

MANCHESTER

a zine compilation
from the DIY/grassroots
bike gathering,
APRIL 2011.



1.



nut
ner
ustainable race
ring
aring race
fork crown race



by nab -
pedaler's

6/85


Bikes have been on my ~~mind~~ lots. I've been riding to Stockholm so I've been on my ~~bike~~ lots so when I've stopped riding I've spoken to people about bikes, about how little they cost ~~or~~ ~~or~~ so they don't need to be elite.

I'm part of a group called Pedaler's Arms and we ~~help~~ people fix-up their own bikes. We don't expect them to learn to become a mechanic but instead feel ~~powerful~~ by doing some DIY (or O.I.T. ~~system~~) and feeling in control of their transport. This leads us into loads of fun politics about how to deal with race & gender & class issues which normally hangin out with my more homogeneous friends I only think about rather than act on. Lot of ~~anarchist~~ type stuff isn't as community building as having an open space ~~tho~~ which is used by a wide range of people. Then all we need to do is make our little space work the way we want the world to work, move into our space and ~~long~~ we can live in utopia... well not really.


My point is I ~~start~~ bikes as a tool for doing politics and a tool for moving me around.

Finally, on the topic I started with - a long bike ride - get out there & do it, meet some other people share experiences and give yourself time to slow down as when your riding your lucky ~~one~~ and for once have no pressures.







Vice grip
Consequently adjustment



Allen keys
(Each one good)



Screwdrivers
(Flat & Phillips)



Adjustable
Screwdriver wrench

HOW TO DO A PROPER TUNE-UP!

First: inspect your bicycle. Check the frame for breaks or cracks, note items that need replacement, adjustment or repair. This will give you an overall sense of the bike, how much work it is worth, and what parts you will need to do the tune up well.

- WHEELS**
 - remove front and rear wheel, inspect them, check for straightness, holes in tire or tubes, smoothness of axles, be sure axle nuts or quick releases are functioning well.
 - adjust axles (for multi speed rear wheels this will require removing the freewheel)
 - replace worn tubes and valves
 - true wheels
 - put freewheel (then put back onto rear wheel)
- BEARING SYSTEMS**

it is easier to adjust these things with the wheels off the bike, this part will entail either greasing and adjusting the system (an adjustment), or taking the whole thing apart, cleaning or replacing parts and reassembling with fresh grease (an overhaul), do what is necessary or go all the way just for fun.

 - adjust and grease bottom bracket
 - adjust and grease the headset

...replace wheels now... (single speeds - check for good chain tension)
- CABLES**

all cables should be inspected for broken housing or frayed cables. If they are broken or cracked or frayed they should be replaced, if not a simple lube (with something like Triflow dry lube) will be great, adjust them properly for smooth braking and shifting.

 - lube brake cables
 - adjust brakes
 - lube gear cables
 - adjust front and rear derailleurs

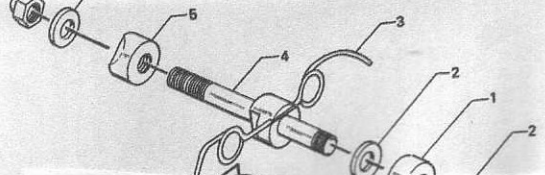
... now is a good time to examine your chain and lube it... (never use WD-40!)

- ETC...**

tighten all bolts and such (seat post bolt, stem, kickstand, rack or basket bolts, etc.) adjust seat height and bars to your liking, wipe off excess lube, shine her up a bit...
- RIDETEST!**

always good to be sure all is well, no squeaking brakes, wobbly wheels, tires seated properly...
- CLEAN UP YOUR MESS!**

put your tools back neatly, clean the grease off of them a little, make them nice for their next use, love your tools and they will love you.
- again, remind yourself that you rule, and go teach someone how to do it too!



I grew up in Newham. Its East of Bow in London, think trendy Hoxton then go a little bit further down the Whitechapel Road until skinny jeans, fixies and boutique shops are replaced with tracksuits and shops selling fried chicken and/or bowls of fruit for a quid. A place still cheap enough to be home to one of the highest proportions of ethnic minorities of all the districts in the country. What it lacks in 'cool' Londonite status it makes up for in the unpretentious, uncorporate east end normality. Now in Newham we have a mayor call Sir Robin Wales, who has thrown all his support behind projects to regenerate our apparently 'un-generated' corner of London. Enter the Olympics 2012, a world-class sporting event which apparently necessitates the opening of a Westgate shopping centre packed with every chain store imaginable (it opens this year just in time to buy all your sporting kit ready for the games you don't have tickets to). Although the cause of much local anger, as it will basically put out of business all independent shops, restaurants and cinemas within a 5 mile radius, that not the main point of this article.

