

Gardening Notes

Gardening was not a pastime of my youth, and it is only since moving to a house with a garden in Derbyshire that I have had the opportunity to turn my hands to growing things. Since doing so I have found that in gardening, as in most other things, practical experience is the best way to learn.

I have only a small plot approximately 18 yards by 25 yards, but it is enough to give two good vegetable borders sheltered by privet hedge and getting enough sunlight from the south and south-west for growing purposes. In addition to the vegetable borders there are some small patches of lawn, a pond which is home to a colony of newts and has also attracted a hedgehog. There is a small traditional wooden shed for potting, storage of seeds, implements and tools. The garden lies at 400 feet above sea level, is well drained, and is somewhat exposed to the prevailing south westerly winds.

Over the growing seasons during which I have cultivated the garden I have tried to be as organic as possible using little artificial fertilizer and no artificial pesticides. I started off by giving the borders a good digging over and a hefty dose of manure in the form of 25 bags of mushroom compost, which is very cheap and improves the soil condition greatly. This makes it easier to work the soil, makes the soil less prone to dry out in hot summers. Application of manure to the borders is repeated annually, and includes use of my own home produced 'compost' which is made in a home-constructed wooden compost bin.

Recently I have concentrated on growing more expensive vegetables such as courgettes and tomatoes and the more

useful crops including potatoes. I have followed a rough 'rotation' never following with the same crop in the same site for more than one season. Thus I hope to minimise the impact of pests and diseases. Despite this pests such as slugs are a problem, I have avoided chemical solutions to this problem, and lacking the time to remove these creatures by hand on a regular basis have adopted for another tactic. This is to grow plants which are resistant to such pests because the pests don't like their taste, or because the plants have their own defensive spines and barbs. The plants which I am planning for the coming summer are those which I have found do well in the conditions of my garden. These are Courgettes, Spinach-beet, 'Cut and come again lettuce', broad beans, runner beans, leeks, welsh onions, shallots, onions, tomatoes, potatoes both early and main crop, and various herbs including chives, lovage, thyme, rosemary, parsley, basil, mint and fennel.

Some plants are grown as seedlings and then planted out at the proper time, others are sown in situ. I like to have plants which produce through winter as well as in summer and autumn, and it is for this reason that I plant leeks and spinach beet, both can be left in the ground through winter and harvested as needed. In addition to the vegetables I have a good sized blackcurrant bush and some raspberry canes.

What relevance has all this to Anarchism? Well I like to think that if everybody either cultivated their available back gardens, or obtained and used an allotment it would be a first step. As a result of producing even some of our own food there would be that much less demand for the services of the superstores. Becoming less

dependent on others for basics of life is a first step to creating Anarchistic societies: self reliant, co-operative, operating on a face to face level.

JPS

Letters

Dear Total Liberty,

Unfortunately it would not be possible to answer all the major inaccuracies within Peter Neville's article on the formation of ORA (Decline and Fall: ORA and the AFB Toal Liberty No.1. Eds), within the scope of a letter of the length that you permit your correspondents.

To attempt to begin such a reply, (and precis the facts,) would involve invidious choices as to which falsehoods were most important and should be answered first; and anyway would open the respondent up to the reply: "I notice you didn't try to deny..."

If any of your readers are interested in a letter setting out the facts of the case, (I fear it takes 10 pages of A4) perhaps they could write to me; (Laurens Otter, College Farm House, Mill Lane, Wellington, Salop TF1 IPR), perhaps making a small contribution towards photocopying and postage for it. Fraternally

Laurens Otter

(Editors Note: Laurens was offered a chance to reply to Peter Neville's article within the standard length for a contribution to Total Liberty, ie an article or letter of approx 1500 words. He declined. Should Laurens change his mind the offer remains open for the next issue of TL.)

Subscriptions

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Total Liberty

A Journal of non-aligned Anarchism

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Editorial

Our first edition met with a mixed reception, some brickbats, a few bouquets. Despite the former, and with the encouragement of the latter appears this latest edition of *Total Liberty*. A big thank you to all who have showed sufficient faith in *Total Liberty's* future to

take out a subscription or to make a donation. Our cover price is increased to £1.00 in an attempt to cover our print and postage costs, which continue to outstrip income from sales and subscriptions.

This edition of *Total Liberty* includes an article by John Griffin on links between science, social theory and Anarchism. In addition there are contributions from Peter Good on Anarchist Publishing, Mick Burley on Anarchist Dogmatism, Richard Garner on 'The benefits of non-class struggle anarchism to the movement as a whole', while Laurens Otter launches an attack on non-class struggle anarchism.

The last edition of *Total Liberty* has been favourably reviewed in the Canadian based Anarchist Journal *Any Time Now* and in *Freedom's* Bookshop Notes. However, the journal *RSN News* published by the Revolutionary Socialist Network, labels *Total*

Liberty ...'an anachronism.' because of *Total Liberty's* ...'unwillingness to consider the Marxist Perspective.' In this they are mistaken. Most Anarchists, including this writer, have both read and considered the arguments of Marx and the subsequent 64 varieties. We simply believe them to be deeply flawed in many respects and

fashioned "common-sense" kind, typical of the output of *Freedom* magazine until very recently'. *Total Liberty* welcomes common-sense anarchism! Many of our contributors have indeed been past contributors to 'Freedom'. Furthermore, *Total Liberty* welcomes an open and honest debate of ideas and possibilities, including those from outside our tradition and with which we may disagree, and on this course we will continue.

