

So far I've only had time to read the first essay from 'In Search of Anarchy' entitled "Radical Walking". Very good stuff. I'm a big walking nut. Here in Plascenia the mayor (now ex-mayor fortunately) was exposed for selling off public land that wasn't his to sell. He lined his own pockets (of course) and contractors then came in and put up the most god awful housing project and tore down / destroyed a nice sized section of a roughly 2000 year old Roman road that many walkers used to go from village to village across a fairly large chunk of Western Spain.

Adios
Kris and Lolás
Spain

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

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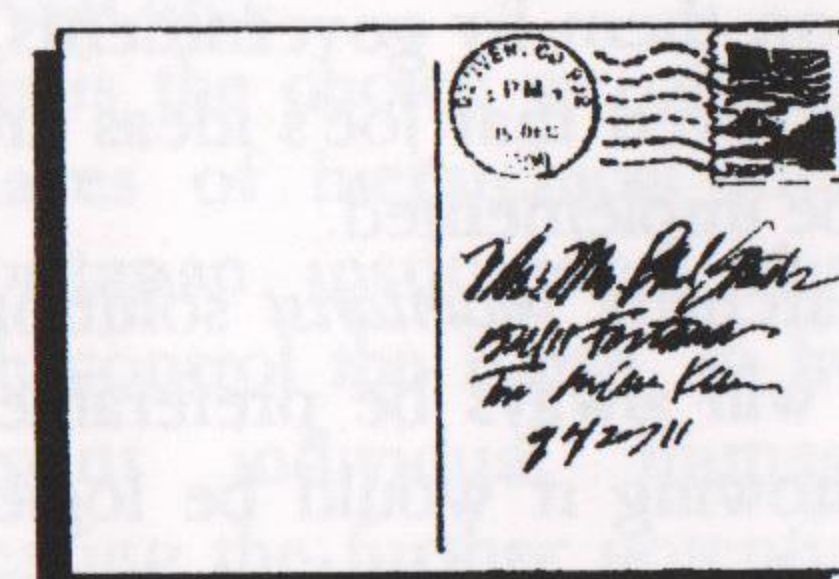
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EDITORIAL

There is a story attributed to the late Ernest Schnieder alias Icarus, author of *The Wilhelmsbaven Revolt: a chapter of the revolutionary movement in the German navy 1918-1919*. Schnieder felt his life was increasingly under threat during the dark years of the late 1930s and the Nazi period. Fearing his papers and library of books, pamphlets and documents might betray him, he buried them, and thus he survived. There are times at present when many of us will feel buried by the avalanche of information, news, magazines and papers which pours upon us daily. But the problem facing us here is not our own personal survival, but the survival and relevance of our Anarchist ideas. The percentage of people who read our journals, books and papers is daily diminished by this avalanche. We are indeed a new form of hidden publishing, a samizdat movement which can only hope to reach a few, a small self selected group. While there are indeed a wide number of journals within the Anarchist and Left-wing publishing subculture, sadly nearly all of them are following blind alleys, stuck in the grooves of Nineteenth century ideas, crude class struggle, uncritical syndicalism, the 57 varieties of Trotskyism. The vast majority show a closed mindset that self marginalises and minimises any possible

influence they may have. All of them have virtually no readership, and given the often poor quality of much of their content this is no wonder and perhaps sometimes even no bad thing. There are some exceptions to this trend, not in the sense of reaching large and significant numbers of readers, but at least in the sense of promoting worthwhile and practical projects at the local and community scale. However, most of these are to be found in the Green Movement or even in local community and religious papers and newsletters, there are just too few good Anarchist papers and magazines. With Anarchist journals there are some exceptions which provide a venue for serious and thoughtful debate, and a selection of these are to be found in our back-page column 'Friends of Total Liberty'. Many of these are not based in this country, but they all deserve to be read and to receive our support. Of course, the problems of reaching a readership are not confined to the Anarchist publishing milieu. Even so called mainstream representatives of Labour, Tory or left Socialist ideas, by which I mean journals such as *The New Statesman*, *The Spectator* and *Red Pepper* count their circulation figures in tens of thousands. Reading and serious thinking is not something that has much appeal these days.

