

brainwashed from birth. I was there to pay respects to the departed person, not to the state apparatus which had harnessed his last remains, but I was seen as at fault. I should have gone along with the ceremony anyway. I should have conformed. Also - and this is a good one - it was suggested I should have acquiesced, just in case the state had got it right about god!

It is the social pressure arising out of "policing" by others which is one of the psychological weapons of the state. Social ostracisation can be more cruel than a prison cell and in a technological age where images of the state are seen everywhere, it is not easy to publicise or give credibility to other ways of living. Moreover, there is the fear of the unknown. Life under state control may lead to moans, groans and criticism, but for most people the alternative is another ruling group. The idea of *no ruling group* is too hard to contemplate when personal responsibility and the ability to trust and work with others has been eroded. As Tolstoy also said "the strength of the government rests on the ignorance of the people".

This is why individuality is at stake in a monochrome state world. The poet Shelley said that "the great instrument of moral good is the imagination" but for those whose imagination is crushed beneath the heel of conformity, then life without government cannot be imagined. However, as long as anarchist writers and their work remain available, then others can extricate themselves, like many of us have done, from the state machine.

Jean Robinson



Friends of Total Liberty

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The Match! A Journal of Ethical Anarchism; Post office Box 3012, Tucson, Arizona 85702 USA \$2.75 Send cash or stamps only.

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Green Anarchist: Available from 9 Ash Avenue, Galgate, Lancaster. Subscriptions £10 for 5 issues. Make cheques payable to Green Anarchist.

The Voluntaryist: P O Box 1275, Gramling SC 29348 USA. Edited by Carl Watner. \$20.00 for six issues.

Freedom: from Freedom Press, in Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. 50p per issue.

Imagine: A sceptical journal of philosophy and politics. \$3.50 or subscription \$5.00 from P.O. Box 8145, Reno, NV 89507 USA

Any Time Now: Anarchist decentralist magazine edited by Dick Martin with regular contributions from Larry Gambone. Subscription by donation to ATN, Affinity Place, Argenta, B.C., Canada (VOG 1B0)

The Cunningham Amendment
The Journal of the East Pennine Anarcrisps. Dedicated to revolutionary acts of joy and irreverence in a world increasingly weighed down by sterile bureaucracies. Send donation (suggest £1.00) to 1005 Huddersfield Road, Bradford BD12 8LP West Yorkshire.

Northern Voices
Diverse and interesting libertarian magazine featuring a range of articles on life in northern England and Wales. £1.20 (cash) Springbank, Hebden Bridge, HX7 7AA

The Dandelion (Individualist Anarchist)
Subscriptions are \$9.00 to people outside the USA. Available from Michael Coughlin Post Office Box Number 205, Cornucopia, Wisconsin 54327 USA.

The Individual published by the Society for Individual Freedom 6 Swan Terrace, Hastings TN34 3HT

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Total Liberty

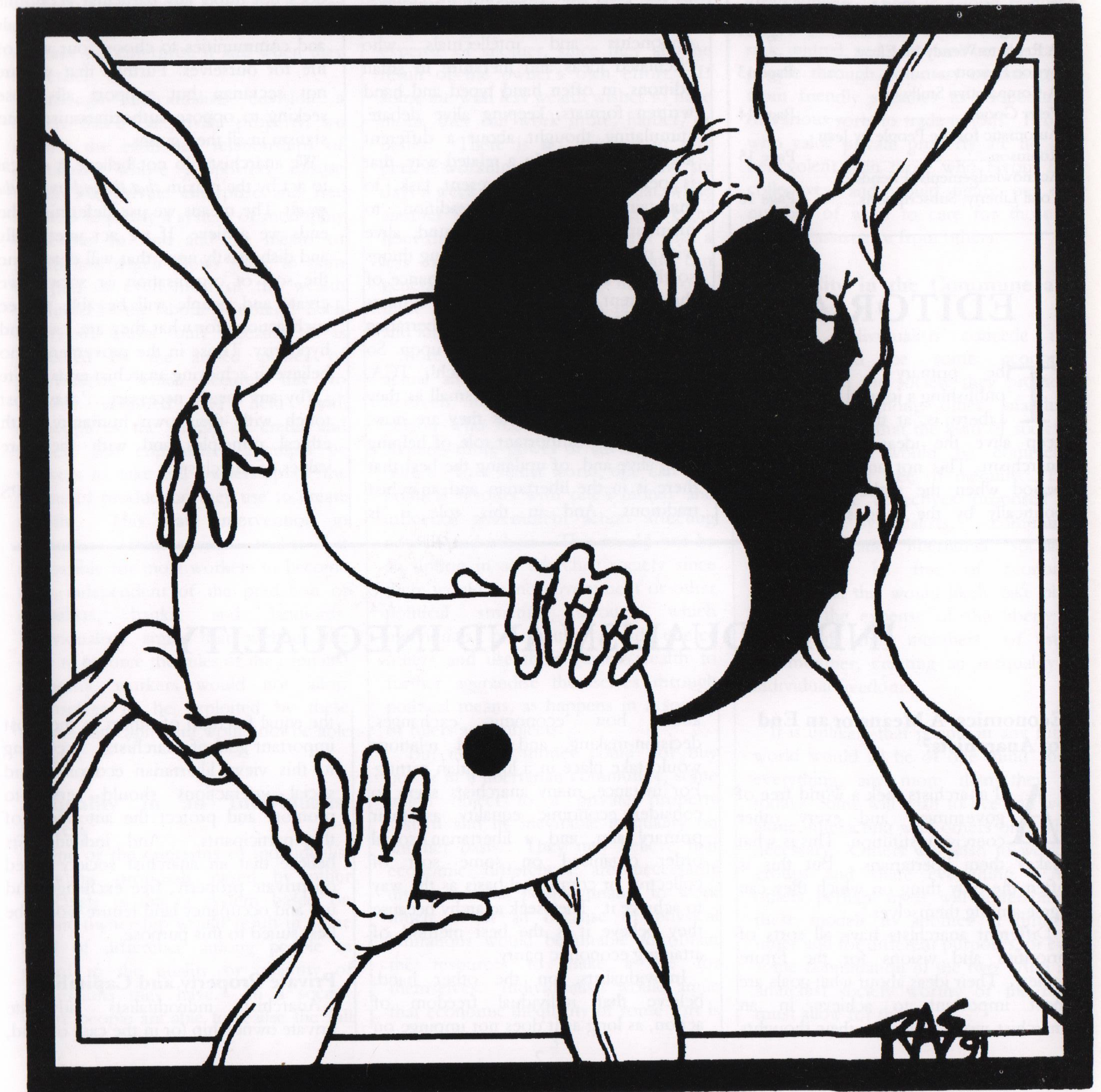
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EDITORIAL

The primary purpose of publishing a journal such as Total Liberty is, at the very least, to keep alive the ideas associated with anarchism. This not an easy task. In a period when the globe is dominated politically by the actions of a single

superpower, and economically by a range of multinational corporations, it is easy to feel disempowered and helpless in the face of such awful accumulations of political and economic might. It is easy to feel it is not worth the effort, or that the effort is ultimately pointless. That perhaps we should follow Voltaire's advice and cultivate our own garden. While there is no choice but to be realistic about the minuscule current level of influence of the various anarchist journals, it is important neither to underestimate it, nor to forget the possible future influence we may have.

In some of the darkest days of the Soviet Union, when few in either Russia or the West were predicting the collapse of that hellish leviathan, there were opponents and intellectuals who circulated ideas and literature in small editions, in often hand typed and hand written formats, keeping alive debate, stimulating thought about a different and better future. In a related way, that is perhaps our only present task, to maintain an alternative tradition, to maintain it alive, not moribund, alive with new ideas and ways of doing things so that if ever the global dominance of the current regime stumbles or retreats there will be anarchist and libertarian ideas worthy of being acted upon. So journals such as The Match!, TCA, Freedom, Any Time Now! small as they are, of little influence as they are now, still have the important role of helping keep alive and of updating the best that there is in the libertarian and anarchist traditions. And in this role it is

important that such journals re-examine ideas, and do not cling to those parts of the anarchist ideology which are no longer relevant or which have been shown to be based upon false principles.

Larry Gambone's *Anarchist Credo*, published in Total Liberty Vol. 3 Number 4, and reproduced again in this issue, outlines some of the more important anarchist principles. For example, that we reject violence as a tactic, that genuine anarchists act with respect and responsibility towards others, that we act ethically, that we are resolutely against the state, that we are opposed to taxation, that we oppose coercion, that we accept that anarchism does not imply any particular economic system but leaves us free as individuals and communities to choose our way of life for ourselves. Further that we are not sectarian but support all those seeking to oppose authoritarianism and statism in all their guises.