To the point...

Never let a politician grant you a favour, they will only want to control you forever.

Bob Marley

The State is said by some to be a 'necessary evil'; it must be made unnecessary. This century's battle, then, is with the



wrong in others. Classical Anarchism may have developed in the 19th century but it has moved on, changed, grown and now looks to the possibilities of the 21st century while still retaining those elements of theory and ideas which remain relevant from the 19th century. *RSN News* review gives TL a somewhat backhanded compliment when it says ...'The type of Anarchism propounded in this journal is of the old-

State: the State that debases man; the State, that prostitutes women; the State, that corrupts children; the State, that trammels love; the State, that stifles thought; the State, that monopolises land; the State, that limits credit; the State, that restricts exchange; the State, that gives idle capital the power of increase, and through interest, rent, profit and taxes, robs industrious labour of its products'.

Benjamin Tucker

Life, the Universe and Anarchism

The answer to it all, life, the universe and everything, as devotees of Douglas Adams' books are already aware, is "42". The cryptic response of the computer "Deep Thought" became a catchphrase that pokes fun at scientific endeavours to understand the nature of existence. The recent TV series presented by Stephen Hawking confirmed that the culture encapsulated by "Deep Thought" is very much alive in contemporary physics. What's that got to do with Anarchism? Well, over the years, really quite a lot, for science and social theory have had a long and often uneasy relationship.

In the beginning, as we might say, there was Darwin. The publication of "The Origin of Species" in 1859, was of cataclysmic importance, and all 1,250 copies of the first edition sold out on the very first day. "The Descent of Man", which followed in 1871, developed the theme of the natural selection of species, by suggesting Africa as the cradle from which the very earliest humans had sprung. The reaction by the Church of course was predictably explosive to the suggestion that "God" was not the answer to all those BIG questions.

If the response of God to Darwin was hostile, Mammon had other ideas, and apologists for capitalism warped Darwin's ideas into a "scientific" justification of ruthless individualism. The notion of the "survival of the fittest" passed into popular culture as one of the most notorious there has ever been. It was at this point that Kropotkin came to rebut the "social darwinists" with his own famous work, "Mutual Aid".

For Kropotkin to emphasise the importance of co-operation in human social development was to be greatly welcomed, but unfortunately the themes of evolution and mutual aid were worked into a theory that capitalist industries would be decentralised, and brought under local community control. This evolutionary tendency Kropotkin tried to demonstrate by (selective!) reference to published economic data. When it came to proving the relevance and viability of anarchism, reference to the mantra of "mutual aid" became of key importance. That humans do have powerful natural tendencies to work together rather than compete was/is true, but many anarchists chose to ignore the conflicting evidence the real world also provided. It was easier to adopt a "natural anarchism" argument than delve into the complexities of understanding the reality of power seeking and greed. "Mutual aid" was close to becoming the anarchist answer to it all, the anarchist "42", handed to us by Darwin via Kropotkinian anarchism.

The 19th Century was a period of great optimism and faith in science, and quasi-scientific arguments found their way elsewhere into social theory: Marx claimed Darwinian support for his "scientific socialism", where historical change had as a motor, revolutionary class struggle. Sociology emerged as "the science of society" and the Darwinian influence, especially in Durkheim, figured strongly here too. It was a time for "big ideas".

These days, the social sciences are much less enamoured with so-called "grand theory" and there is an increasing tendency to drop the word "science" from their lexicon. However, in the natural sciences the search to fully comprehend the nature of the universe, and if possible reduce its basis to some neat little mathematical equation continues: astro-physicists are pushing on along the trail blazed by Newton, Planck and Einstein. Intriguingly, quantum mechanics handles randomness, surely the key element which discouraged social theorists from the "scientific" approach: human actions can be most unpredictable.

All of the natural sciences received a severe shaking in the 1960s and 70s when Chaos Theory made its appearance. Chaos or Complexity Theory (CT) was not one theory relevant to a particular subject, its compass was universal. It accepted randomness, where many disciplines would exclude it for the sake of producing results which could be shoe-horned into readily usable formulae. Science had a long-standing tradition of fudged results and reductionism.

With breathtaking boldness, CT encompasses all natural phenomena, and holds that all random events have an underlying order which continually reasserts itself. We have lived experience of the truth here: the ongoing natural processes of decay and renewal, the interaction between plants and animals: all of it seemingly random and unplanned, all of it dynamically evolving, yet stable and beautiful. This is what Darwin too saw, and which gave rise to the idea that human society also forms an integrated unity: the "organic analogy" which, in their different styles, became central to the sociology of Durkheim and the anarchism of Kropotkin.

All very exciting, could this be another, this time successful attempt for social theory to root itself in natural science? It doesn't look that way. There has been no great rush by sociologists to apply CT to their own discipline, no doubt some have tried. One of the Chaos pioneers however,

has had considerable success in the social field - the gambling halls of Las Vegas - and been promptly banned! CT works here because gambling is subject to pure chance, whereas human social action, whilst often unpredictable and the subject of whim, is based on rational thought; it is not wholly random.