And now sadly, the longstanding flagship of British Anarchist journals, namely *Freedom*, has increasingly abandoned the broader church of Anarchist ideas, and has metamorphosed into a poorer version of Black Flag. Some may claim this has been a popular move and brought *Freedom* into closer touch with mainstream Anarchism. If this is so then this so-called mainstream of Anarchism (and it would be interesting to know just who decides what is mainstream Anarchism!) is widely out of touch with ordinary people. Some of the ideas Anarchists claim to advocate such as individual liberty, greater equality and a real sense of community may at times strike a cord, but only so long as you do not use the label Anarchist. The minute that word is used, people dismiss us out of hand. The truth is that ordinary people fear the abolition of Government, police, courts, prisons, law and order, they assume Anarchism means the end to an ordered life, the end to their way of life, and more basically the end of personal safety,

dependable sources of the basics of life: food, housing and clothing. These days, there is little I read in the Anarchist Press from Britain that shows any awareness of this gap between our wishes and desires and public perception of what Anarchism means. There are too few Anarchist papers relating news reports regarding successful and practical projects on the ground whether in city, town or countryside, there are too few UK based Anarchist papers containing any serious and realistic discussion of such ideas and projects. Such a journal if it existed, would do more for Anarchism than any number of accounts of the Ukraine between 1919 and 1921, Spain in July 1936, Paris 1968, or any number of mind numbingly boring accounts of Syndicalism, or macho accounts of riots, animal liberation raids, et al.

Let's face it. There is no mass Anarchist movement in this country and precious few Anarchists. Perhaps George Woodcock was correct when he said Anarchism was a movement of *permanent protest*. That is perhaps a more realistic aim and purpose for Anarchists, to act as a sort of political conscience within society, against the ever increasing growth of the state and the constant diminution of individual freedom in modern western society. To do this while still acting to promote libertarian and Anarchist projects and solutions at the local level.

COMING TO ANARCHISM

I was born into an upper class but not rich family. My father was a cartographer and aviator. So I had a so-called privileged upbringing, which meant being sent to boarding school from the age of seven, first a private 'prep' school and then public school in the English sense of the phrase. But my parents were humane people with broadly liberal ideas, and I always knew that they loved me. I was also very close to my brother, although he was six years older than me, and he 'brought me up' as much as my parents did.

The prep school headmaster sometimes put newspaper cuttings up on the school notice board, and when I was

eleven he put up a picture of some men on a street with a machine gun. The text explained that rebels had started something in Spain. Knowing nothing of Spanish history, I instantly decided I was on the side of the rebels. My brother and I always supported rebels.

At school we went to chapel twice a day. At the age of twelve I decided that the Christian account of the universe was logically impossible. I also discovered that I was revolted by British nationalism and the constant refrain that British was always best. This merged with my revulsion at the morality that insisted, both at the prep school and the public school, that the school was more important than any individual in it.

In 1939 my brother registered as a conscientious objector, and was conscripted into the army Dental Corps. I must have learned from him the word "Anarchism". He gave me the enthusiasm to teach myself Spanish when I was 16; I devoured books about the Spanish Civil War, starting with G.L. Steer's *The Tree of Guernica*. I read the article on Anarchism in my father's 'handy' 1910 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, by Kropotkin himself.

English public schools were – or at least mine was – a mixture of fascism and nineteenth century liberalism. The night in December 1942 when I left the school for the last time, I blew up part of the school's dry stone perimeter wall with a home made bomb in a large tin that I had made with my father's home canning machine. I packed it tight with gunpowder, and inserted a length of white fuse. Anyone could go into a gun shop, as I did, even in war time, and buy blackpowder and fuse. A friend at the school told me later that it looked as if somebody had attacked the wall with a pickaxe for some minutes. I don't know if the school authorities ever discovered who did it.

A month after I became eighteen I was called up. The army was very much worse than boarding school. My sheltered life was over. My memory associates intervals between sessions learning how to dismantle and reassemble Bren guns with studying Alexander Berkman's *ABC of Anarchism*. I don't know where I got it, and I don't have it now. But I remember it as a wonderfully clear and persuasive case for the libertarian ideal. Towards the end of basic training I was called into the office

and told by a captain that he was putting my name forward to be sent to an O.C.T.U. (Officer Cadet Training Unit). I realised this was because I was the only 'man' in our unit who spoke posh. No thank you, I said. "Not interested?" "Not interested."