We anarchists do not believe it ethical to act by the maxim *that the ends justify the means*. The means we use determine the ends we achieve. If we act unethically and dishonestly now, that will determine the sort of organisation or society we create and people will be able to see such actions for what they are: cant and hypocrisy. Those in the movement who believe in achieving anarchist ends quote ...'by any means necessary...' have lost touch with their own humanity, with ethical principles and with the core values of anarchism.

JPS

INDIVIDUALISM AND INEQUALITY

Economics: A Means or an End for Anarchists?

All anarchists seek a world free of government and every other coercive institution. This is what makes them libertarians. But this is often the only thing on which they can agree among themselves.

Different anarchists have all sorts of priorities and visions for the future society. Their ideas about what goals are most important to achieve in an anarchist world influence their thoughts

about how economic exchanges, decision-making, and social relations would take place in a libertarian setting. For instance, many anarchists seem to consider economic equality as their primary aim, and a libertarian social order organised on some sort of collective or communal basis as the way to achieve it. They seek anarchy because they believe it is the best method of attaining economic parity.

Individualists, on the other hand, believe that individual freedom of action, as long as it does not impinge on

the equal freedom of others, is the most important goal of anarchists. According to this view, libertarian economic and social interactions should serve to promote and protect the autonomy of the participants. And individualists believe that an anarchist society based on private property, free exchange, and use and occupancy land tenure would be best suited to this purpose.

Private Property and Capitalism

Anarchist individualists advocate private ownership (or in the case of land,

tenure) of property and free exchange of goods and services both now and in any future anarchist society. We believe that individuals should retain the full value of whatever they produce and should be free to occupy and use only that land which they can put to use without employing the labour of others. Of course, being anarchists, we also maintain that individuals would be free to pool their labour, property, and/or land in order to increase their economic efficiency, better provide for others in need, or simply enjoy the company of their fellows. But these would still be voluntary, private arrangements, wherein the individuals concerned would share the products of their labour and contribute to the joint project as long as they see fit, while retaining their freedom to leave the enterprise if and when they so desire.

Although individualists envision a society based on private property, we oppose the economic relationships of capitalism, whose supporters misuse words like private enterprise and free markets to justify a system of monopoly ownership in land and the means of production which allows some to skim off part or even most of the wealth produced by the labour of others. Such a system exists only because it is protected by the armed power of government, which secures title to unjustly acquired and held land, monopolizes the supply of credit and money, and criminalises attempts by workers to take full ownership of the means of production they use to create wealth. This state intervention in economic transactions makes it impossible for most workers to become truly independent of the predation of capitalists, banks, and landlords. Individualists argue that without the state to enforce the rules of the capitalist economy, workers would not allow themselves to be exploited by these thieves and capitalism would not be able to exist.

Inequality in an Individualist Society

One of the criticisms of individualist economic proposals raised by other anarchists is that a system based on private ownership would result in some level of difference among people in regard to the quality or quantity of possessions they have. In a society where people are able to realise the full

value of their labour, one who works harder or better than another will possess or have the ability to acquire more things than someone who works less or is less skilled at a particular occupation. But economic inequality would not have the same significance in a non-capitalist anarchist society that it does in today's societies.

The differences in wealth that arise in an individualist community would likely be relatively small. Without the ability to profit from the labour of others, generate interest from providing credit, or extort rent from letting out land or property, individuals would not be capable of generating the huge quantities of assets that people can in a capitalist system. Furthermore, the anarchist with more things does not have them at the expense of another, since they are the result of the owner's own effort. If someone with less wealth wishes to have more, they can work more, harder, or better. There is no injustice in one person working 12 hours a day and six days a week in order to buy a boat, while another chooses to work three eight hour days a week and is content with a less extravagant lifestyle. If one can generate income only by hard work, there is an upper limit to the number and kind of things one can buy and own.

More important, though, than the actual amount of economic inequality between individuals is whether the person who has more wealth thereby acquires more power or advantage over others. In a statist world, one can buy political favours with one's money and influence government action affecting oneself and others. This would not be an option in an anarchist society since there would be no government or other political structure through which individuals or groups could coerce others and use their greater wealth to further aggrandise themselves through political means, as happens in a society of rulers and subjects.

But even if money could not buy power in a libertarian community, some might object to a private property system and its inevitable inequality on another basis. They may believe that economic differences are necessarily unjust, or that people unable to work much or at all because of physical limitations would be unable to obtain the resources to make a life for themselves. Individualists would argue that economic inequality of some sort is

inevitable in any truly free society. People have varied needs, wants, and mental and physical abilities and are therefore unequal in many ways. Some produce more, some produce less, and there is no injustice in the fact that this would result in different amounts of wealth. A society or community that prohibited those who so desired from retaining the full value of what they produce in order to create an artificial economic levelling would infringe on the freedom of individuals and thus violate a basic anarchist principle.

As for those who produce little or nothing because of some disability, there are other means of providing for the less fortunate than communal economic arrangements. There is a long tradition of groups of individuals taking care of sick, injured, and otherwise incapacitated people through voluntary organisations from friendly societies to cooperatives of various sorts to trade unions. People who value private property are no less benevolent than those who favour free collectives, and would figure out any number of ways to care for those in need of assistance from others.

Inequality in the Commune and Collective

While individualists concede that there would be some economic inequality in the society they promote, their critics among other anarchists often presume that the kind of societies they envision would be completely egalitarian and free of inequity. But, although the collectives proposed by anarchist syndicalists, communist anarchists, and libertarian socialists might well be free of economic differences, this would likely take place only at the expense of the liberty of some of the members of such communities, creating an inequality in individual freedom.

It is unlikely that people in any future world would all be of one mind about everything, any more than they are today. Some will wish to live and work alone, interacting with others only when necessary. Others will wish to work in groups and share everything. And others, perhaps most, will prefer one of these models to another at different times and for different purposes, or even some combination of the two. And any anarchist society worthy of the name must allow for this.

As noted above, individualists believe that pooling of resources, land, or anything else by autonomous individuals can be fully compatible with individual freedom. Unfortunately, however, there are some anarchists who advocate the outright abolition of private property, not allowing any opportunity for those who prefer a different economic arrangement. If such an economic model was imposed on the world, those who wished to live otherwise would not have the freedom to do so. Allowing people no alternative to joining the local commune or syndicate would simply replace the tyranny of state capitalism with the oppression of an involuntary "community." There would consequently be an inequality between the society, or more likely, the committee or other "delegates" who presume to represent it, and the individual. The group will make decisions and the dissenting individual must comply. Thus, in many a collective or commune no one will be poorer than another, but some will certainly be less free.

This is not to imply that all communist or collectivist anarchists believe in imposing their economic views on those

who view the world differently. Many who advocate some form of communal society are as committed to personal liberty as are private property advocates. But there is a tendency on the part of many anarchists to present a "one size fits everyone" economic model for the future, not realising the possible implications of such an all-encompassing ideal.

For Economic and Social Freedom

Individualists see the economic system they propose as simply the means to an end. And that end is a free society of free individuals. We believe that only free economic exchange, based on private property, can produce and protect every individual's autonomy, their freedom to live as they see fit, which we believe is the essential goal of the anarchist project. Moreover, while such an arrangement would encourage and reward individual initiative, more collectively-oriented people would be free to construct whatever group enterprises they wish by coming together and sharing production, consumption, or both.

People in a society based on individual ownership of property and tenure of land would be able to choose whatever economic or social system best suits their interests, personal relationships, geographic location, and temperaments, without sacrificing the option of changing their minds and making other arrangements whenever they decide to do so. While some amount of economic inequality would be unavoidable in such a world, schemes which seek to bring about absolute parity in wealth and possessions would simply produce another kind of inequality, where individual wants and desires would be subservient to those of the group, and limits would be placed on the freedom of those who wish to live their lives in their own way. Such social inequality between and among individuals and groups and the limits on liberty which it would produce are precisely what individualists, and, one would hope, all other genuine anarchists, seek to eliminate from the world.

Joe Peacott



A Teenage Anarchist Speaks: by Patrick MacLeod Cullen, 16

I have been a left-leaning person for my entire life, and rejected church and religion at the tender age of three. My liberal views, on subjects as diverse as sexuality, freedom of expression and society in general, however, didn't fully take root in the anarchist cause until about the age of eight or nine. I decided to write this article on the public perception of anarchism and politics from the view of a teenager after having been asked by a classmate for the hundredth time;

"Anarchism won't work - it's never been tried, and anyway, who would keep the people in order without police?"

Firstly, most children are popularly assumed to have little or no inclination towards social responsibility or politics, and any that do are assumed to be parroting the views of their parents. However, as recent events have shown, us children are quite capable of organising - both spontaneously and rapidly - protests, dissension and individual views at odds with not only

our parents, but the state. The state itself, however, far from encouraging this display of political awareness, stamped down on it. I was present at the anti-war demonstration by schoolchildren and some students in Parliament Square on the 19th of March, the day before war was declared. I saw, firsthand, the way the establishment sent huge numbers of police - I counted at least 100 - with extra barriers and backup from other police units to prevent us getting out of hand. I saw

how they treated an entirely peaceful protest by children and students, how they attacked a sit-down protest, and how one policeman punched a child of nine in the face.