However attractive the idea may seem then, CT cannot be used as a justification for anarchism, CT undoubtedly exudes something of its spirit, and is certainly in my view compatible with it. We may nod approvingly at the holistic approach and the rejection of reductionism, ideas which really do give a hard scientific basis to scrapping sociological models like class analyses. We need to

be working strongly with the real social world, eschewing determinist views in favour of pragmatic ones: whatever serves the cause of freedom and fulfils need is OK.

The overall thrust then, of the lessons to be learned, is that our thinking needs rather less emphasis on Kropotkin and Bakunin, and rather more on Proudhon and Malatesta. With Marxism and "grand theory" in general in retreat, now should be the time for anarchism to reassert itself, but without recourse to any "technical fixes". When it comes to updating and reworking our ideas, there really is no substitute for hard work.

John Griffin

DOES ANARCHIST PUBLISHING MATTER ANYMORE?

Anarchism's attachment to publishing is a noble if not obstinate tradition. Indeed it would be hard to separate any anarchist event from some attendant theoretical or populist text. That old question as to whether propaganda precedes the event or is it the other way around cannot deny the fact that the most memorable of anarchist texts were the product of human commitment appropriate to the context of its time. Success, for the publisher, is to be measured by the degree to which events are interpreted in a compelling and novel way.

A feature of our own times is that anyone with PC and a kitchen table can transform themselves into a publisher. Presented with this vast technological opportunity it is a sad observation that many pamphlets fail to keep pace with this challenge. Most attempt to recapture the vibrancy of past success on the basis of *imitation* rather than any risky venture into *originality*. Imagination itself becomes surrendered by a reliance on an entrenched ideology. It is as if the ideology itself is sufficient to address the needs of waiting hordes of converts. One need not look too far to come across sad stacks of short-lived and forgotten flysheets. Generally three or four issues are enough to encounter the harsh realities of distribution, one-way economics, and a discouragingly mute readership.

Less I be accused of too bleak a vision let me state that I welcome and celebrate every single anarchist venture into publishing. For me, the greater the number and the greater the variety of texts

swimming in this word-world the better. Neither am I going to pursue the rationalisation that publishing is merely a substitute for street-level action. Energy and passion is to be expressed at many different levels. No one I ever met carried a correct strategy for action. My concern is that those who take on the responsibility - and it is a responsibility - to publish papers must commit themselves to specific obligations. Firstly, anarchism demands that we project standards and expectations that are on a different *human* level than other concerns. If, as a self-proclaimed

publisher, one persistently 'can't-get-it-together', or fails to reply to correspondents, or decline to honour debts and deadlines, then perhaps one's sense of responsibility should be reconsidered. New publishing houses must strive to arrange themselves *differently* to models of centralised administration. The practice of ignoring the emotional housekeeping of its own readership is an all too common crime. Look after your readers. Take a passionate care in their well-being. That old enemy, *money*, so frequently touted as the excuse for treading water, is part of the same

frame of responsibility. All non-romantic history records the realisation by various enterprises (co-operatives, communes, bands of outlaws) that specific tasks require specific amounts of money to realise specific ambitions. Transport must be paid for, paper costs real money, computers need to be fed with expensive ribbons. Approached from the standpoint of responsibility this

Der Buchbinder.



question is resolved in a straightforward manner: *If you want money and you haven't got it then you are too lazy.* This statement is worth repeating and digesting again: *If you want money and you haven't got it then you are too lazy.* That's it. Period. No arguments. I don't pretend such projects are easy but out there there are vast rivers of currency flowing into filthy seas of lucre. Be ambitious. Why aim for a pound when a grand would do the job more effectively? The ocean won't mind if you go to it with a teaspoon or a bucket. Just watch out for the sharks and the crocodiles. Remember, the evidence to suggest that if you are nice to crocodiles they will be nice back to you is fairly scant.

Anarchist publishing needs entrepreneurs blessed with the singular quality of fanaticism. Adventurers whose concerns about their own comforts are of a secondary consideration.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON 'ANARCHIST' DOGMATISM

Commenting on a visit he had made to Littlethorn Bookshop in Leicester, I recently heard someone say that he considered the shop to be too indiscriminate in its selection of books and magazines. It stocked, he said, material that was not of a libertarian nature, such as pro-IRA literature. I hold this to be a deplorable attitude because it implies that there are certain types of material that are suitable for a 'libertarian' / 'radical' bookshop and certain types that are not; but who, I would ask, is to judge what is 'suitable' and what criteria are to be used? It further implies that the message or argument presented in any book stocked by a bookshop must thereby be condoned by the shop itself. This is ridiculous. If I were to set up a bookshop and stock only material with which I was in total agreement, I should think the shelves would remain virtually bare. In my view, the best kind of book is one which stimulates, irritates and intelligently provokes, not one which merely supports and

confirms opinions which I already hold. The job of a radical bookshop is, or should be, to provide access to material that is otherwise difficult to get hold of, not to pander to a particular, narrowly-defined, 'libertarian' readership. I'm sure, if I wanted to research pro-IRA propaganda, I would find next to nothing in mainstream bookshops and libraries, so where should I turn to but the small radical ones?