So I was sent off to be a driver/signaller in the Royal Artillery. My brother had given me a copy of *War Commentary*, as *Freedom* was called in those days. I must have subscribed to it regularly, because from the Conwy *morfa* where I was stationed I started writing little anonymous pieces for it about anonymous army mates. I wrote particularly about two men, and their troubles. One, Baldry, I affectionately dubbed Base Clam Baldry. His foremost concern in life was to keep away from active service, to which end he pleaded flat feet. I do not know if he had flat feet, but he certainly made a point of walking as if he had. I do not remember the name of the other man. He was big and tall, regular army, with a



pockmarked face. He had been wounded and captured by the Italians in the North African desert, moved to a German prison camp, and then repatriated as part of a Red Cross exchange of invalid prisoners. Whereupon the British authorities put him straight back into the army. He fought a running battle with it in his efforts to get released. One day he tipped the colonel's table, with all the colonel's papers on it, on top of the colonel.

It was around this time that, waiting outside the mess hut one day, I denounced Stalin to another soldier. "Stalin!" he spluttered, "Stalin is the light of the world!"

Towards the end of 1943 I was sent to a big camp in East Anglia where we prepared for the invasion of Europe. It was near enough to London to go there

on 48 hours' leave, and so I went to the office of *War Commentary*. There I found Marie Louise Berneri, and Maisie Cardile.

Marie Louise was a beautiful young woman of 25 when I met her, and yet already wonderfully mature. From the very first seconds I felt in her, all together, a tender motherliness devoid of all condescension, a spirit of comradely equality, and intense but completely unselfconscious sexual attractiveness. She is one of the two or three most remarkable people I have ever known. I believe the history of Anarchism in Britain, perhaps in the world, might have been completely different if she had not died so young. Those who never knew her can understand a little of what she meant to people from *Marie Louise Berneri 1918-1949: A Tribute*, published by the Marie Louise Berneri Memorial Committee, London, 1949.

Marie Louise introduced me to 'Frank'. He was in fact John Olday, or Oldag, the Anglo-German Anarchist militant and cartoonist. He was called Frank because he was on the run as a deserter from the British Army. I liked him immediately. The train back to my unit that evening was crowded. I sat on the floor of the luggage van in a state of happiness that I have only experienced two or three times in my life.

Many might say that this was the mere sentimentality of a vulnerable and inexperienced youth who needed reassurance when things were a little difficult for him, and overreacted unrealistically to a little friendliness. I think not. The world is a terrible place, and it was particularly terrible at that time. So it was realistic to react with joy at finding new loving friends, who shared values with me and believed passionately in a kinder, gentler world, and were struggling to do what they could to help bring it about. Unfortunately most human beings, most of the time, are unrealistic. They refuse to admit the world's horror. Is it a protective mechanism to avoid going mad?

In the next few months I was with Frank whenever I was free to go to London. But then one night he tried to seduce me. I was not shocked. I was familiar with homosexuality. It was unacknowledged but widespread in the public schools. I felt miserably let down, though. I had believed Frank had simply given platonic friendship to a young man

he wanted to teach about Anarchism. Now his enthusiasm for me cooled. Looking back, however, I feel no reproach, only regret that I could not meet his needs.

During those months I also came to know Vernon Richards, Marie Louise's companion and collaborator ('Vero'). Now, in the winter of 1944, I began to agonise about what the army was about to order me to do: help kill Germans. I did not fear death. But I could not stand the idea of causing grief to some German mother, sister, brother, father. Should I desert? On my birthday, the last day of fourteen days embarkation leave, I debated what I should do, with my brother, Marie Louise and Vero. Marie Louise and Vero thought I should desert. My brother thought this would in practice make me even less independent, even more a victim of the authorities'