In addition to this, we were declared truants, and our families made liable for prosecution - for what? Allowing us to engage in debate, which the government itself claims to want? In reality, the government, like all governments, merely wishes us children to listen to the Party Line, to agree and to shut up. So I take great pleasure in providing a differing view for my classmates and teachers to listen to and to debate. I have noted, however, that, largely thanks to the equating of anarchism with chaos in the media, the vast majority of people seem to believe that anarchism stands for a violent revolution, with executions, internment camps, and Soviet-style secret police.

Furthermore, even when I have convinced people that this is not the case, and that Bakunin predicted Marx's Communist Manifesto would give way to such a dictatorship, they say "Ah yes, but surely if it works, we should be in an anarchist society now?" A valid point, you might say. Yet in fact it is us anarchists who are largely to blame for this opinion. Our inability to express our

ideology to children and teenagers means that the vast majority of each generation grows up ignorant of anarchism and what it stands for. Even those children and adults who disagree with anarchism, must agree, under the principle of free speech, that anarchist thought should be allowed the same scope in schools as, say, Labour's. All the mainstream political parties in Britain have youth wings, such as the Young Conservatives, but anarchism, by its very nature, doesn't - and shouldn't. But we, as anarchists (of all sorts) must raise awareness of anarchist ideas and ideals.

By sending free copies of magazines or pamphlets to school libraries, for instance, or by putting them in public libraries. I have recently introduced *Total Liberty* and *Freedom* to my school library, and was rewarded by seeing them read, during lunchtime, by thirteen to nineteen year old boys who live in Windsor, an area not renowned for its revolutionary tendencies!

Surely this is a good omen, if boys whom I know ignore newspapers such as the Times and the Telegraph, will sit down and seriously read the text-heavy *Total Liberty*, or read, and then think about, *Freedom's* articles. For schoolchildren are, even if we fail to

acknowledge it ourselves, anarchistic. We organise ourselves into groups, we cope when a teacher doesn't arrive for a lesson, we set up activities such as a five-a-side football tournament at lunch with no help from teachers, we set up a school magazine that criticises the staff, the school, and the establishment, and so on. Surely we, as anarchists, should take advantage of this, and reclaim the word 'Anarchy' from the Sex Pistols and the Daily Mail.

In closing then, the central message of my article is this: please, as anarchists, do whatever you can to help us young anarchists in our ongoing crusade to wrest the word anarchism from the politicians, the media and the state's portrayal of 'anarchism = chaos'. For us children are willing to listen, and act - as we showed in our opposition to the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. Without our support, anarchism in this country, at least, is doomed to stagnate at best and to shrink or die at worst - for all ideas need new blood with new views and opinions, ever evolving and ever changing, and this must be the future of anarchism.



IT'S A WONDER ANYTHING WORKS

I visited an old friend a while back. We got into a conversation about the irrational and inefficient nature of government bureaucracy and he made the point that such problems weren't just limited to the state. "It's a wonder anything works," he said and gave examples from the corporate sector. And he was right. Virtually all large institutions suffer from such problems. Why they do is an interesting question.

I think the reason lies in organisation. Almost all large-scale institutions are run

by authoritarian hierarchies. Now, not all hierarchies are authoritarian. For example, there are status hierarchies. Everyone admires Luciano Pavarotti, but he can't fire us or put us in jail, for he has no coercive power. It is the power to coerce that creates the problem.

The system of top-down coercive institutions is based upon something fundamentally irrational. Those in control don't do the actual work on the shop floor or office, and those who do

the work, don't have any real say in it. The same holds true for the politicians and bureaucrats who are supposed to represent us. They can't possibly know what our real needs are. Only we know our real needs, but we have little ability to do anything about it. This creates a situation where those in control are acting more or less blindly, since they lack accurate information about what is going on below them.

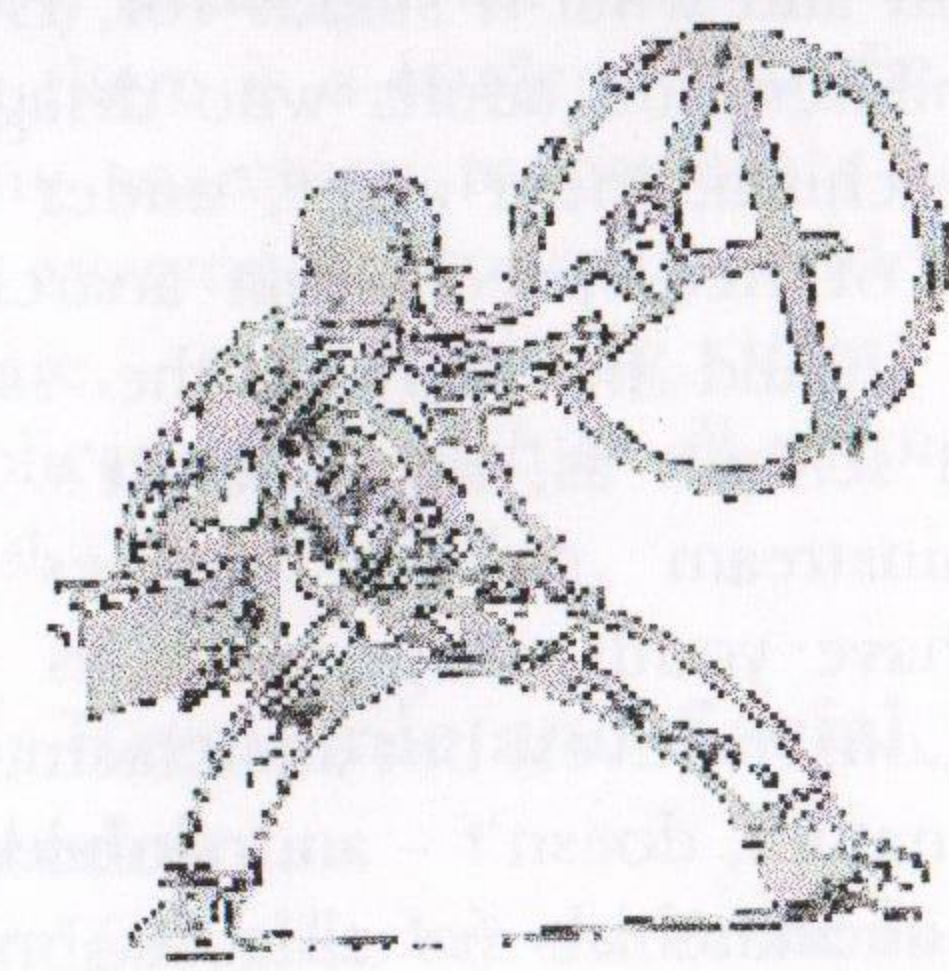
The sort of person who gets along well in an authoritarian hierarchy is the yes-

man. Thus bosses end up hearing only what they want to hear and not the truth. The main concern of everyone in such a structure is to protect their arse. Mistakes are only a problem when found out, and for those on the upper levels of the human dog-pile, these are easily blamed on subordinates. This increases the bitterness of the lower ranks. Sociopathic personalities are attracted to power. They are master manipulators and filter upward. States and corporations are founded by brilliant sociopaths, but in time end up in the hands of dullards, who then run them into the ground. Creative individualists – the sort of people who tell the truth – are filtered out. Thus, the brutal and the inferior take command and the institution becomes starved for knowledge and intelligent ideas. Authoritarian structures punish subordinates for not obeying the commands of those on high. Hence, the folks at the bottom fear and distrust those at the top. This leads to mutual resentment and the order-takers find a hundred ways to ignore the rules or thwart their masters. A climate of continual conflict is engendered and much energy is wasted by both parties, energy much better spent doing the task at hand.

Authoritarian hierarchies are a hold-over from the Late Bronze Age and are rooted in superstition. The Bronze Age tyrant, as a representative on Earth of the Sky God, was considered sacred. The divine aspect of the tyrant lay in the title and had nothing to do with the type of person he was. He could be, and almost always was, cruel, stupid and psychotic, but had to be adored and obeyed nonetheless. Some of his glamour rubbed off on his subordinates, and the common folks had to love and obey them as well, even though they were little better than sword wielding Hell's Angels.

How is it this archaic and irrational system still exists? The power to coerce is psychologically satisfying to the minority who have the "privilege" of ruling over us. Domination is a compensation for a weak ego. This low self-esteem is the result of family and societal repression, the logical outgrowth of a system based upon coercive hierarchies. Thus, a vicious circle is engendered which perpetuates domination down through the ages.