The worst thing about the attitude which wishes to restrict what ought or ought not to be sold in radical bookshops is the underlying motivation, which can be summed up in one word: *fear*. Fear of being challenged; fear of being allowed to read opinions which differ from one's own; fear of diversity. It's the same kind of fear which motivates the 'No platform for fascists' campaigns that seek to prevent public talks by nationalist politicians 'by whatever means necessary'. This last phrase is, of course, a euphemism for 'aggressive posturing, intimidation and

Publishing has a future if it is not to be hampered by money-rejecting complexes or adequate only standards of presentation. The production of pamphlets *does* matter in that to make its impression it must strive to be different and be bold in re-inventing itself. The newly available technology asks not only that we switch on and tune in. It asks for something much more. Namely that our message be written with real flesh and real blood. That we dare to put at risk our own uniqueness as living and breathing subjects.

Peter Good.

Our comrade was on the editorial board of *Anarchism Lancastrium* for eight years. For the past 6 years he has carried the dubious distinction of being banned from the columns of *Freedom*.

violence'. Why, I wonder, do the 'no platformist anti-fascists' not regard members of the public as intelligent enough to make up their own minds about the issues expressed by politicians? Or is it that they simply enjoy the violence? One thing's for sure: if you want to bring the likes of the British National Party greater publicity (which, presumably, is precisely what they crave), then don't forget your steel-toed DM's, otherwise you may be mistaken for a 'wishy-washy liberal' who just happens to think that fighting violence and intimidation with violence and intimidation is like trying to put out a fire with a can of petrol. I experienced signs of the fear and a lack of adventurousness in the 'libertarian' cum 'anarchist' milieu some years ago when I published a small-circulation magazine called *Polemic*. One of the issues I was concerned about at the time (and still am, to some extent) was the growing prudishness towards sexually explicit books and magazines, the epitome of which can be

found in Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography*. Put very simply, the attitude is that sexually provocative representations of women (a) somehow promote male aggression towards women, and (b) are themselves examples of such aggression, therefore pornography should be condemned and its producers and distributors persecuted under the name of women's freedom. I objected to this view on the following grounds: (1) By condemning all sexually-explicit material in a blanket fashion the opportunity to create and promote a genuinely radical pornography - including gay / lesbian and experimental heterosexual material - is lost. (2) Condemnations of sexually-explicit material serve to patronise and disempower people who work in the sex industry, many of whom either enjoy their work or regard it as far preferable to other forms of employment. (3) The 'Pornography promotes / is violence against women' argument is tenuous at best, pseudo-scientific Mary Whitehouse-esque bullshit at worst. (4) It stinks of censorship.

Disturbingly, (though, perhaps, predictably), I received a torrent of criticism from self-proclaimed 'anarchists' and 'feminists', both male and female, attacking me for even daring to question the anarcho- (read 'Puritan') orthodoxy that pornography is *bad*. I received support, however, from the publishers of radical homo-erotic publications (such as *Bimbo-X* in Canada) who have first hand experience of what it's like to have not only an authoritarian and sexually repressive state, but also authoritarian and sexually repressive (and repressed) 'anarcha-feminists' (sic) to



contend with.

I also published, in one issue of *Polemic*, a poem sent in by a young Irish woman which was an imaginative attempt to view the world from the position of

an unborn child whose mother had decided to have an abortion. Again the defenders of the anarchist orthodox church stepped into action, and I received several letters of complaint, one of which (written by a man) was personally abusive towards the author of the poem. It didn't bother me that people had objected to the poem, after all the magazine was intended to be provocative. What bothered me was the apparently automatic 'knee-jerk' nature of the responses. Abortion is an emotive subject; it requires sensitivity and compassion from all sides, not angry and dogmatic rhetoric.

The great strength of the anarchist press lies, in my view, in its potential to allow dissenting voices to be heard, which would otherwise be either ignored or suppressed, or both. No view - however unsettling to delicate libertarian sensibilities - should be beyond the pale of debate. There are no taboos.

Mick Burley



The benefits of non-class struggle anarchism to the movement as a whole.

Revolution is a process ever going. Like a river it flows; changing shape, altering its course, sometimes slowing down, sometimes becoming a rapid. At times we lose sight of it behind the dogma of some ideology or another. But it can never be stopped. Since the first slave said 'no', since the first people rose up against the tyrants, since the concept of Freedom was formed, the Revolution has always been there. As a comrade wrote to me, *Revolution is a*

process, not an historical event. The nature of the Revolution stems from the forces it encounters, the aspirations of those within it, and the strength of the reaction. If it can progress unrestrained, then it is likely to be peaceful. The ends will never justify the means, they are inextricably bound together and what better way is there of taking someone's freedom than by killing them. Violence is the basis upon which government stands, and as such

it is the counter Revolution. From the writings of Kropotkin up to Colin Ward there have been attempts to hi-light points in existing society where the river may flow - worker co-ops, food co-ops, alternative welfare and education, and countless examples of how order is spontaneous, and springs up from the very act, and point of association itself: "What kept us together was our work, our mutual interdependencies in this work,

our factual interests in one gigantic problem with its many specialist ramifications. I had not solicited co-workers. They had come of themselves. They remained, or they left when the work no longer held them. We had not formed a political group, or worked out a programme of action...Each one had made his contribution according to his interests in the work...There a.e. then objective biological work functions capable of regulating human co-operation. Exemplary work organises its forms of functioning organically and spontaneously, even though only gradually, gropingly and often making mistakes. In contra-distinction, the political organisations, with their 'campaigns' and 'platforms' proceed without any connection with the tasks and problems of daily life".

