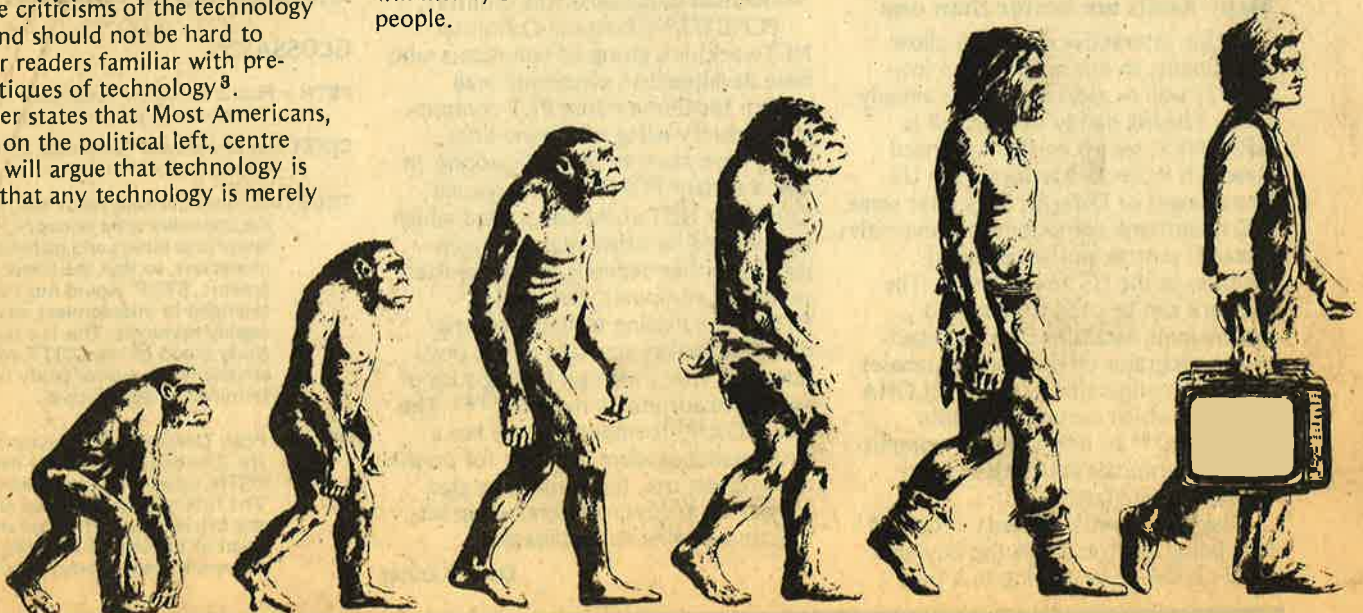
The same attitudes are even more common when it comes to television. The suggested reforms are many: promote better programming, reduce television's emphasis on violence, reduce x-ray emissions from television sets, ban offensive advertising, institute provisions for equal time for alternative viewpoints, promote community access television. But if television technology is indeed *intrinsically* biased—towards creation of artificial realities, centralised control, inducing passive behaviour and communicating simple linear messages—such reforms will merely serve to hook even more people.

Mander says that 'television, for the most part, cannot possibly yield to reform'. Hence, he argues that television should be *eliminated*. This may sound strange and unreal. But it was not so long ago that the idea of eliminating nuclear power or supersonic transports was just as strange. One difference is that television is well and truly institutionalised, like automobiles and nuclear weapons but unlike nuclear power and SSTs. But, as Mander concludes his book, we must 'purge from our minds the idea that just because television exists, we cannot get rid of it'.

I will not go into the details of Mander's arguments against television here, since he does that quite well in his book. But I will assume that the question of the role of television in society should be an important one for activists working towards local self-management—even if they do not fully subscribe to all of Mander's arguments and conclusions. Mander describes *why* television should be eliminated, but not *how* this might be accomplished.

Campaigning against television

There are several issues around which campaigns against television might be orientated. The comparison



that TV is *inherently* unreal, unhealthy, simplistic and authoritarian: it should simply be *abolished*. Brian Martin has been looking at what an anti-television campaign would mean.

Television.....?

between television and nuclear power is a useful one. I make it not because of any special similarity between these two technologies, but because many people have been involved in campaigns against nuclear power and are familiar with the issues and arguments.