Larry Gambone



Respect My Authority!

Pennywise are a west coast US punk band. It is not too often I get inspired to write something for *Total Liberty* after listening to Pennywise but there is a track on their 2001 album release *Land of the Free* called rather bluntly 'Fuck Authority' in which the band assert the need to challenge prevailing norms and values. The track got me thinking. Where does authority come from? How does it manifest itself? What should anarchists do about it? Is there such a thing as anarchist authority? Can authority be a force for good? What is the relationship between authority and power? These are critical questions, which I do not believe the libertarian milieu has given sufficient thought to. Addressing authority is likely to be the biggest challenge we will face trying to create a truly free world. Anarchists have mostly pointed to the power of the state and religion as the sources of authority in modern capitalism as well as the economic system itself. Hence Bakunin's slogan 'No Gods, No Masters'. Authority, the means by which decisions and actions or their absence are given legitimacy is a much more slippery and complex notion than this however.

While there is no doubt that the state still attempts to stamp its authority on us whether we like it or not as the decision to support the US invasion of Iraq shows, we as individuals and as part of groups though also make decisions that affect others. We frequently claim or seek authority for our decisions.

Authority justifies what we do or do not do.

Consider your evening meal. Are you going to have meat with your potatoes and vegetables tonight? What gives you the right to, de facto; take the life of an animal (if you gave up eating meat 87 less animals a year would die)? The Cambridge philosopher Peter Singer has made a pretty solid ethical case against the eating of meat in his books *Animal Liberation* and *Practical Ethics*. Christians justify (claim authority) to eat meat because they believe that god put animals on the earth for the use (exploitation) of humans. This is the source of their authority to eat animals. You also hear people justify eating animals on the grounds that if we didn't they would die anyway. This is an interesting argument which implicitly states that humans have created a power structure that has made farm animals subordinate to us. This power relationship gives us the right to eat animals.

Most people of course don't bother to consider why they eat animals. Modern shopping ensures they do not need too. Packaging and marketing of meat products in supermarkets take the ethics out of meat eating (and much else). Shopping distances us from the consequences of consumption. Shopping then could be seen as another form of authority for eating meat. On the other hand so could the fact that our families eat meat. This makes eating meat appear normal. It is what we do. There is a whole other debate about whether humans evolved to eat meat or not. The answer is almost certainly yes (although in the past we probably ate much less than we do now) but as vegans show you do not need to eat meat to stay healthy. Which takes us back to the original question - by what authority do some humans claim the right to eat meat?

The point of this discussion is not to try to convince you to become vegan but to try to illustrate the complexity of the notion of authority. Too often anarchists have concentrated on the big sources of authority such as the police, courts and laws at the expense of every day sources like community, family or customs. As sources of authority are also locations of power dismantling the state and its trappings alone will be insufficient to create an anarchist world. We will need

to tackle the thorny issue of authority as well.

There are many ways in which individual and group authority can be enforced: foot-dragging, rioting, intimidation, threats, gossip, gestures, strikes, patriarchy, sexism. Ever noticed any of these behaviours on anarchist email discussion boards? The list taken from *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* edited by Paul Griffiths, (Macmillan, 1996) shows authority is a real hornet's nest! We experience it all day long.

Anarchists certainly do not believe that authority in itself is wrong. Most would argue, for example, that in an industrial dispute the authority of the majority who vote to strike should supercede the wishes of the minority who do not want to strike. There is a moral authority of solidarity which exceeds the rights of the individual. While this may be true in respect of a collective dispute, anarchists would not of course argue that the rule of the majority should always dominate.

This tension between the individual and the community has been inherent in anarchism since at least 1844 when Stirner's *The Ego and its Own* was published. Most anarchists believe that at the social level freedom "is anchored in a social being that celebrates individualisation" (*Anarchism* by Sean Sheehan, Foci 2003). Does this really square the circle though? How possible is it to take account of the interests of the individual when they are out of step with the majority? How meaningful is the right to consideration if ultimately the majority will claim ethical or moral authority for what they do?

If there is one work of fiction all anarchists should read it is Ursula Le Guin's 1974 science fiction classic *The Dispossessed*. In this book she imagines an anarchist world on the moon Anarres. In theory every one is free. There is no state, there are no laws. The trappings of power have gone but authority remains. In Le Guin's finely crafted story authority resides in the community and the status quo. One character says "you can't crush ideas by suppressing them. You can crush them by ignoring them. By refusing to think – refusing to change". On Anarres society has become a heavy mass that individuals or new ideas or creative endeavours find it impossible to emerge from. While considerably better than the nearby capitalist world of Urras, Anarres has

lost its revolutionary zeal and openness. Greed and competition have pretty much disappeared only to be replaced by conformity.

Le Guin's novel highlights not only the manifestations of authority but also its sources, many of which in modern society stem from its economic superstructure. Given this it is reasonable to assume that if we dismantle this, changes of attitude and action will follow over time. Christianity in England for example is no longer in a position to enforce its authority on our lives as a whole, although at an individual level there are still people and families who determine their actions according to the Bible. Sociobiologists have considered why religion has evolved as an idea throughout human history and across the world. Their conclusion is that religion as a source of ultimate authority has been necessary to ensure human order. Most people could in the past be compelled to behave if they faced an eternity of damnation for transgressing. What forms of authority would bind an anarchist society together?

Not all sources of authority are external to us. Michel Foucault observed that many of us internalise notions of 'appropriate' behaviour and belief. We believe for example that capitalism is natural and permanent. We become our own gaolers. These beliefs are reinforced every time we open a newspaper or watch the TV or talk to work colleagues, although not when we read *Total Liberty!* In fact as anarchists know there are plenty of ways in which people subvert prevailing norms. No form of authority is universal and all powerful. Resistance and transgression is possible but what is interesting is that people who transgress against prevailing norms and values frequently seek to justify their actions claiming an alternative authority. Those who trash McDonalds on anti-capitalist demos justify their actions, claiming an authority for their violence.

I believe that anarchists need to think more deeply about the notion of authority. It is a much more difficult and fuzzy concept than power. Power is very tangible as anyone who has been on a demo will know! We can confront it, subvert it and dismantle it in many ways. The great insight of classic anarchists was to realise, unlike marxists, the importance of power structures like the state. Taking over the state would never

be a route to freedom. Authority though is less visible. Sometimes it is in our heads. Some times it manifests itself behind closed doors in our homes. It is multi layered and textured but it guides what we do. People will look for authority for their actions in any society including an anarchist one. Pennywise might want to fuck authority but do they or we really have a firm grip on what it is?

Richard Griffin

GETTING THAT MESSAGE OUT THERE

THE GARSTANG MARKET TEST

Maybe this is wrong but I have a strong feeling that never before in the history of the world has the anarchist message been so needed, the case for anarchism been so clear. The state is totalitarian, corrupt, dying on its feet. Our alternative is vital. Yet it becomes harder and harder to put our political philosophy across. In many cases, anarchists have turned completely inwards. Partly, this is a consequence of the power of capitalism in all aspects of life, especially advertising and all the various Bread and Circus type distractions. Partly it is a result of official propaganda excluding and misrepresenting. Partly it follows from our own inefficiency.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Garstang is a small rural town in Lancashire, which I take as a representation of the ordinary public. The 'Garstang Market Test' basically says we have to be able to put our message across to ordinary people. If it cannot be understood, if it cannot make sense to the ordinary people on Garstang Market, then it isn't going to work.

SIMPLE, DIRECT, SUSTAINED

It isn't just the words, though these are important, it is also the way we say it. We are in competition with multi national advertising, cultural hype around Harry Potter, or news and propaganda. What we do has to compete with this, whether we like it or not. It has to be better than they are. Our message therefore needs to be simpler, more direct, more colourful, stylish, and linked to clear and crisp images. It needs to be repeated, over and over again, not

just for days or weeks but for months, years; all across different media, in different circumstances. Posters, stickers, T-Shirts, websites, books, magazine covers or inserts, on leaflets dropped inside library books, hidden in tourist brochures, or handed out at election time. If we cannot reach through to the everyday people, then we will have less and less impact on the situation, less relevance.

QUALITY STANDARD KITEMARK

To go with this, we need a new symbol, something different from the A

in the circle, a new emblem which identifies us as anarchists, but it should also represent quality, integrity, progress. It might be something positive like a distinctive plant, a tree or a beehive. Over time, if this became associated with other positive campaigns and activities, the emblem might take on a quality assurance aspect, like the safety kitemark.

DELIVERY

If we just think of anarchist propaganda as a form of advertising, this symbol will not mean very much. The customers and stall holders on Garstang

Market want something much better than this, they demand a product which delivers. Sit down and write out a list of all the positive things you can think of about anarchism and the anarchist movement. What have we achieved? What successes have we got under our belts? Then, try to tell the Garstang Market people about them. Or, if you can't think of any, go out there and create some first.