Like the fishermen in Brixham, or the miners in Durham or Brora, Scotland, workers co-operatives provide small, rare examples of how a task provides its own point of association, and provides the associates with a focus, that transcends any necessity for coercive pressure. In short, the act of society provides its own order internally, whereas all governments attempt to impose it externally, stifling and smothering the social instinct. These examples exist in modern society. They are not memories of an age before the nation-state, but are modern facts. Paul Goodman once described anarchism as both conservative and radical, for we must attempt to conserve those places where liberty may be developed in full, as well as create new ones. Gustave Landaur also wrote along the same lines "The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, it is a condition of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting

other relationships, by behaving differently". Even, according to the film 'Michael Collins', the Irish Republican leader Eamon de Valera spoke along the same lines by claiming roughly that "We defeat the British Government by ignoring it".

The antagonism between class struggle anarchists and non-class struggle anarchists is not new. It can be seen at the beginning of the movement itself, in the discussions between Proudhon and Bakunin. Proudhon went further than most of us would even consider, by getting involved with the government during the mid-point of his career. His General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century, a book which George Woodcock claimed contained all the elements of the anarchist movements which grew from him, both individualist, and socialist - loose, voluntary association, contract, federalism, workers control, free credit, banks of exchange - was dedicated to the bourgeoisie. It wasn't until, La Capacite Politic de la Classe Ouvrier, that he argued for the working class to completely disassociate itself from the bourgeoisie, and even then violence was not to be the means of bringing about the Revolution.

To proclaim ourselves as anti-class struggle does not obligate the notions of compromise and collaboration which sicken us all. We just see the struggle in a different way; as Landaur pointed out, the state is more than an existing entity, it is an ideology, it is an expression that "authority" and obedience are virtues, and necessities. Destruction of the state will not destroy the almost instinctive desire to obey. We bring about the Revolution by ignoring the state and bosses, by creating the alternatives NOW.

Those who call themselves evolutionary are under the same danger as falling into the same millenarian and fatalistic trap as the revolutionaries. Anarchy must be made now. If we sit on our heels and wait for some apocalyptic insurrection, or some evolutionary stage, which, to be frank, doesn't look as if it is coming, then we will find that any instinct for mutual aid and spontaneous order will have been crushed by the religious worship of our great and benevolent welfare state. Already we can see this happening as anarchists sit around bemoaning the crisis in public spending, or the condition of the NHS, instead of seizing such moments as opportunities to put our plans into action. We are not here to help government carry out its job more successfully, but to prove that it is unnecessary. Every failure of the government is a potential success for anarchy.

I am an aligned anarchist. I am a mutualist, which means, for those who haven't read their history, that I draw mainly from Proudhonian theories, rather than from Bakunin or Kropotkin. This does not mean that I can't also draw from other influences. If I were to list those books which had the greatest influence upon me you would find not just What is Property?, and The General Idea of the Revolution, but also Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow, and Mutual Aid by Kropotkin, and Bakunin on Anarchism as well as various writings by Malatesta and others. All these have constructive points which have played a part in helping me formulate my own anarchism. I dogmatically assert that dogmatism has no place in the anarchist society! In order to find the best truth to suit us we

must explore all theories and possibilities, and learn from each other. The mistake inherent in all governments is that it prevents the free growth of all viewpoints and interests, which is of fundamental necessity if we are going to create a free, progressing society.

As a mutualist I have found myself occupying rather a fringe status within the anarchist movement. George Woodcock found the same when he began to reject a movement that was dominated by anarchist communist ideas, with a spattering of anarcho-syndicalism, and following Bakuninist strategies. He, like me, found that Proudhon offered greater hopes. Talking about the value of individual possession in a libertarian society whilst also rejecting

capitalism has meant that I am "looked down on" by communists and anarcho-capitalists, finding no welcome in the Anarchist Communist Federation, or right wing libertarian groups. This has meant that fringe anarchists, such as Tolstoyans, mutualists, or religious anarchists have been deprived of a voice and an audience. To use the terms of a political economist, the anarchists and the anarcho-syndicalist maintain a monopoly in power over the field of play; and the only alternative is to allow for the rise of some good healthy competition. For example, would it not reinforce the communist's argument if someone were to challenge their views on property as anti-libertarian? An anarchist would rise to the challenge, and

if they win the debate then their position is all the stronger for it. If they lose, well, there is no loss as a new truth will have been revealed. A dogmatist, on the other hand, will either attempt to silence the challenge, thus drawing attention to it, or will ignore it and hope that it will go away. Either way the dogmatist cannot gain from the challenge. Here lies the importance of the Federation: it allows the fringe elements to speak out. It means that those defending a position that differs from the mainstream will have their position analysed in relation to its relevance to modern situations and dilemmas, rather than on whether they are "socialist" or "petit-bourgeois".