Environmental effects. In the case of nuclear power, environmental and health hazards have been the basis for a large component of public concern. Yet many who are familiar with the issues would agree that non-environmental hazards—such as proliferation of nuclear weapons capability, terrorism, and threats to civil liberties—are much more important in a fundamental sense. It may be that environmental objections have obtained currency precisely for the reason that they do not seem to be political. The *apparently* apolitical objection thus serves as a basis for political action about a technology which does indeed have immense political effects.

Mander devotes more space to his argument 3, which is concerned with the effects of television on the human being, than to any other argument. One of the important points he makes is that there is an extreme scarcity of studies on the neurophysiological effects of television. Another problem in

documenting any health hazards is the subtlety of the effects. But the same applies to most of the health effects arising from nuclear power. A more serious limitation in using health effects as a basis for opposing television is that the hazards *seem* to be accepted voluntarily. Individual users purchase and personally interact with television technology, like automobiles but unlike nuclear power. This makes it harder to realise, at least for the purposes of political action, that the technology is being promoted by and selectively adapted for the purposes of powerful vested interests.

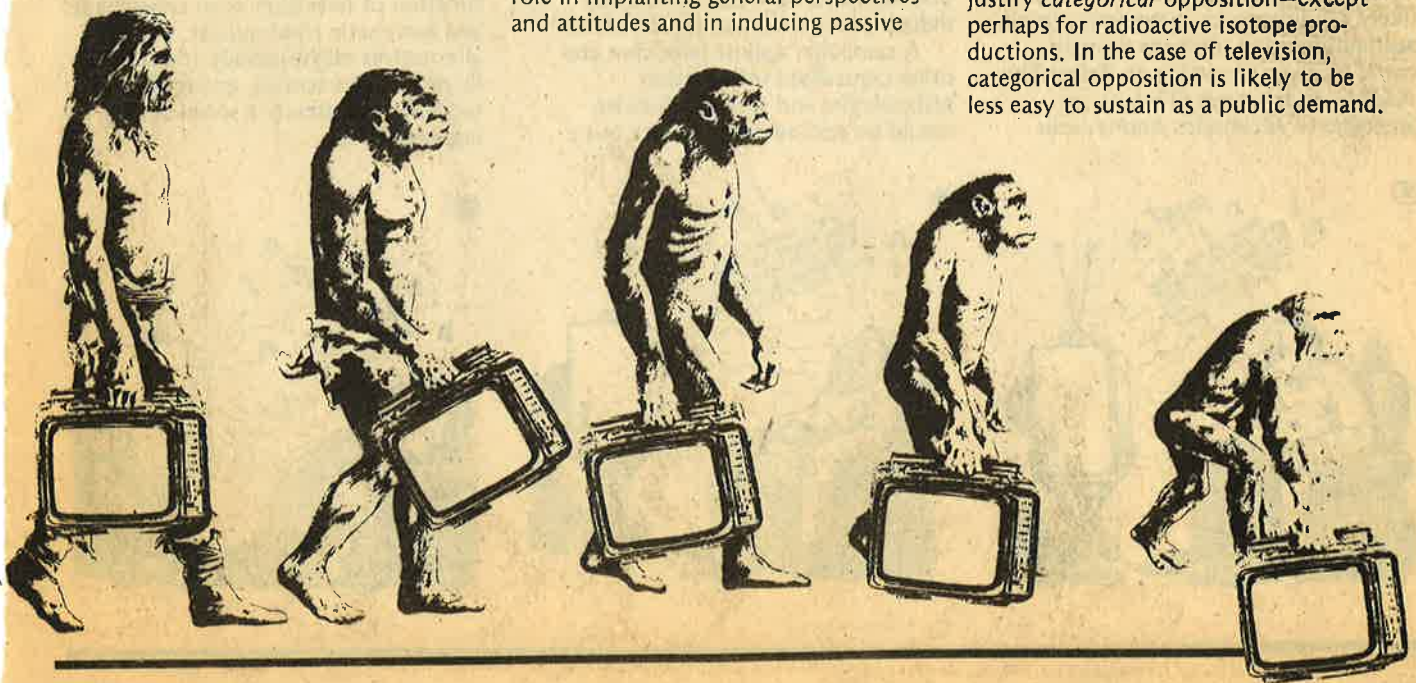
Use by elites. Centralised political and economic control is characteristic equally of nuclear power and of television. Challenges mounted against either of these technologies would also be a threat to this centralised control. In the case of nuclear power and other large-scale energy technologies, a primary factor is the sheer scale of economic investment and the enormity of the infrastructure involved in electricity grids, production facilities, energy-using equipment, urban planning and the like. Communication technologies do not (yet) rival this level of economic and structural investment. On the other hand, television is more deeply enmeshed in social and psychological patterns throughout the community, through its role in implanting general perspectives and attitudes and in inducing passive

behaviour. Thus television is useful to elite groups more through its impact on people's ways of thinking and perceiving than through any direct economic influence.