I am writing this because as many people as possible should know that while Sir Rob is happy to have all the glory hosting the games and having world-class sporting venues costing billions for a two-week circus he has flat out refused to have a simple Cycle Mayor Boris Johnsons much watered-down but better than nothing interpretation of former Mayor Ken/ Livingtons plan to have safe, dedicated cycle routes running from the four points of the compass into central London. Reason? Newham residents don't cycle. True. But there are two reasons for this Robo, the first is cultural and economic, many residents are muslim this presents some barriers to cycling especially for women and girls. And on the economic side research show that poor people (we have some of the lowest average incomes and highest unemployment rates in London) status symbols are just as important as for the rich. Unfortunately its a luxury of the middle class to shop in charity shops and ride rubbish old bikes without a care, the working class residents of Newham aspire to owning cars and wearing labels. But the much bigger reason is safety and education. If no money is put into teaching people to ride bikes and making it safe nobody will. Newham is much more dangerous for cyclists because there are less of us, there

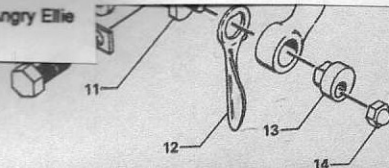
such a dodgy spot on the Rumbford Road my sister got knocked of 3 times before she quit cycling to work. None of the other barriers are insurmountable if money is invested in enabling people to cycle. The money to fund this was on offer but because of opposition from the Mayor the local community lost out on £125,000 from Transport for London - £100k for cycle parking, £20k for cycle training and £5k for bike safety checks. I guess when the 'eyes of the world' aren't trained on him Robo not really that interested in cycling.

A group of local cyclist have joined forces with the youth group Woodcraft Folk to hold Robo to account on this because for everyone in Newham improving on-road safety for bikes in increasing the health of the population by getting them cycling (which incidentally has some of the lowest health outcomes in London) is a matter of life and death. For me this highlights the basic hypocrisy of the Olympic games to 'regenerate' east London - never in there 114 year history of the modern games has the presence of the two-week spectacular increased sport participation in the host community. Its a parade of elite sport which is as likely to put people off, because it shows sport to be expensive, all-consuming and ridiculously challenging, than increase uptake. As the borough continues to get flattened to make way for the shiny new regeneration, Robo continues to ignore the not unreasonable request of this local campaign to invest money in the sports and transport facilities we actually need and will use. Instead we get a velodrome - just what the Bangladeshi population had been crying out for!

So when your next riding east from Aldgate on the Cycling Superhighway 2 and you decided to zip over the Bow fly-over just to see whats on the other side and the bright blue strip stops suddenly virtually in the shadow of the new Olympic stadium now you'll know why and perhaps you'll think to yourself thats bollocks and you'll join this Facebook group and support our action to carve out about bit of space for normal people on bikes in Newham out of all this Olympic frenzy: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002403391911&sk=wall>

Adjusting nut
Adjustable barrel
Cable anchor bolt

Angry Ellie



Commonwheel

A syndicalist federation of bicycle workers' co-ops and projects

At a grassroots/anarchist bikes conference in April a few people introduced the idea of forming Commonwheel - a syndicalist federation of bike projects in the UK. The project is still very much at an early stage, but here's a little bit of information explaining it - what is stands for, and what we hope it will achieve. And, of course, how you can get involved.

Setting the Wheel Spinning

Politically and practically, Commonwheel is very much about lots of people getting involved, so we are looking for groups and individuals who are interested in helping form this organisation from the beginning. We will be calling a gathering in Birmingham (17th-18th September 2011) to develop these ideas further and hopefully to split the work of running this network up. Until then, we can't say for sure how Commonwheel will function, but we have some ideas about what role we see it playing, and about the politics and values that underpin it.

Why a Syndicalist Federation?

Syndicalism is a vision of society where the production and distribution of resources is controlled democratically by everyone. Syndicalism operates through mutually supportive networks of producers - there is no hierarchy, and no economic competition; and, because it exists within a wider framework of anarchist/communist politics, these networks are controlled in a genuinely democratic way. Workers control their own means of production, but they are

also accountable to those who their work affects. A syndicalist federation then is a bit like a union, but whereas unions are mostly concerned with creating better working conditions for people within capitalism, a syndicalist federation is explicitly anti-capitalist.

But syndicalism is also a means of building this new society in the shell of the old. Whenever we take part in economic activities we are forced to engage with the capitalist state and market system. However, we are seeking to empower workers, providing a practical means of mutual aid between our co-ops and projects, and taking advantage of a larger combined purchasing power to get better prices; favour more environmentally sustainable and ethically produced goods; support producers which share our co-operative and sustainable aims; encourage and empower others to take these principles up; and challenge those powerful ones that do not.