Steve Booth,
Editor
Green Anarchist

Government, Society and its critics:

Dick Frost responds to previous issues of Total Liberty

Why are exploitative societies so often stable? The question has been raised several times in recent copies of TL. In Volume 3, Number 2, JPS writes that, "however depressing it may be, we must conclude that they (ruling elites) carry out their murderous work with the consent of the majority of the governed". On the following page, Larry Gambone writes: "The state consists of the rule of a small and often conspiratorial elite forcing the mass of the population to do its bidding".

It is possible that both these statements are true; no doubt they could be made to fit together. Certainly some regimes are violently oppressive but in the liberal democracies, other factors rule.

For most of the time we, the people, give consent to very few of the actions of government. Some decisions - like that to invade Iraq - are clearly opposed by the majority. But most are simply incomprehensible and beyond the possibility of either blind or informed consent. Only full-time civil servants have a half-way adequate grasp of the facts on, say, education, health service funding, refugees, genetic engineering, China, water reserves, energy, etc. Politicians read their briefs; Parliament stages truncated debates, the Press grab for titbits of a policy to sway, deceive or illuminate their readers. The public, like

a peasant at the plough, keeps its head down waiting for the rain.

How could 25 million adults understand the intricacies of any policy - the facts, the legal jargon, the arcane vocabulary, the history, the exceptions, implications, speculations - the sheer weight of it? Why should we try?

The fact is that Government of even tiny states cannot be by the people. It is done to the people and is usually tolerated, like the weather. And when, after a tedious ten or 15 years, the people are pissed off, they kick out Tweedledum and vote in Tweedledee, theoretically in support of, and opposition to, 30,000 word manifestos very few have seen and even fewer have read. Hope and habit triumph over experience yet again.

Even this is only part of the picture, for we know that government is not only incomprehensible, it is also secretive, dishonest and corrupt. Apathy isn't enough. The development of the atomic bomb was a state secret; Egypt was invaded in 1956 on the basis of a plot by the UK, France and Israel; the supply of arms to oppressive regimes was covered up. Scandals - like the Profumo affair and Bloody Sunday - are buried in inquiries by complaisant judges.

The stories of colonial murder since 1945 - I ignore the outrages of the previous 300 years - in Kenya, Cyprus, Aden, Malaysia are denied and buried,

only to fester for 20 or 30 years before they seep like poison into the realm of tolerated truth, their virulence spent. Occasionally, institutionalised child abuse, police atrocities, hospital scandals or prison riots provoke inquiries, reports, recommendations and promises. Heads roll to safer jobs and cynics wait for the next tragedy. We do not wait in vain.

How is consent imaginable in such a political system? I am not demeaning the people. The system is not intended to serve them. In England its basic outlines stem from a settlement, which broke the power of the crown and established the power of landowners, who subsequently bent sufficiently to let in the wealthy capitalists of industry. They happy few were "the people" and they were able effectively to control the system: they owned it and it served them.

Through the trick of representative government, they later gave the masses the charade of democracy. That is what we have still and its tatters conceal less and less each year our naked powerlessness. That any anarchist should even discuss the value of voting (Wendy McElroy in TL Vol. 3 No. 4 refers to a debate on the subject in America) surprises me.

None of this means that we are governed by force (Gambone). This argument is often taken to be the message of the great 17th century writer

Thomas Hobbes, who makes frequent appearances in TL - not surprisingly since his ideas snap persistently at the heels of anarchism.

Larry does not deal in his article with the theory of coercive government but Joe Peacott reviews, in TL Vol.3 No.2, two interesting pamphlets by Richard Garner about Hobbes which raise the issue.

Hobbes argued that the State was essential to protect the people from the chaos of lawlessness, lawlessness being worse than anything that even the worst State could do. The State would arise out of - or be accepted because of - rational self-interest. Garner, however, believes that enlightened self-interest could produce a co-operative, peaceful society in which the lawlessness which inevitably occurred would be controlled by private individuals and groups.

I am not that optimistic. His argument depends on people being free to develop co-operative structures. Given a struggle over the distribution of scarce resources, the most likely outcome of any free market is the success of the most powerful gang, leading to its establishment as the Government...the old, old story.

Hobbes is generally taken as the apologist for State power (as Gambone describes it) but he does not simply say that people should obey Government because the alternative would be worse. He says that people will (almost) always willingly accept and obey whatever government they find themselves living under no matter how bad it is. They desire order and security and they expect to get it if they obey the law. This does not mean they consent to the actions of "their" government; they tolerate them to ensure a degree of security, in spite of its many failings.

Hobbes saw around him such acquiescence: the breakdown of society into civil war; the acceptance of the Cromwellian Commonwealth; the disorder of the weak government which followed Cromwell's death, and the happy return of a monarchy which was far less efficient and much more corrupt than the Commonwealth. The people were as willing to accept Cromwell as Charles as long as each imposed peace and order.

What Hobbes describes is the inherent social nature of homo sapiens, which inclines us all to obedience because we need society. Any effective structure

will do; and we tend to prefer the devil we know, though bad, to the alternatives boldly promised by little known revolutionaries. Coercion is seldom necessary.

This tolerance of bad Government (is there any other?) was something John Locke, intellectual father of liberalism, also recognised. A few years after Hobbes, Locke wrote that rebellion should never happen because the people were almost infinitely patient. Rebellion was caused by really stupid Government - so stupid it deserved to be overthrown. Locke justified rebellion against tyranny, as to a lesser extent did Hobbes. (Hobbes said that rebellion was justified if Government had become so bad that it was actually worse than the condition of lawlessness; however, it was justified in the end only by success!)

The point I am making, following Hobbes and Locke, is that, in liberal democracies, Government does not rule by force; the people are willing to be tolerably oppressed and will put up with bad regimes far beyond the demands of reason. We have only to look around the world or glance at a few pages of history to see the truth of that.

However, I do not agree with Steve Booth (TL Vol. 3 No. 3) that the State is now more authoritarian than ever. Though it has closed circuit television and sophisticated eaves-dropping technology, I doubt that it is more "total" than Elizabethan England, Calvin's Geneva, Germany under either the Gestapo or the stazi or Stalin's tyranny.

But what is to be done, given the supine nature of consent? Steve suggests we shun "those who actively participate in the regime". Considering the extent of the State, I cannot even imagine how this might work. I wonder how I would be effected since I live on State benefit!

Richard Griffin (TL Vol. 3 No. 3) says both that "people... have... internalised the idea of the State, becoming in the process their own prison warder" but that we can "create new ways of being": that we can "imagine (the State and capitalism) away. I doubt it. So does Richard. He says (after Foucault) that people generally find it impossible to perceive an alternative reality to the State myth. Handfuls of anarchists, Flat Earthers, religious cultists, et al may create alternative realities in their minds but his claim that the great revolutions

succeeded because they created a new reality/myth puts the cart before the horse. Myths are spun around the facts of existence. So are revolutions.

Larry Gambone says quite rightly but too hopefully that large majorities of the people are quietly rebellious. They want less government, decentralisation, community power, lower taxes, etc. - and other such "libertarian positions". Sadly, people who share some ideas, beliefs or desires with libertarians are not necessarily of that ilk. The high Tory libertarian who wants lower taxes, less Government and the decriminalisation of drugs, or the working class red neck who hates the police and has no respect for other people's property would string up the consistent anarchist. It is never safe to trust people who hold specific views and prejudices with which we agree. I was once helping in Palestine with a student whose hostility to Israeli occupation I shared but who wanted a united Palestine-Israel state ruled according to Sharia law.

Larry, Richard Griffin, Steve Booth and others see hope in co-ops, LETS schemes, allotments, credit unions and so on. Richard likens such alternatives to the embryonic capitalism in 14th century Florence. Rory Bowskill, in his review of "Permaculture" (TL Vol. 3 No. 2) suggests that alternative networks which provide food, health, education etc. undermine both the state and capitalism and he envisages a time when "a call for total non-compliance with the State... will be responded to with enthusiasm by millions..."

I have helped set up two LETS schemes, have friends who "home school" their children, and have been in various little co-ops and one sad commune. However much I sympathise, I do not see these swallows as harbingers of summer. Many people involved are not seriously libertarian: they do not want to see the end of government as they know it, nor of private property as they enjoy it; few doubt the value of family life and they certainly are averse to the risks of serious change.

Many support alternatives out of hope or for ideological reasons; such support lacks the reliable basis of need. They withdraw just a little way from accepted norms; they do not withdraw from the State. As Larry says, the "democracies"

permit a fair degree of freedom and most of us enjoy bits of it.