In fighting nuclear power, effective opposition has been organised relatively straightforwardly around environmental, political and economic issues, including the advocacy of alternatives. But a struggle against television may have to base its efforts on a rather deeper understanding of the psychological and ideological aspects of social control and the individual's adaptation to society.

Selective usefulness. By its very nature (high potential danger, large scale, high capital cost and high complexity) nuclear power is unsuited for direct control by workers or the community. Short of developing a hypothetical clean, simple, cheap, small-scale community reactor, there seems no way to avoid this. The technology of television, on the other hand, has a greater *potential* as a self-managed community resource. Television sets, broadcasting facilities and programmes could, conceivably, be produced under conditions of worker and community control. Indeed, with cheap video equipment and increasing use of video cassettes, some of these possibilities seem to be coming nearer. However, it is not clear that these alternatives yet provide much of a threat to centralised broadcasting.

These points suggest that a campaign against television would need to consider carefully the desirability or otherwise of possibilities such as community access television. Similar problems arise in assessing some energy technologies, such as tidal power or solar power towers. In the case of nuclear technology, it is possible to justify *categorical* opposition—except perhaps for radioactive isotope productions. In the case of television, categorical opposition is likely to be less easy to sustain as a public demand.



Effects on activists. Nuclear power in its role as a technology does not have a great direct effect on activists, except perhaps in causing a few cancers. (Nuclear power does of course give rise to a great deal of *activism*, and to efforts by corporations and the state to oppose this activism.)

Television, on the other hand, has a great direct impact on activists and on activism in general. Most activists—though probably a smaller percentage than the general populace—watch television some of the time. More importantly, the general level of social activism is almost certainly reduced, being displaced by the millions of person-hours spent before television screens each day. Then there are the physiological and psychological effects of television, so well described by Mander, which combine to induce passivity, to reduce touch with reality and to increase cravings for immediate stimuli and results. These effects could hardly be better designed to inhibit efforts towards long-term political organising at the grass-roots.

If a drug is defined, very generally, as an artificial cause of change in physiological or psychological functioning, television is one of modern society's most pervasive and addictive drugs. Marie Winn⁴ cites studies and presents many examples to show that breaking the television habit almost uniformly leads to improvements in individual and group well-being. Yet these very studies and examples also testify to the extreme difficulty of permanently kicking the habit.

This suggests that a campaign against television must clearly address the need to break the television viewing habit. Those who have succeeded in doing this are prime candidates for an anti-television movement, just as cyclists are likely candidates for campaigns against automobilisation. Perhaps thought could be given to setting up Television Addicts Anonymous (TVAA), an analogue to Alcoholics Anonymous



TV makes people SICK!!
 TV ENSLAVES you and SAPS ALL YOUR CREATIVE ENERGY!
 TV MAKES YOU LIKE DOPE!
 TV is obviously a "VAST WASTELAND" This is common knowledge.
 TV is just plain BAD for you physically, mentally, and spiritually. Watching it will cause you great unhappiness in life and you're more than likely to get CANCER!!

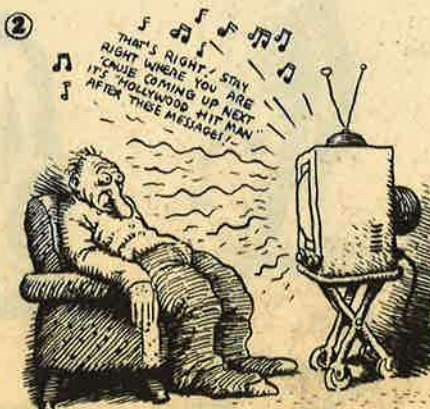
and Synanon. (Unfortunately, however, such organisations are not noted as being prime recruiting grounds for participants in other social movements.)