What's that got to do with Bikes?

We aim to demonstrate that syndicalist ideas can work effectively, and we believe that bike recycling, and the maintenance and production of bikes and bike parts are a fertile area to work in. We also think bikes are crucial for creating a sustainable transport system and more liveable communities. But we'd love to see other projects being created that focused on other areas, and we'd be happy to share our experiences with people once we've got off the ground.

Specifically Commonwheel aims to provide:

1/ An effective buying group -

i) lowering prices for us and enabling us to compete with chains on price and on the quality of the goods we offer.

ii) Allowing us to offer goods produced locally, under better working conditions

and following more sustainable environmental practices at more affordable prices than it is currently possible.

iii) Enabling us to support more environmental and ethical producers and pressurise other producers to adopt better practices.

2/ A loan fund to help new co-ops or projects to establish and a 'fire-fighting fund', which will stop co-ops from going under and assist in cases of hardship for individuals.

3/ A continuous ethical and ideological basis for individual co-ops

to refer to prevent the drift away from democracy and towards capitalism.

Accountability of present members of any co-op to the principles upon which their co-op was founded. Loans and combined purchasing power would be contingent on adherence to certain principles.

4/ A formal and fair arbitration policy for intra-co-op disputes to help prevent the collapse of projects due to personal disagreements.

5/ A means to share resources

and skills without having to engage with outside agencies or maybe even currency. For instance, a co-op could train fellow members setting up a shop in mechanical skills in exchange for 'volunteer' hours stripping bikes &c.. Surplus second hand parts could be donated and exchanged where surpluses exist. We could also share experience and advice.

6/ A working, effective challenge to capitalism

and an alternative to the environmentally unsustainable practices and unjust working conditions under which most bikes and bike components are currently produced. A way of working towards an economically and environmentally sustainable bicycle industry that could be fully developed locally with just and democratic working conditions; fully internalising the environmental and human costs of cycling as a means of transportation. A part of the economy that would be structured democratically and could function in a post-capitalist society; a solid, long lasting and powerful model to experiment with, that could be used by or inspire other economic sectors as well.

If you and/or your co-op, project, shop would like to be part of developing this federation, come along to the gathering in September and help make it happen!

For more info you can contact commonwheel@aktivix.org

Are you a Cycling Sinner?

by matt

Which sort of cyclist are you? Are you the lentil-eating, sandal-wearing, holier-than-thou, smug sort, or the suicidal, reckless, arrogant, granny jostling kamikaze sort? Or perhaps you're neither? I certainly don't identify with either of these, and neither do any of the cyclists I know; yet as stereotypes of cyclists, they are rapidly gaining ground, entering into the popular conscience. In previous generations, cyclists were culturally marginalised with the implication that they were either poor - at least, too poor to afford a car - or by the suggestion that they were something of a freak, a socially awkward and childish creature that hadn't really grown up. These stereotypes continue to exist, but as arguments for the merits for cycling gain ground, the process of delegitimising cycling has shifted focus. Most worryingly, however, the stereotype of the reckless cyclist - on which I want to focus - is not only becoming increasingly popular, it has also taken root in what should have been the one safe place where such misrepresentations were incapable of residing - the cycling community itself.

All too often, I hear cyclists bemoaning the behaviour of other cyclists, arguing that their reckless and lawless behaviour is giving cycling a bad name. The argument goes like this: It's no wonder car drivers hate cyclists and treat them with contempt; it's no surprise that governments won't listen to our demands; it's no wonder that society at large has no time for us - by cycling recklessly and breaking the law, by showing our contempt for road traffic legislation and other road users, we bring this on ourselves. Why should car drivers, and indeed the rest of society, respect us, when we don't respect them? This topic clearly raises passions, and I understand and respect



people who desperately want to see cycling increase and believe that a minority of dangerous cyclists are making that task a more difficult one; the problem is, this argument is not only unsound, its perpetuation is doing precisely the sort of damage to cycling that reckless cycling is supposed to be causing. So I'd ask people to stop and reflect on this issue, and consider the debate from some different angles.

First, we should ask; just where, and who, are these kamikaze cyclists? The image of the reckless cyclist is now repeated endlessly by a wide spectrum of the press, and has been accepted as fact by wider society - but where is the evidence for these creatures' existence? I don't know about you, but when I cycle, I don't think too much about the law, or polite society - but I think a great deal about getting home alive, and that means that my cycling is necessarily mindful, of my own vulnerability, and of the presence and actions of others around me. And I think the same can be said for the vast majority of cyclists. So we might want to ask to what extent this stereotype, like all stereotypes, isn't primarily a cultural tool used to delegitimise cyclists, and which, again like many stereotypes, has taken root in the popular conscience, despite not actually being based on much.