Richard Garner

*Editors note. The Federation referred to in Richard's article was the proposed non-aligned anarchist federation which resulted in the forming of the Anarchist Information Network, Box EMAB, 88 Abbey St. Derby.

Can there be a non-class struggle version of anarchism?

"We are interested in establishing an organisation, probably a network or federation, for anarchists who wish to work with other non-aligned anarchists interested in ..a non class struggle based version of anarchism." Extracts from "Towards a New Anarchist Alignment" the call that launched the 27/9/97 meeting.

Can there be a non-class struggle based version of anarchism? And if there can would it not be somewhat exclusive? Is a total renunciation of class struggle a sound basis for trying to build

a new anarchist unity?

It is arguable that in classical Greek the term anarchist did not imply anything very much, an Archon was a particular form of religious authority



(with some judicial powers,) and city-states which abolished their archons were not necessarily libertarian. Megara which had a tyrannois, was nevertheless anarcho;

indeed (as Nicholas Walter unintentionally drew to my attention in an 'Anarchy' debate in the 60s,) for a short time was Athens. The anglicanised form of the Greek

word for egalitarian would be *isocratic* and for lacking government *acephalist*.

Nevertheless from early times the word anarchist was used as a regular term for risings of the exploited. One finds it used by subsequent commentators writing upon the Spartacist and similar slave risings in Rome. One finds it as a description of peasant risings in North Africa associated with the Donanists,

(though the Donanists, though egalitarian, were hardly anti-government). One finds it used in England to describe a peasant rising at the time of the wars between Canute and Edmund Ironside, (even though the peasants had elected their own candidate for the kingdom). One finds it used for Arnold of Brescia for Cola di Rienzi and for Massionello, (even though they were also described as dictators).

Though *anarchist* is a word that has frequently in history been used as a term of abuse for people, (meaning in such abusive usage, basically anyone with whom one disagrees, who does not blindly accept one's own authority, and thus it was applied by imperialists to advocates of national independence, whether these latter envisaged an egalitarian society or not. The Serb Nationalist, usually described as an anarchist, whose bullet occasioned World War One, was an ardent Serb royalist.). Those who have chosen to use the term for themselves have been relatively few and far between. (An alternative abuse, used by bureaucrats everywhere, was and is to say they lack self-discipline.)

In modern times the first people to resurrect the name anarchist were the extreme wing of the French revolutionary, Anarchsis Cloutz and his comrades who were the spokesmen of the sans culottes - the poorer artisans (nascent Parisian working class) for whom the normal revolutionaries, Girondins, Jacobins, and even Cordeliers and Hebertistes did not and could not speak.

Though their name for themselves was Pantisocrat, the term was used to describe English ultra-Jacobin advocates of egalitarian commun-

itarianism, and from them descended to the more extreme agitators for an extension of the franchise before the Great Reform Bill. It thus was associated with the working class wing of republicanism in post-Napoleonic times, and as in large measure socialism arose from such circles, it was an early term for socialists, even though most of the Utopian socialists were paternalist. At varying times Proudhon swung from glorying in the term to repudiating it totally; given anyway that he asked Louis Napoleon to introduce a society of anarchism, he obviously didn't mean what modern anarchists mean.

The term's modern currency however is generally traced not to Proudhon but to Bakunin; that is to the split within "scientific (and Hegelian) socialism" (for both wings were distinct from "Utopian Socialism") between Marx and Bakunin. Bakunin in fact called himself an anti-authoritarian collectivist, and later reacted against Marx's scientism; there must be some question about the anti-authoritarian part, since he also advocated - or at least he endorsed Nachaev's advocacy of a conspiratorial revolutionary elite who would briefly create a world-dictatorship.) But Marx's description of Bakunin as an anarchist stuck, and so he is remembered by history.

It was Kropotkin who in a sense codified the term, who (using a later Greek usage which identified archons with all authority) took the term to mean against government and all exploitative power. Kropotkin was himself very much part of the socialist tradition, though being (unlike Marx) involved in scientific research, he insisted that the

term scientific should be retained for research based on experimentation and observation and so was particularly hostile to see socialism as a science.

For Kropotkin anarchism was the pure form of socialism and he used both terms for himself; all the organisations he supported related to wider socialist and class struggles, the black and the red flag were both used by anarchist groups in his day; both flags were to be seen, carried by anarchists, on the wider class-action demos.

This, notwithstanding the fact that Kropotkin deliberately set out to widen the term *anarchist*. He pointed out the republican-libertarian-socialism advocated by Russian exiles round Herzen, (even despite his renunciation of revolutionism,) the pacifist communitarianism of Tolstoy, or the ditto individualism of Thoreau, (despite their moralistic individualism,) the individualist-existentialism, (denounced by Marx as the "German Philosophy" and its advocates driven out of Marxian-Social Democracy,) of Stirner, and Josiah Warren's communitarianism (despite mutual antipathy between Warren and Kropotkin, were all forms of anarchism.