Alternatives. The anti-nuclear power movement began, and for some years was, primarily an *opposition* movement, vocally against nuclear power but with little comment about alternatives. This exclusively negative stance has often been criticised by both supporters and opponents of the movement. But this situation did not last. For some years, well researched and thought out alternatives have been advocated, involving varying proportions of conservation, renewable energy technologies and social and institutional changes. Groups such as Environmentalists for Full Employment are forging links between environmentalists and workers. These developments have put the nuclear industry very much on the defensive.

A campaign against television and other centralised information technologies and systems likewise would be well advised to work out a

clear alternative. This might involve local newspapers, local presses, local radio broadcasting, CB radio, telephone networks, courier information distribution systems, workplace or community meetings and public notice boards. Planning and managing local information systems might be done by groups of volunteers, by groups with elected or rotating membership, or by groups chosen randomly (like the jury system). The alternatives certainly would involve adapting and creating communication technologies for local and individual needs. And, of course, the alternative would need to provide a clear threat to prevailing systems of centrally controlled and manipulated media.

Some attention should also be paid to providing alternatives for the function of television as an anaesthetic and automatic child-minder. Such alternatives might include communal living, drop-in centres, and more sociable and attractive social action organisations.



Campaigning without television

In the meantime, activists in all movements need to consider carefully their relation to television. Here are some suggestions that seem to me to follow from what Mander has argued.

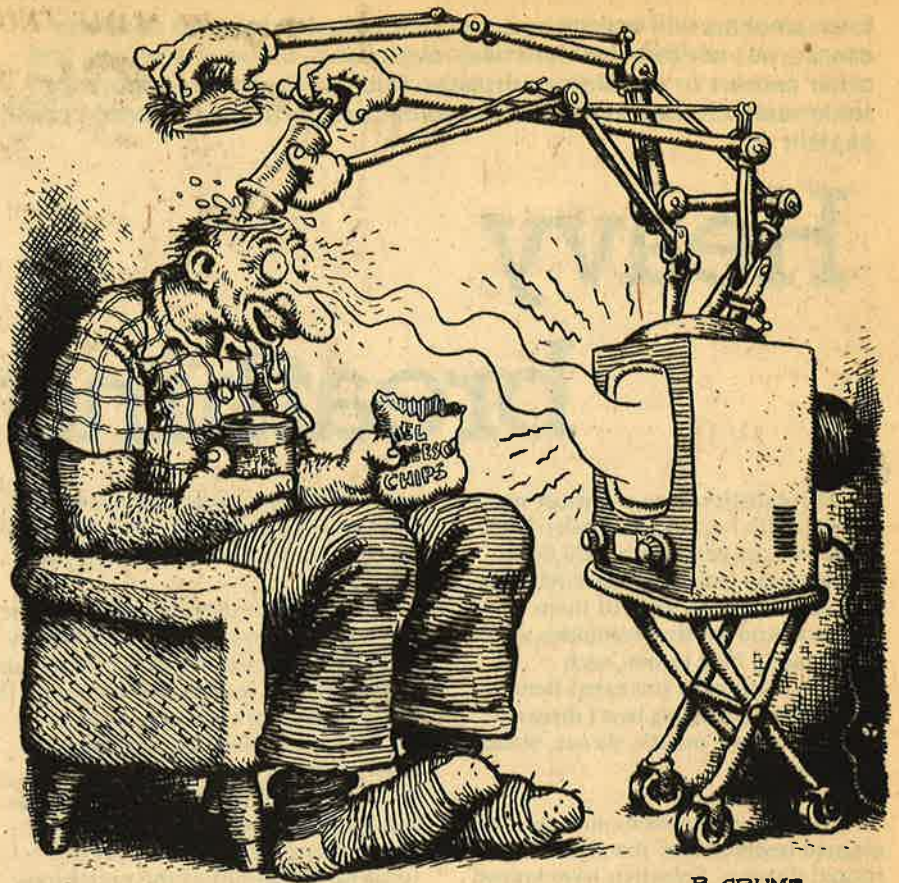
1. Individuals should watch television as little as possible. If there are significant numbers of programmes considered important by activist groups—such as daily news programmes—perhaps one or two members, rotated frequently, could be assigned the task (or pleasure?) of viewing them.

2. Television should not be used for getting one's message across. For most small grass-roots organisations this is not possible anyway. But for rich environmental organisations, some unions, and political parties, there is often a pressure to try to compete in getting one's message across on television. Completely avoiding television advertising and refusing to compete can help discredit television as a balanced medium. It might be that such a policy would lead eventually, in the manner of co-option, to offers of free time. But in any case, funds would be released for alternative modes of communication which are less inherently biased.