Where alternatives are making life better for the most deprived and exploited – where the beneficiaries are the organisers and controllers – we glimpse through rose-tinted glasses the new world. If such self-regulating actions were to grow, what might they not achieve? This is Rory Bowskill's dream again; but sadly, self-help through cooperative organisations has usually been a stage towards full membership of mainstream society. Examine the alternatives of the last near-two hundred years: the co-operatives, building societies, sock clubs, the Trustee Savings Bank, Workers' Educational Association, even the trade unions. What can withstand the power of capitalism?

All this negativity (on my part) will get us nowhere. We must all act; we must

do what we believe is or could be useful. I support alternative structures; I would support the Manchester People's Forum but with greater scepticism. Such organisations attract ideologues: they are Swiss cafes for exiles who stay at home.

What we have to face is that anarchism insofar as it is concerned with society is a reformist movement, though with a revolutionary objective. Hence we should seek improvements at every point as long as those improvements are clearly on the road to utopia and are sign-posted as such. There are principles of anarchist organisation which could and should be adopted now by any organisation intent on serving the public as opposed to making money. These principles include total openness, total accountability, the absolute right of the people as users, patients, clients, voters, to question and get answers from

any individual or structure which claims to act in our name or which claims power over us; hierarchies which are functional and temporary. There are also, of course, liberal rights which we should support while they are necessary – such as equality before the law, the rights to assembly, freedom of speech, and so on.

Why are alternatives like LETS schemes and others I have spoken about worth more to anarchists than the reform and improvement of institutions which exist to satisfy human needs and which almost everyone has to use?

[The editor invites responses for inclusion in the next edition of Total Liberty.]

WELL FARES THE STATE

Towards the end of the Major Government, and after a series of benefit cuts from 1970 Michael Portillo in a rare moment of candour, came to remark that he foresaw state benefits becoming reduced to "nugatory" (trifling) levels. How pleased he must be to see Labour's "reforms" – derisory indexing of payments and huge rises in Council Tax – pushing steadily in that direction. To be fair, Labour has increased those benefits that are means-tested, but at the expense of other claimants who still have savings. The latter are being hammered by increased charges for services and the Council Tax.

Council Tax is coming to operate as a perverse "wealth tax" bearing heavily on those who, if not rich, have been thrifty. Local Authorities have been forced to jack up this iniquitous tax, because of deliberate underfunding by the Blairistas. Labour is forcing Councils to be their accomplices, in the drive to relieve ever more pensioners and the disabled of their savings, and push them into the poverty associated with means-testing. The obvious downside of this devious strategy to just about everyone, is the growing disincentive to save.

Now, the cost of welfare is intended to be met by National Insurance

contributions, paid mainly by those in work in proportion to income. Of course, those who pay for *insurance* should expect to receive some payout commensurate with their contributions; the forced shift towards means-testing reneges on that principle. Revealingly, Blair has said that most people saw NI contributions as "just another tax," they are, but he omitted to point out that they are an *hypothecated tax, they are intended for a specific purpose.*

On pensions, both parties seem to envisage a privatised future, but that idea has been seriously undermined by the recent vicious cuts made by private companies to pension entitlements; the victims here of course were given no opportunity to resist. Millions of people becoming progressively impoverished by both parties, are getting to feel disenfranchised, and are increasingly showing a disinclination to vote for a system which is loaded against them.

All of which one might have thought should prompt some serious thought within the anarchist movement, but there's precious few indications of that: we make our bland commitments to mutual aid, we point out that before the State muscled in, welfare provision was made voluntarily through sick clubs, friendly societies and the like. We don't

like to acknowledge that these informal arrangements were hopelessly inadequate to meet the totality of people's needs, or that there were instances of contributions being stolen. We are right to attack the grotesque over-reliance on prescription drugs, to encourage preventative medicine, healthy eating etc. but when will we get down to brass tacks: how would anarchists ensure that those unable to work or afford private medicine, pensions etc. could gain access to the means of life?

I have my own ideas, but first we need to backtrack. You see, the key reason why many governments are slashing welfare is to restrain company taxation and thereby maintain profitability in an increasingly competitive market. There are plenty of countries whose welfare arrangements are far worse than our own.

Now, those who aspire to *world* revolution can dismiss these facts, but others with their feet more firmly in contact with the ground, should be thinking about what could be done in the admittedly unlikely event of revolution in the UK. Even those who think in "evolutionary" rather than revolutionary terms, ought to have a

rough idea of where they are trying to go.

So, let's assume that we have consolidated a successful revolution. Do we now throw all the pieces in the welfare jig-saw into the air, and encourage people to sort it all out for themselves? We keep saying that free people can accept responsibility for their own lives, and don't need the State, but can they? ALL of them? The elderly? The disabled? The just plain feckless?

No, but in my view, we need not be so reckless. Alongside the factories, National Insurance could also be collectivised, with broad policy made subject to referenda. It sounds clumsy, but there are ways of making local organisations responsive to local needs within overall budget allocations. Not easy, I grant you, but surely preferable to starting all over again from scratch.

Whatever anarchists may think (or prefer not to think) out there are

millions of people who have an affection for the NHS certainly, and who are rightly distrustful of any changes which go beyond say, slimming down bureaucracies. Nobody, apart from the Treasury and HMG likes means-testing. Most would be opposed to a slash-and-burn approach *especially if it were to come out that there were no clear plans for a viable all-inclusive alternative.*

If the system of financing remained broadly the same as it is now, contributions would be compulsory, and as such unacceptable to many anarchists. I don't like it either, but see no practical alternative, given my view of the population's general psychological profile. We should also consider the corrosive effect on social solidarity which would arise if there were to be widespread dodging of contributions, accompanied by fraudulent claims. Having just got rid of one form of parasitism, capitalism it seems to me

foolish to open the doors to others. That said, I'm all in favour of a wholly voluntarist solution *provided there is the necessary degree of social responsibility present to make it work.* In conditions that were uncertain, I would expect libertarians to encourage pilot studies before taking such a difficult step.

The provision of health and welfare services are major functions which give the modern state much of its legitimacy.

We should not be sitting back resting on what is essentially a 19th Century critique devoid of clear and practical alternatives.

Footnote. I should own up to pinching the title of this essay from Colin Johnson, who used it for an article in Freedom many years back.

John Griffin

REVIEWS

Lobster 45: Published by Robin Ramsay, 214 Westbourne Avenue, Hull, HU5 3JB. Price: £3.00. Cheques payable to "Lobster".

For those who haven't seen Lobster magazine, it is best described as a neatly DTP'd and printed monochrome, bi-annual 48 page A4 magazine. No graphics, no frills, just straight forward articles. The topics that previous issues have covered range from the Kennedy assassinations, in-depth looks at the far right, conspiracies throughout the world, the murky world of spying, covert ops, EM and non-lethal weapons and related topics. This issue is more prosaic, focusing mainly on matters domestic (i.e. UK based). As would be expected one major focus is Iraq and Robin kicks off the zine with an excellent 6 page article looking at state sponsored lying in the run up to the invasion of Iraq. Lobster went to press before the latest bout of media interest in the story (which now seems to have abated again) so I look forward to part two in six months' time. Corrine Souza backs up Robin's piece with a discursive item with a take on "PR" and

Iraq. Corrine's Iraqi father was once an SIS agent in Baghdad and later in London so she has a unique view on events. Tom Easton follows this up with a long article on the British American Project and the war in Iraq. If you ever need to explain why the New Labour Government so slavishly follows the line from Washington, this is as good a place to start as any. Any discussion on Iraq will eventually lead on to the subject of oil, and Alfred Mendes's piece, "The Crux" deals with US penetration of the republics of the former USSR, in particular those with oil reserves and strategic importance. Another key area of interest are "think tanks", and William Clark in his article gives a detailed biographical account of those working under the "Demos" flag, including people such as Martin Jacques, Geoff Mulgan, Anita Roddick, David Marquand and Stuart Hall. *Think tanks* (whoever thought that name up?) are where many government policies first get aired and "thought through" (obviously not very far in many cases) and this particular bunch of lefty intellectuals, bureaucrats and capitalists aren't in business to benefit the working classes. More "not-quite-sleaze" is discussed in John Burne's article on David Mills (*Mr Tessa Jowell*) and his

links with the Italian leader Silvio Berlusconi, which fleshes out the brief flurry of articles that appeared in the press a month or so ago. Another major focus of this issue is the harassment of individuals by covert agencies of the state. In this issue the cases of Robert Henderson and Malcolm Kennedy are highlighted, including an extended (and for those not up to speed on the law in this area, pretty unintelligible) look at the secrecy ruling on Malcolm Kennedy's case. There is also a short item on the Force Reconnaissance Unit in Ulster, which (again) looks as though it went to press before the latest revelations came out of the Stevens Inquiry, especially relating to collusion with not only Loyalist but also Republican paramilitary outfits by the British military. Robin and Terry Hanstock both contribute sections of smaller items, there are some updates on stories featured in earlier issues and a couple of letters and the magazine is finished off with an excellent 8 page section of book reviews (including Corrine Souza's memoir of her father, which looks very interesting). All in all, another competent issue, perhaps lacking a "must-have" article (not surprising given that so much is now flooding onto the Internet and also as many of the academic authors have now

gone mainstream or have more prestigious journals in which to publish to further their academic careers). That said *Lobster* remains required reading for anyone who wants to peer below the surface of events and the flim-flam of the mass media. My only grumble is that it only comes out twice a year! Do also check out the web site at www.lobster-magazine.co.uk run by Ian Tresman

Richard Alexander

The Conserver Society Reviewed by Jonathan Simcock



The Conserver Society:
Ted Trainer. Pb Zed
Books London £15.00
ISBN 1 85649 276 1

Despite now being 8 years since its first appearance this remains a book worth reading. In essence it puts in practical terms many ideas derived in part at least from writers such as Kropotkin, Murray Bookchin and Colin Ward. Indeed many readers of *Total Liberty* may already be familiar with the works of Ted Trainer. His books previous to this include the well known *Abandon Affluence; Sustainable Development and Social Change* (first published 1985), and *Developed to Death: Rethinking Third World Development* (first published in 1989) both from Zed Books, London.