It must be noted that each of these, however far their views were from Kropotkin's revolutionary socialism, nevertheless insisted that the world was divided on the basis of class, that the power of rulers/the rich derived from their exploitation of the ruled, that rulers/the rich constantly increased their power/wealth at the expense of those they exploit, that indeed if the ruler/rich person did not so enlarge his her/power (s)he would soon cease to be amongst the rulers/rich. That in order

to survive the exploited were forced to resist, and that this made class struggle inevitable. In each case the thinker has argued that the advocate of a better society has a moral duty to empathize with the exploited in society, and to act in solidarity with the struggles of the exploited class to prevent greater exploitation.

It was the great contribution of Elysee Reclus and Kropotkin, though to give Marx his due the concept is inherent in many of his writings, that the one and only strength of the working class, their sole hope for victory, lies in the mutual aid and solidarity which is the nature of the class.

Until World War 2 it was taken for granted that all advocacy of anarchism automatically involved the advocate in class

struggle; there might then be a division between those who believe that anarchism would be the product of class struggle and those who say no we have to go beyond class struggle, anarchism is the cure to class division not the product of them. But in that debate, both sides equally believed in class struggle.

It is only since WWII, that forms of anarchism have arisen (a strand of the Sydney Libertarians, and the Anarchist Capitalism of Ayn Rand) that did not start from this basic premise.

However, there is an even more recent phenomenon; those who insist on describing themselves as class struggle anarchists, - obviously implying that the rest of us do not advocate such struggle - and who

paradoxically, regard all manifestations of mutual aid as pandering to bourgeois values; thus acting to deprive the exploited of their one effective weapon in class struggle. It is notable that most of those who use the term, support groups which are extremely sectarian and which are not notable for their internal libertarianism. One can easily understand why many anarchists would want to disassociate themselves from these; but unless those who make this disassociation want something that is scarcely really anarchism; such disassociation would be from a perverted understanding of what the anarchist view of class struggle is; not from an essential facet of anarchism.

Laurens Otter

For Anarchism or for Leftism?

Much of what passes for anarchist action today is not Anarchism in creation or intention but simply parasitic on indiscriminate Leftist support of current events. Let me give you a few examples from the past. Lets start with Wapping.

THE PRINTERS' STRIKE

The printers dispute so familiar to many anarchists was both a move by an employer to a new site at the Docklands Estate away from Fleet Street and a move to introduce new modern working practices in line with most printing works in Western Europe, the United States and the Pacific Rim, most especially Mr Murdoch's Australia. The London Printers objected. They liked the old system, weren't prepared to learn new skills and had developed working practices

which brought them substantial rewards. Skilled workers were being de-skilled. Naturally they objected. The Left and many anarchists loved the dispute and gave it their full support seeing the printers as knights of labour. Well let's have a look at this.

Ever wanted to be a London printer? Not unless you had at least one or preferably two relatives already in the print trade. Without this you had no chance. And all those little spin offs like printing Sunday papers under assumed names as casual labour. Those in the print trade were on to a very good thing, almost a kind of workers control - if you could get into the print trade that is. I'm not against working people working out survival tactics but access should be universal. Why should the rest of us support a closed shop?

A WILDCAT STRIKE

I remember a story told to me by my late father about a similar sort of dispute in the the nineteen thirties but on a smaller scale. A new docks manager had been appointed at Middlesbrough docks. A vacancy opened for a crane driver. So the docks manager did the right thing. He contacted the Labour exchange to see if they had any crane drivers on the books, interviewed those they sent and then appointed one. The existing crane drivers then immediately went on strike saying that the crane driver appointed was not suitable and demanding his immediate sacking and the sacking of the docks manager for going outside accepted custom and practice. The Left loved it and rushed to support. The docks manager was puzzled.

The new crane driver was experienced and qualified for the job and he was a member of the appropriate union. He could not see the objection. A union official was called in and he enquired the root of the trouble. This rather bemused him. You see the crane drivers were operating a system of workers control. Only members of their large extended family were allowed, they believed, to work on the cranes. Other non-family members were excluded. Which when the facts came out caused an immediate evaporation of support - remember this was the hungry thirties. "the depression".

The docks manager pointed out to the strikers that the labour exchange had plenty of other crane drivers on their books both experienced and trained and all members of the union so if the strikers did not go back to work they could soon be replaced and it was his job to hire and fire not theirs. I suppose any replacements he might have made in these circumstances might have been called scabs by The Left. To my knowledge most so-called scabs are just unemployed people desperate for a job and often previously prevented from getting these by closed shops.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In the early sixties I was kicked out of a university and desperate for a job spent some weeks in London going from factory to factory along the Great West Road and Western Avenue and being constantly told "sorry closed shop, union members only". A friend kicked out with me tried to get into the film industry but was told "Sorry, we only employ union members."

"But how do you get to be a

union member?" he asked. "Get a job in films." So no chances for newcomers, as he subsequently found out. What he needed to do was to get a job in non-union firms like the Shell Film Unit which did not recognise that union and then apply for union membership. This was the only way in. Job restriction by closed shop.

THE 1984 MINERS' STRIKE

Initially my union backed the miners all the way but as the facts came out our support became rather guarded. My union branch withdrew our original motion of support and passed a new motion of critical support - for which the



proposer and seconder, both CP members found themselves before the CP District Committee and treated like misbehaving schoolboys. Both were well-qualified Science teachers and also well read Eurocommunists and defended their position. Justifying their position availed them nothing. They were expelled from the party.