3. The value of publicity-seeking—demonstrations, stunts, scaremongering, contrived stories—should be carefully scrutinised in the light of television's inherent limitations. The alternatives—patient grass-roots organising, collective working out of strategies, building up local bases of support and the like—should be considered on their merits, independent of publicity value.

4. Alternative communication networks, and their relation to the group's goals, should be used whenever possible. In using television, a few people do something and many people watch. In moving towards a self-managed society, the aim should be to attain just the opposite result.

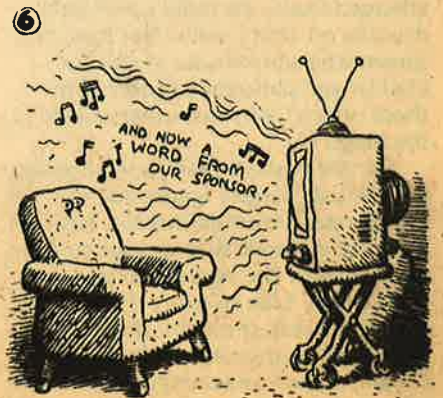
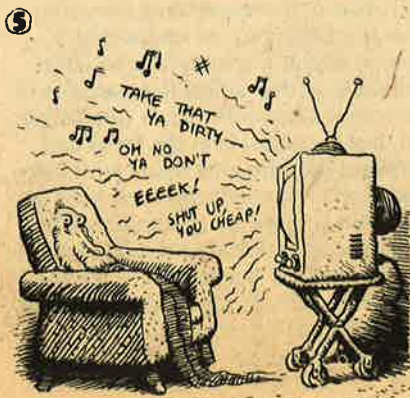
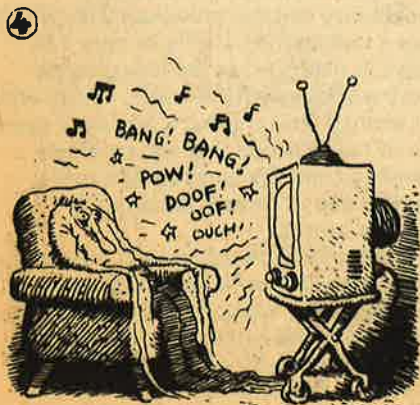
Brian Martin



R. CRUMB

Notes

1. Jerry Mander, *Four arguments for the elimination of television* (New York: William Morrow, 1978, and New English Library, London 1980).
2. Some other perspectives on television and media in general are given by Robert Cirino, *Don't blame the people: how the news media use bias, distortion and censorship to manipulate public opinion* (Los Angeles: Diversity Press; 1971), Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *The Consciousness industry: on literature, politics and the media* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); Alan Swingewood, *The myth of mass culture* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Raymond Williams, *Television: technology and cultural form* (London: Fontana, 1974).
3. David Dickson, *Alternative technology and the politics of technical change* (London: Fontana, 1974). Godfrey Boyle, Peter Harper and the editors of *Undercurrents* (eds.), *Radical Technology* (London: Wildwood House, 1976).
4. Marie Winn, *The plug-in-drug* (New York: Viking, 1977).



Letters

IN DEFENCE OF TELEVISION

I have been reading UC for a long time now, and I find myself in agreement with a high proportion of the articles which appear in it. Occasionally, however, an article appears which makes me despair for the future of radical dissent in this country: such an article was *Life Without Television?* (UC43).

Forgive me if I am wrong but I had always understood that the ultimate aim of radical dissent was to achieve a freer and more peaceful society. Does it really have to be spelt out to Jerry Mander that freedom springs from increased knowledge, and that increased knowledge is dependent on open channels of communication? To speak of "eliminating" television is about as enlightened as burning books written by people whose opinions differ from our own (as well as being completely unworkable in practice in anything other than a totalitarian state).

I am not so naive as to believe that all is well in television: at least 90% of the material broadcast is designed to induce stupor, obedience to and acceptance of the status quo via escapist fantasy; certain allegedly impartial documentaries are deliberately biased to misinform the public. However, as someone with five and a half years of experience working in a busy public library, I can assure you that by far the most popular books are those which cater for escapist fantasies (e.g. Collins Crime Club mysteries). On this basis should books be banned? of course not.