Trainer's work *The Conserver Society: Alternatives For Sustainability* almost qualifies as a manual for the practical

application of permaculture and social ecological ideas in the here and now.

Trainer develops the theme that western industrial society is unsustainable and supports his argument with a host of statistics from a wide range of sources and projects. The ideas and practical suggestions made by Trainer certainly show the influence of Murray Bookchin's *Social Ecology*, Kirkpatrick Sale's *A Human Scale* and also Colin Ward's *Anarchy in Action*.

Trainer's utopian vision is essentially one of hope, for it outlines in detail what is possible now in the restructuring of society and communities along more sustainable and community orientated lines. He advocates a network of ecologically balanced, permacultural communities, socially, economically, politically self-reliant, and yet not culturally isolated. Of course Trainer is not an anarchist and Trainer does not call this an anarchist society, yet for many it would be hard to tell the difference. Indeed at several points in the book Trainer quotes anarchists such as Colin Ward on the zero-sum clash between society and state... 'If we want to strengthen society we must weaken the state...' or comments favourably on anarchist ideas acknowledging the virtue of the anarchist as opposed to marxist view of issues concerning social change, society and history. Trainer believes anarchism is more in tune with decentralist and ecological ideas than marxism (1).

Trainer makes his own views about government clear... 'Although we do need many arrangements, laws and treaties which govern all nations, the last thing we need is even more centralised, big and bureaucratic power. Indeed the relevance of existing states and nations would be greatly reduced. Your country and its boundaries would be much less important than your bio-region ie the area around you which forms a more or less distinct and integrated ecological system within boundaries set by mountain ranges, rivers, climatic or other geographical features. The question is why can't everything be done in these local and participatory ways, especially when most functions have been reduced to a small scale and few big or centralised systems are needed.

What is being recommended here is simply classical anarchism. Anarchism is unfortunately often interpreted as being opposed to government

of any sort, whereas it is only opposed to paternalistic government ie to any situation where some govern others. Anarchists insist that people can and should govern themselves in participatory ways, and not via representatives to whom power has been given...' (our italics.)

The Conserver Society pg 190

Of course not all of us will agree with Trainer's interpretation of anarchism, but that said it is a positive rather than pejorative definition, which is rare in non-anarchists.

The contents of Trainer's 'Conserver Society' fall into four sections: Part one being the introduction which looks at the reasons why a *Conserver Society* is needed, followed by an overview of what constitutes a *Conserver Society*.

Part two lists the detailed changes Trainer believes are required, these being divided into three headings 'easy', 'core' (i.e. not so easy!) followed by 'consequences'. Under these three headings Trainer discusses very practical matters: Food and Agriculture, Housing, Water and Sewage, Living Lightly on the Earth, Building Self-sufficient Communities, the Economy, Energy, Values, Community, Third World Development, Peace and Security, Education, Inequality, Government.

Part three of the book gives numerous examples of existing communities and projects which are implementing 'sustainable' ideas in practice. Some of these are in the USA, some in Canada, Europe and Australia.

Part four of the book is titled *The Transition* and looks at the possibilities for society wide change beyond individual and isolated actions, and beyond merely 'educational' projects (such as the Centre for Alternative Technology in mid Wales). His conclusion is that in seeking to create a *Conserver Society* the main area of action for the present is educational. This is the same conclusion many anarchists have also come to about the prospects for creating an anarchist society.

Trainer's book is worth reading, not only because it is a mine of information and good ideas, but because it integrates some of the best of classical and contemporary anarchist ideas into a wider ecological / permaculture movement. Given that it is available through mainstream bookshops it may hopefully introduce anarchism as a concept to new readers.

(1) See page 191, 216 and page 217.

A Reply to McElroy

In her article on individualist anarchism in the October 1984, *New Libertarian* (reprinted with permission of the author in TL Vol. 3 No. 4). Wendy McElroy mistakenly claims that modern-day individualist anarchism is identical with anarchist capitalism. She ignores the fact that there are still individualist anarchists who reject capitalism as well as communism, in the tradition of Warren, Spooner, Tucker, and others.

In her overview of anarchist history, McElroy criticises the individualists of the past for their belief in the labour theory of value, because it fails to distinguish between profit and plunder. Some anarchist individualists still believe that profit is theft, and that living off the labour of others is immoral. And some individualists, both past and present, agree with the communist anarchists that present-day capitalism is based on economic coercion, not on voluntary contract. Rent and interest are mainstays of modern capitalism, and are protected and enforced by the state. Without these two unjust institutions, capitalism could not exist. These two institutions, and the money monopoly of the state, effectively prevent most people from being economically independent, and force them into wage labour. Saying that coercion does not exist in capitalist economic relations because workers

aren't forced to work by armed capitalists, ignores the very real economic coercion caused by this alliance of capitalism and the state. People don't voluntarily work for wages or pay rent, except in the sense that most people "voluntarily" pay taxes. Because one recognises when she or he is up against superior force, and chooses to compromise in order to survive, does not make these activities voluntary; at least, not in the way I envision voluntary relations in an anarchist society. Benjamin Tucker, when he spoke of his ideal "society of contract," was certainly not speaking of anything remotely resembling contemporary capitalist society.

McElroy also makes invalid assumptions about strategic differences between communist and individualist anarchists. Surely, communists are as likely as individualists to leaflet tenants encouraging them to refuse to pay rent or to resist eviction. Communists don't routinely put guns to people's heads as their primary method of organising for anarchy. Many individualists, as well as many communists, however, do support violence in self-defense. Communist anarchists are also as likely to be means-oriented as individualists. I know some communist or collectivist anarchists, and although we differ in our economic preferences, they are as committed to voluntarism as I am. As McElroy says, in an anarchist society communist and capitalist (and individualist and mutualist) communities could exist side by side, as long as all of these

communities were voluntary. McElroy, however, seems to share the conventional view that most communist anarchists are closet authoritarians and potential bomb-throwers, and implies that communist economic arrangements are less likely to be voluntary than capitalist ones, an assumption with no basis in fact.

I do not quarrel with McElroy's definition of herself as an individualist anarchist. However, I dislike the fact that she tries to equate the term with anarchist capitalism. This is simply not true. I am an individualist anarchist and I am opposed to capitalist economic relations, voluntary or otherwise. I do, however, support the freedom of people to live in voluntary capitalist communities if they so choose, although I think few people would if they had a real choice. I would prefer to live in a community based on principles like those of the communities in which Josiah Warren participated. Such principles, neither capitalist nor communist, are what individual anarchism means to me.

Joe Peacott

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An Anarchist Credo

- Anarchism is not terrorism or violence and anarchists do not support, aid or sympathise with terrorists or so-called liberation movements.
- Anarchism does not mean irresponsibility, parasitism, criminality, nihilism or immorality, but entails the highest level of ethics and personal responsibility.
- Anarchism does not mean hostility toward organisation. Anarchists only desire that all organisations be voluntary and that a peaceful social order will exist only when this is so.
- Anarchists are resolute anti-statists and do not defend either "limited states" or "welfare states".
- Anarchists are opposed to all coercion. Poverty, bigotry, sexism and environmental degradation cannot be successfully overcome through the State. Anarchists are therefore opposed to taxation, censorship, so-called affirmative action and government regulation.
- Anarchists do not need scapegoats. Poverty and environmental destruction are not ultimately caused by transnationals, IMF, the USA, the "developed world", imperialism, technology or any other devil figure, but are rooted in the power to coerce. Only the abolition of coercion will overcome these problems.
- Anarchism does not posit any particular economic system but only desires that the economy be non-coercive and composed of voluntary organisations.
- Anarchists are not utopians or sectarians, but are sympathetic to any effort to decrease statism and coercion and the replacement of authoritarian relations with voluntary ones.