What was wrong with the miner's strike? And in this, with considerable hindsight, I have to say I have some sympathy with Mr Scargill here as most of his predictions have come true. He unfortunately confused strategy with tactics.

The strike was always a

political strike. The miners had brought down Edward Heath's government. Margaret Thatcher knew that to defeat the unions she must destroy the NUM. So she brought in as head of the Coal Board a Mr Macgregor, an experienced mining executive and proven strike breaker from the United States and then these two pushed the NUM into a corner. But it was the wrong strike at the wrong time for the wrong reasons and showed a complete lack of intelligence on the part of the NUM Executive and by intelligence I do not mean brain power but tactical information.

The strike was called in late Spring. The biggest market for coal were the coal fired power stations and, no doubt with Macgregor's connivance, these had built up huge coal stocks and with Summer approaching and a reduced demand for fuel and lighting this was just the wrong time to have a strike. Furthermore there was considerable opposition within the NUM for either a strike or a strike at that time but instead of having a

referendum to gauge support Scargill went ahead, pointing out, correctly, that under NUM rules he did not have to have a referendum. However tactically, when asking for universal support, this is the major way to get solidarity and Scargill blew it. The NUM split and a new union developed - the Union of Democratic Mineworkers covering the newer and more profitable pits.

Eventually the strike collapsed, the coal industry was both decimated and privatised and Scargill's predictions came true. Strategically he was correct. Tactically he blew it. But this did not stop The Left and many anarchists giving

considerable support and, like my two union colleagues, we betide anyone who differed from the "party line", a party line we never voted on and were condemned if we tried to question. After the miners' strike both teachers and FE lecturers had industrial action but there was not a whisper of support from the miners.

THE 1926 GENERAL STRIKE

It takes me back to my grandfather's time, my mother's father. He was a pitman too but eventually managed to get a surface job, a staff job, as Master's Weighman. The pit was run on the gang system, a kind of worker's control. A group of

experienced miners worked as a team doing different jobs, some were hewers, some shotmen, some labourers and so on. When a coal tub was filled they put the gang's docket on it and it was run up to the surface. My grandfather, under the eye of the Union Weighman, checked and priced the quality of the coal and at the end of the week the gang convenor took the gang's wages and paid out the various rates to the gang members.

After the First World War the victorious allies decided Germany must pay war reparations and to do so Germany dumped huge quantities of cheap coal on the world market which reduced the price of coal so employers were forced to reduce the miners' wages. The miners objected which led to a strike which for a few days became The General Strike but the miners stayed out for nine months.

The managers and staff: weighmen, deputies, enginemen stayed on to keep the pumps going to prevent the pit flooding. Eventually the coal company could not afford to

pay these without production so laid them off and my grandfather, who was also a Methodist lay preacher and knew many miners personally, went to see them pointing out the danger. If they did not come back to work they would not have a pit to work in. He was ignored. Eventually the men gave up the strike. Meanwhile the pit had flooded and was unworkable, the coal company had gone into liquidation and the pit never opened again. Most miners never got jobs until the Second World War when they were offered jobs in the forces. My grandfather being older never worked again but as his two daughters were both working he received no unemployment benefit. The Left blindly supported the miners all through.

ANARCHISM AND TRADE UNION DISPUTES

I am not against people showing solidarity with striking colleagues but examine the situation carefully. Is their action justified? Are the strikers members of an open occupation or an artificial closed shop only benefiting a few? In other words comrades be selective. Go for meaningful support for right actions. Ignore what other Leftists do especially Trotskyists - you know they'll drop support if another cause comes up. Offer meaningful help and advice not just secondary picketing.

The last time my union went on strike in fairly cold weather I ran the soup kitchen delivering hot soup, tea and coffee to the strikers. This heartens people and stiffens their resolve. You can do the same. But be realistic. Sometimes you or they will lose. Learn from activities. And do not under any circumstances put over your political views. Wait for them.

to ask - if they do ask - only then will you have a meaningful audience. They will listen to people they respect. They turn off when tub thumpers spout. Have you noticed the respect shown by drinkers to the Salvation Army in pubs? And, oh yes, use real language not Leftist cliches. And do not be surprised if the ones you are talking to turn out to be racist, sexist and authoritarian, that's real life.

ANARCHIST ALTERNATIVES

You have to work out whether it is worthwhile supporting people who frankly you would not give the time of day to. If so it is a good time to consider your own options. You cannot do everything. Make sure what you do is meaningful to you, not just some senseless ritual you have been cajoled into. As to what other action anarchists can do? There's a lot of it around and serious anarchist activists need help. Any of you support the Ploughshares group? Mind you when the Gandalf Six were travelling around the country to gain support for their trial - we in the London Anarchist Forum organised two successful meetings as did some in other areas but support from many so-called anarchist activists was minimal.

Anarchist action is action to further the ideas of anarchism, not left wing parasitism to increase your street cred in authoritarian Leftist circles which frankly has nothing to do with anarchism and which serious anarchists should ignore.

Peter Neville

(This article has been shortened: Editor)

People sometimes inquire what form of government is most suitable for an artist to live under. To this question there is only one answer. The form of government that is most suitable to the artist is no government at all.

Oscar Wilde