The book has the potential to liberate individuals instead of continuing to enslave them, because certain people are at work in the medium of print who care about freedom. In the same way, people are working within the BBC and ITV who care too. Such people should be given every encouragement by the radical community at large: without them, alternative ideas stand less chance of reaching a wider public. Boycotting such a powerful medium is only cutting off one's nose to spite one's face, and helps the ideals of the status quo to pass unchallenged.

In conclusion, I believe that television is a neutral, benign instrument, and that comparisons with narcotics or with nuclear weapons are so absurd as to be hilarious. Surely our job is to make the medium work not only for a certain segment of the community as at present, but for all of it.

Stephen D. Morgan

"Eddystone",
167, Sandy Lane,
Upton,
Poole,
Dorset

CHEVIOT HILLS — BENEATH THE SURFACE

I was puzzled by the reference in your news piece "Spot the Radical" (UC 43) to the Cheviot Hills Inquiry. You say it was "dominated by the Ramblers Association and countryside groups". If you mean they are the groups rich enough to be able to play the inquiry game and naive enough to want to, then I suppose they dominated jointly with Northumberland County Council and the Cheviot Defence Action Group which also had lawyers.

Tyneside Anti-Nuclear Campaign boycotted the inquiry because it believed that to participate was to lend credibility to a total farce. Anyone who drew conclusions about the inquiry from only odd days would have missed the TANC, FOE and other groups' first day picket, the spontaneous disruption and song (by "other groups"), and the leafletting, three separate occasions when the inquiry was disrupted by "invisible radiators" four of whom were arrested and the last day wreath laying ceremony in the snow. They will also have missed street theatre at the Cheviot rally and in Newcastle emphasising that the inquiry is a farce, and a documentary by Ian Breach.

Nationally the press have emphasised the "country folk of Northumberland who want to be left in peace" but locally other views are being heard. TANC believes that not to participate in the inquiry was the right course. We are trying to communicate our experiences so that hopefully the next inquiry has a tougher time than the Cheviots inquiry.

If UC does not notice the grass roots campaigning that is a feature of anti-nuclear groups in Newcastle then other groups might be discouraged from "alternative responses" by the assumption that only the visible face of the inquiry counts.

Jane Gifford (TANC)

6 Summerhill Terrace,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

We would like to carry more news of grass-root campaigns than we do. However, given our limited resources and our inevitable London blinkers, we rely on groups like TANC taking the initiative and sending us reports of their activities, with a black and white photo if possible.

THE TEACHERS AND CLICHES

We are aware that it is extremely difficult for you or your correspondent Rose Manson (UC43) to grasp easily our eccentric views. Rose Manson's total experience of us was during a crowded Alternative Communities Movement meeting, your own experience of us even less, comprising hearsay and prejudice.

We are NOT right wing or left wing. Unlike both yourselves and

your correspondent, we do NOT divide the world simplistically. You with your softy left world view are thus always forced to categorise anyone whom you cannot understand (you do NOT even understand us well enough to "disagree" with us) as "reactionary" or the like.

It takes us several years to TEACH people to think, rather than to react in simple cliches as with your correspondent: e.g. "left wing socialists", "the liberals", "the working class", "christians", "CND", "the trade unions", "the upper class".

We concern ourselves with INDIVIDUAL people, NOT CATEGORIES. Unfortunately to think thus takes work; work which the soft left will NOT apply — the slogans are an easier route than thought.

As for the Alternative Communities Movement being out of the "mainstream". We receive some thousands of enquiries each year and NOT just from the oh so narrow milieu of what you wish to label "the mainstream": I suggest that you look at the real world beyond the two or three unstable, disorganised, inward-looking communines who claim to be the "mainstream" of the "commune movement". We do NOT make any such claim but we do offer by far the most efficient source of information on comunines in this country and probably worldwide. Perhaps you would prefer to ignore mere facts in your pursuit of rationalising your prejudices.

As for our own eccentricity, we run one of the most effective non-marriage based, non-religious comunines in the world. We have built this from scratch while all around us similar efforts flounder. Again we prefer to let the facts "speak" louder than words or mere theory.

Kevin of The Teachers

18, Garth Road,
Bangor,
Gwynedd

OBSESSED WITH OBSESSION?