Now, some of you will have noticed I said I don't pay too much attention to the law; so the second point to consider is the distinction between breaking road traffic law, and cycling recklessly or selfishly. Think about this: what are the big three cycling sins? Cycling on the pavement; jumping red lights; and riding the one-way down one-way streets. Yet all of these activities are slowly being in some way legalised or reconfigured, and they're often undertaken because they present a safer or less stressful option: we see more and more 'shared-use paths' which are, in most instances, little more than

the legalisation of cycling on the pavement, and many people cycle on the pavement because roads are simply too dangerous or stressful. More and more contra-flows - ditto for one-way streets. And advanced stop boxes, and growing talk of allowing cyclists to turn left at red lights, are legitimisation of the argument that suggests cyclists are placed in unnecessary danger at ordinary traffic lights - one good reason why many cyclists prefer to ignore them.

So what is often simplistically characterised as dangerous and arrogant is often perfectly safe and civilised - it just happens to be illegal. People may think that's as good a reason as any not to cycle in this way, and I'll come back to this, but even if you disagree with breaking the law, there is still the case for challenging this stereotype in its cruder form; if you want to criticise cyclists who break the law, you ought to also acknowledge that their behaviour often makes sense, that there is no reason to believe that the cyclist is in any way selfish or reckless, and that what they are doing may well in fact be safer than adhering to the law; you might also consider that therefore asking that they obey the law for the sake of the good name of cycling is often to ask them to place themselves in life-threatening situations because politicians haven't been bothered to change the law and because society's respect for 'the cyclist' is more important than their life. If that sounds like hyperbole, presumably you don't know some one who's been needlessly killed whilst cycling.

Thirdly, we should then ask why the behaviour of a minority of cyclists should be seen as having such a negative effect on cyclists generally; clearly, the same isn't true of car drivers. Stereotypes are well recognised tools by which majority groups undermine and control minorities; and we have seen that before the kamikaze cyclist, there was the poor or freak

biker through which society stigmatised cyclists; if every cyclist obeyed the law 100% of the time, another stereotype would come along, because - and this is the real point - the anger directed at cyclists is not really about their specific behaviour, but about their transport choice generally; some people just don't like cyclists (because they remind them they're trapped in a car, or that they're a fat, ageing journalist, or because they feel that their dominance on the road is threatened, or because cyclists get in the way when people are driving round at extremely dangerous - but perfectly legal - speeds).

Which brings us to the fourth - and real - cycling sin: we're not as fast as cars and therefore we sometimes slow them down. What's more, we don't always cycle in the gutter, we even sometimes take the lane entirely; we don't automatically give way to cars, and we don't pull over to let them overtake the moment we hear them approaching us from behind. Isn't this in fact the arrogant, selfish behaviour that winds car drivers up? The routes I take in Lancaster mean I rarely break the law, but I encounter dangerous and aggressive and clearly resentful driving pretty much every day I ride my bike, because I refuse to ride in the gutter, because I take the lane when necessary, and so forth. This is the real situation of cycling in Britain, and when cyclists blame other cyclists for creating this attitude, they are effectively helping feed a rampant scapegoat, helping legitimise the delegitimisation of cycling. They are also ignoring or undermining the reasons why cyclists break the law, and failing to acknowledge the real reason car drivers get irritated by cyclists, rather than helping create a culture in which car-dominance is actively challenged. When cyclists ride on the pavement, we shouldn't attack them, but ask why they feel the need to do so in the first place. When the day comes when all car drivers drive at below 20 miles per hour and

respect cyclists rights and needs, then maybe I'll think about criticising pedestrian cyclists; until then, I'll defend the right of cyclists to ride as they see fit - which, to repeat, is overwhelmingly in ways that are perfectly safe and respectful.

I occasionally teach children to cycle in schools, but I'm becoming more and more uncomfortable with teaching children to cycle a metre away from the curb, or to ride into the middle of the road when approaching a junction, because our culture is one in which car drivers see this behaviour as selfish and dangerous. We desperately need to challenge this, but we'll only succeed if we stop stigmatising other cyclists, and unite against the genuinely anti-social behaviour that we witness on our streets every day - that of car driving. In their attempts to defend the good name of cycling, those who condemn lawless or reckless cyclists in fact do nothing other than bolster the good name of driving. Ironically, then, it is not anti-social cyclists that are an additional impediment to us making the case for increased cycling, but those cyclists who sing to the tune of a society that demands the right to drive, and to drive unhindered by annoying obstacles like impoverished kamikaze vegans on bikes.