Larry Gambone

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF APPLICATION FORMS FOR HOUSING BENEFIT AND AN AMERICAN EXPRESS CARD

Added up all the words on an American Express application form and you reach a total of 128. There are a maximum of 44 answer boxes you may wish to respond to.

On the Kirklees Metropolitan Council Directorate of Health and Housing application form for Housing Benefit there are a total of 1134 words. There are 396 possible answer boxes you may be required to answer.

I completed the former application form in something less than 75 seconds. The Housing Benefit form needed three hours work and only then after I had assembled a small mountain of documents dug up from various cubby-holes around the house. It was a tiring and unpleasant task.

Both these organisations are established institutions. Both offer a form of credit and both will wish to make investigation into the financial standing of every applicant. From this point onwards the similarities fade. American Express is granting credit amounting to several thousands of pounds. Kirklees Housing is talking in terms of single figures, at best tens of pounds.

Conveniently, American Express's form turns itself into a pre-franked, ready addressed envelope that just needs popping into a postbox. The very size of the Council's form would prove costly in postage. The only instruction available was that completed documents be "returned to the District Housing Manager." I suppose people just returned them by hand. Anyhow, next to the Receptionist's kiosk there was a stack of bulky completed forms.

The image each organisation has of its potential clients is clearly reflected in the language used.

Note (a) on the Housing Benefit form states:

'If you are living with relatives or friends as part of their family IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR YOU TO COMPLETE THIS FORM as you are NOT ENTITLED TO HOUSING BENEFIT.'

The tone of this language picks up on the weariness of long-suffering benefit clerks who can spot instant documentary anomalies. The words upped into capitals are being SHOUTED, much in the manner of a tourist who shouts louder the more they are not being understood. Note (a) sets the weighting of the master/servant relationship throughout the document.

It is much more comfortable to deal with the language of American Express. The instructions on how to fill in:

'Please use block capitals in ball point or felt tip.'

From the start your name is made to feel important:

'Please spell out your name as you wish it to appear on your card using no more than 20 letters.'

It is not only in words that American Express gets its message across. There is well thought out use of colour and typeface. The form itself feels businesslike. It even folds itself. Should there be any doubts as to what American Express imagines you look like there is a flattering photograph of two attractive people, one casually holds the card, the other a briefcase. Handsome, worldly-wise and very laid back.

Approaches from the lowly to the high follow similar patterns across a wide range of agencies. There is always considerable time spent in waiting and processing. The extent of the questioning requires an almost confessional honesty. And it all congeals into a dehumanising malaise. Vigilance is required in observing the subtleties that take place when the powerful come to care for the powerless. The clues are always to be found in the language used.

Not only did filling the form in use up time but so did securing a place in the queue down at the Housing Office. Even this time was to be restricted. Several large, badly stenciled notices were crudely sellotaped to the walls and the doors:

PLEASE NOTE. FROM 21ST THE HOUSING BENEFIT / REBATE COUNTER WILL ONLY BE OPEN BETWEEN THE FOLLOWING HOURS: MONDAY-FRIDAY 9.00AM - 2.30PM.

The endless questions required me to bare my material life before an anonymous administrative system. The very detail fatigued me, slowly pulled me down, and always the sense, expressed frequently in capital letters, that I was being SPOKEN DOWN to. I surrendered my trust into their hands and began a period of waiting for notification.

Hilda lived alone in a set of flats purpose built for the elderly on the outskirts of Huddersfield. With help from a neighbour she had completed the Housing Benefit form. Once submitted she became increasingly obsessed by an overlooked entry on the form:

'I understand that a person who dishonestly obtains housing benefit by any deception will, on conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years under the Theft Act 1978. WARNING - GIVING FALSE INFORMATION COULD LEAD TO PROSECUTION.'

The thinking processes of the elderly living alone may well be different from an administrator working from an office. Hilda's life gradually became taken over by a belief that her application contained a misrepresentation concerning a minor building society account she held. Each hour she expected the police to arrive and arrest her. Her pain was compounded by the horrifying realisation that her trial and subsequent imprisonment would ruin the reputation of her son living in Southampton. As she sat each day by the window awaiting the police, her images grew and twisted themselves into all sorts of monsters. Her fear and panic spiraled. In desperation she decided to confess all to the building society manager, and it was he who contacted social services to say that an elderly lady in his office could not be stopped from weeping.

Things are seen differently from various positions on the master/servant

axis. Another's language can be received in such a way that its original meaning can get itself lost or, as in this case, tragically warped. To begin again and attempt a reconstruction of the benefit form would demand a fundamental realignment of how one set of strangers care for another set of strangers. For a start we could attempt to talk to each other in a language that identifies us all as fellow citizens. For many this would be rare human experience indeed. Identification of the high against the low is a process so ingrained within us that we barely fail to notice it.

It is a sad fact of modern life that most of us are in hock to a variety of bone-crunching bureaucracies. Worse, we are all almost immune to the fact that we comply unquestionably with the demands they make of us.

Ever expanding regulation suggests that administrative solutions are not pointing a way to increased respect for free individuals. Once you go down that road, they will argue, you come up against all sorts of untidy complications. No managerial structure can ever be flexible enough to deal with the complexities of being human. Knowing this, institutions try to turn human life around to fit the needs of the structure.

It's an awkward position to find yourself standing on the powerless side of the reception counter. You risk compromising the value of your worth and your identity. You risk turning yourself into a *client*, and thus, a dependent on a distant and uncaring state.

For me, the best thing these air-conditioned Housing Benefit Offices could do would be to make up glossy packs with pictures of worldly-wise tenants on the cover. Inside would be the deeds to your house, a cheque for a grand, and a little black flag to fly on your window-sill. Such a solution would free-up acres of cube-farmed office space ready to be transformed into accommodation suites for homeless wanderers.

Bye the bye, neither of my applications was successful. Bother!

Peter Good

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AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE?

One summer in the 1960s, my family's ground floor flat and two others on a council estate were flooded in a sudden thunderstorm. Neighbours and strangers from the estate, seeing the damage, turned up to help clean up and dry us out. Food was provided for my family and we were given accommodation in neighbours' homes. This was people working with and for other people without the involvement of any authority or government figure.

Consider that same scenario today. The basic human instinct to work together and help each other should still be present, but it has now been compromised and overlaid by government in a proliferation of laws, regulations, directives, guidance, policies, initiatives, visions, etc. etc. which is serving to sever the ability of the individual to enact with and help others for the good of a community.

The state increasingly divides people from each other, atrophying their genuine helpful actions and in doing so, cleaving the people ever closer to the system. This means that instead of turning to each other and their communities, the state is seen to be the only refuge from the vagaries of life. The fact that the state has created or colluded in some of those vagaries is not recognised by the people.

So, in the flood example, it may well be that today my family would have turned immediately to government agencies. The fire brigade and police would be called, possibly environmental health, water authorities, local council etc. Presumably, before any kind of work commenced, there would have to be a "risk assessment". OK, looking at it objectively, these agencies may be there to try and help, but there is a creeping assumption that only the agencies can help out. In addition to this is the fear which the state has implanted amongst the people: fears such as picking up disease from dirty water, being sued for breaking people's property in trying to help, worrying about whether any guest

might rifle through your belongings. Media reports may highlight suspicions that my family would be part of an insurance scam, making inflated insurance claims.

So government harnesses the natural human actions and shackles them to the state machinery in an illusion of "common good" in an increasingly complicated world. Disputes, which would once have been sorted locally are now channeled into the state process of law and courts, stripping individual responsibility and driving a further wedge between people.

The result is that instead of turning to themselves and their wider community for assistance, the people legitimise and become dependant on the apparatus of the state. They learn to distrust their neighbour. If people are severed from each other, then they pose no threat to the ruling machine because their personal lives are tied so closely to it. Conveniently, they will also police the actions of others who attempt to tell them differently or seek to undermine the state structure in which they live. They become the unwitting drones of the system.

Leo Tolstoy said "The truth is that the state is a conspiracy designed not only to exploit, but above all to corrupt its citizens..." and that it's education system is "the tendency of one man to make another just like himself". And Emma Goldman said, "Ah, the people, the people: they conspire with their masters to crucify their Christs and forge their own chains".

Even those who are not quite sure will often hold on to certain structures just in case they may be wrong.

Sitting in a church at a recent funeral, I found it quite chilling how the assembled large group of all political and personal persuasions, nonetheless united in the mantra of the lord's prayer at only a token gesture from the vicar. So far as I could tell, I was the only one not bowing my head or chanting. There were a few disapproving glances from some who would otherwise mock the authorities they were legitimising. Asking afterwards why people felt compelled to recite a collection of words designed only to keep people in thrall to a particular religion and therefore to a controlling group, I was told "respect for the dead". No - it is respect to the state and its organisations which have harnessed the fears of those they have