About the article on deprogramming in UC40:

How important are all these apparently nutty new cults like the Moonies? Obviously they seem to suck in people who want to be told what to do: probably, they also re-inforce this desire with conditioning techniques. But there are older organisations which also suck in such people, like the Pope's and the evangelical Christians! One can hear in the so-called "mainstream" Christians exactly the same kind of blind certainty one gets from Moonies, Hare Krishnaites and some kinds of Marxists.

But, more disturbingly, one can also notice it in rail freaks arguing that the traditional steam engine is "really" more efficient than a diesel engine, also in wind power enthusiasts and followers of any other human activity. I have even seen it in Boy Scouts.

The problem is that people are liable to turn almost any activity into a religion. Why is this a problem? i.e. what is a religion in this sense?

The problem is that a person in this state is unbalanced in his development. I suspect that this is what the traditional eastern teachings are really about. What they call for is balanced development without obsession. From this point of view almost everyone is a sort of cultist (including the psychiatrists, of course, but because they are ordinary human beings).

I also suspect that this is the real reason why anarchism, cooperation, free association and so on don't become the normal way of behaving; not because there is a repressive state outside but because there is a state of unfreedom inside most people. Some choose the scientologists to give them orders, others the Moonies, others the ordinary processes of the society.

In the past ex-communists used to become Catholics. Some became fascists. No doubt quite often ex-Moonies become attached to some other similar organisation. One may also note that most obsessed people hate other people's obsessions. But what we have to do is avoid obsession as such.

George Matthews

29, Brookside Road,
Wimborne,
Dorset BH21 2BL

REALITY AND THE EIGHTIES

After re-reading my own article in UC42 much improved after re-writing by Comrade Hutton Squire, I happened to notice an article by Geoff Wright modestly entitled *Manifesto for the Eighties*.

It strikes me as a stream of personal prejudice and wishful thinking happily unaware of either reality or logic.

Just to take one sentence: "The British Labour Party has passed some appalling legislation influenced by the profoundly authoritarian and puritanical nature of traditional Marxism." Well, for a start the Labour Party has never been, is not and I hope never will be, a Marxist organisation. There is an assortment of people who call themselves "Marxist" in the Party but they are very much in a minority. What do you want anyway, Geoff, a McCarthyite purge?

I have always gone on the theory that anyone who claims to have read more than half a dozen pages of Marx continuously without falling asleep is probably lying.

What is this "appalling legislation" that Geoff Wright refers to anyway? The National Health Service? Social Security? Comprehensive schools? The Sex Discrimination Act? The Employment Protection Act?

May I suggest that either Geoff Wright is specific when he makes such accusations of that he

Letters

T.V. REALITY

In my article "Life without television?" (UC43) I outlined some of the key ideas in Jerry Mander's book *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, in particular the role of television in creating artificial realities, inducing passivity, and communicating in a one-directional manner in the interests of powerful groups in society. I then went on to compare the characteristics of television, as a technology, with those of nuclear power, and to spell out some implications for activists.

Stephen D. Morgan in his letter (UC44) says that "television is a neutral, benign instrument". It is surprising to learn that a long-time reader of UC can say that any form of technology, or indeed any social institution, is neutral.

Ten years ago most people thought that the technology of nuclear power was neutral and that what mattered was how it was used. The anti-nuclear power movement has alerted people to the tendencies towards centralised political and economic control inherent in nuclear power technology.

Ivan Illich, among others, has challenged the idea that schooling, medicine, or transport systems are neutral. Neither can science, law or bureaucracies be considered neutral.

Feminists and other have challenged the 'neutrality' of centralist and hierarchical organisational forms as a basis for radical social change.

Few today still argue that nuclear weapons are neutral, and that support should be given to the 'socialist bomb'. Most people would support total elimination of nuclear bombs, if this were possible, in spite of possible benefits from them such as blasting harbours or diverting asteroids.

The important question is whether a technology or social institution can be used to support democracy, participation and self-management, or whether the very nature of the technology or social institution lends it to the purposes of exploitation, centralised control and alienation. In the latter cases good intentions — such as those of the scientists who in the 1940s designed nuclear weapons and in the 1950s promoted nuclear power — will be for naught.

Television is not unique in its service to powerful interests and its inducement of passivity. These characteristics are shared to some extent by film, radio and mass spectator sports, for example. Of course there is no sharp dividing line between 'convivial technology' and

'repressive technology'. But any technology such as television which has such an enormous impact and which so clearly induces passivity surely deserves close scrutiny by social change activists.

It is not a simple matter of deciding whether or not to 'boycott' television. Instead, assessment (explicit or implicit) of the actual and potential role of television influences how action campaigns are organised, what sort of demands are made, and how new members are obtained. For these and other reasons, Jerry Mander's views deserve attention.

But you won't see him on television.

Brian Martin

Department of Applied Mathematics,
Faculty of Science
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

NO CARS/NO NUKES

Both you and *Spare Rib* have recently helped someone promote a postcard which is of a big American car with a 'NO NUKES' numberplate. Personally I'm against the private motor car and for free and improved public transport, which I think is a winnable objective if taken up by the right kind of feminist/old and young people's/community and transport workers' coalitions.

If I take a knife and walk down the street saying 'get out of my way or I'll kill you!', I'll be locked up. Yet cars impose a similar threat and anxiety to us all. We won't get rid of nukes unless we oppose every facet of patriarchal-capitalist imperialism, including cars (with or without 'No Nukes' signs!).

Keith Motherson

3 Jordanston Cottages,
Nr Fishguard,
Dyfed,
Cymru

CO-OPS AND WOMEN

Anna Whyatt (UC46) has her facts wrong. There are ten worker co-operative members of the SCDC Committee and the regular attenders often send women representatives. Our Vice-chairperson and convenor of the finance sub-committee this year is a woman. The representative from one of our sponsoring bodies (the Workers Education Association) is a woman and she was one of two woman founder members of the SCDC.

Yours sincerely,
John H. Pearce,
Chairman

Scottish Co-operatives
Development Committee Ltd,
100 Morrison St,
Glasgow

SPANNER IN THE WORKS

When women move in 'men's territories', be it paid work, technology, or decision-making, our world is effectively enlarged, and we (usually) all gain. The articles in UC46 (*Women in Co-ops*) are a good case in point: intelligent observations, well written.

But oh! the illustrations. The writers show every sign of working hard to make real changes in the real world; the artists, of playing at it.

There are men I'd like to share some of this issue's contents with, that I won't, because they wouldn't look at more than the cover illustration. It's most painfully obvious that the artist has no first-hand experience with the angles of adjustable wrenches, the dimensions of toolboxes and hammers, or the existence of nail aprons. The syndrome continues throughout: the lop-sided two-woman saw on page 9 will surely snag the sawyers' (un-tied-back or braided) hair; the centre spread's hand-scripted captions show no awareness that fine-pointed pens are necessary for legible reproduction, and so on.

I don't bring this up to criticize the individuals who drew these sketches. We all have a lot to learn, and men just happen to have a cultural headstart with tools. Naytheless, the entire UC editorial collective bears responsibility for allowing these clumsinesses to pass into print: is there anyone techn(olog)ically competent left over there?

Peace,

Pierce Butler

Natchez,
Mississippi

VEGGIES AGAINST NAZIS

I don't know what A. Harris means by "This sort of thing went out ten years ago". Apartheid in S.A. certainly

didn't "go out" ten years ago. Does s/he mean "went out of fashion" — i.e., as if concern over human suffering is a matter of passing trends? If so, I couldn't care less. I still like to listen to Beatle records, don't you know!

Certainly oppression and exploitation doesn't stop short at S.A. It exists everywhere. In asking for UC readers' help on this particular issue I don't see that I in any way implied that other issues are not important also.

The question that A. Harris puts to veggies is one that most of us probably come to sooner or later. I certainly have — and I haven't yet found the answer. The fact that we can't always live up to our ideals does not mean that we should modify them (but perhaps *having* ideals at all isn't modish enough for A. Harris's liking). We should simply do whatever we can to live up to them — admitting failure when appropriate and trying again (regrets and guilt-feelings are, of course, counter-productive).

I don't "preen myself" because I'm a veggie — how could I? That's a load of bollix. I'm a veggie because I don't eat meat — and I don't eat meat because I don't *want* to. It's my choice, and I don't see why people should assume or imply that it's some kind of an ego trip. You can eat meat if you want to (and all the chemical crap that goes with it — but not in my house, okay!) — that's *your* choice (incidentally, I only found out recently that Herr Hitler was a veggie — so what? Does that make me a nazi?).

One final and unrelated point, about my letter in UC45. The letter referred to from PN was not *in* PN but *from* PN to me personally, which will explain why no PN readers will be able to find it in their copies.

Love, peace and freedom,

Nick Godwin

Eyemouth
Berwickshire
Scotland