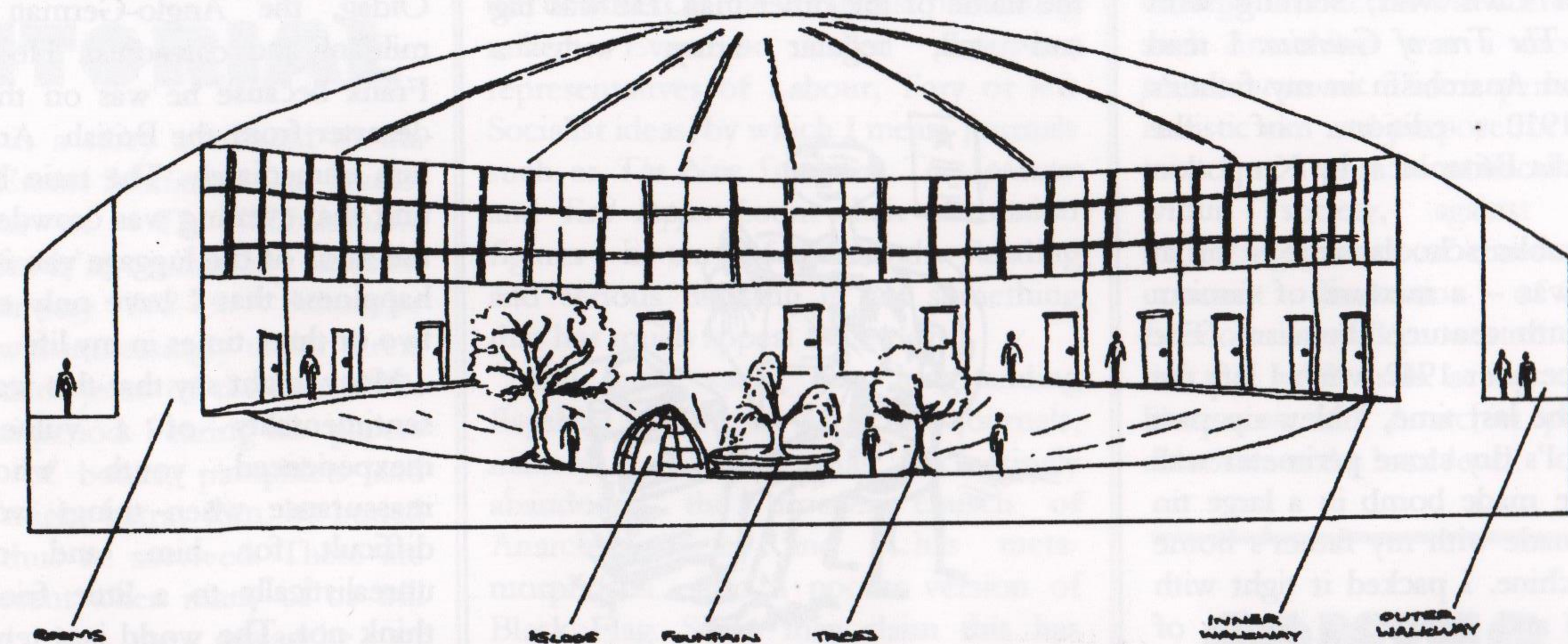
rules. I understood both arguments. My brother was thinking of my welfare. Marie Louise and Vero were thinking of my conscience. I still don't know whether one should ever support any side in a national or Capitalist war. Some Anarchists, from Kropotkin to Arthur Moysé, have thought one should.

My subconscious solved the dilemma for me. I developed a dangerously bleeding duodenal ulcer and nearly died. I was taken to hospital in Cambridge and given blood transfusions. A moment of joy was when Marie Louise came to visit me.

I was invalided out of the army, but soon recovered. In the autumn Marie Louise and Vero asked me to run the Freedom bookshop in Bristol. I was briefly trained in the job by the redoubtable Lilian Wolfe, who devoted a long life to the Anarchist cause.

I only spent about eight months at the bookshop, but met many interesting people. And in Bristol I met Tom Carlile. He was a conscientious objector and Anarchist, from London's East End, who was then working in a Somerset coal mine. Maisie Carlile and he were bringing up two very small children in a damp Cotswold stone cottage. Tom and Maisie are two of the finest human beings I have known. In 1946 I went to Sweden, where I first lodged with German refugee Anarchists, but then became seduced by Swedish social democracy for about ten years and lost touch for a time with the Anarchist movement. But Maisie and Tom I have always stayed close to.

Amorey Gethin



A FREE DOME FOR THE ABSURD

Anarchist Approaches to Alzheimer's

Any free society will be host to people whose own acts of freewill put them in danger. To be kidnapped by Alzheimer's is to be put under the cosh of progressive memory loss, confusion and anxiety. Everyday conversations become increasingly difficult and the loss of recognition can be heart breaking to previous companions.

Our present society views the management of this condition as the property of biomedical psychiatry. The

prevailing wisdom believes that the activities of the confused elderly are the direct result of some chemical scrambling of higher critical functioning. Accordingly, a mix of pharmacology and confinement has come to control the meaningless wanderings, the incontinence and the indecipherable mutterings of Alzheimer's captives. So overwhelming is this faith in official medical opinion that it is often voiced to excuse why so little attention is put towards ideas of creativity. Make no

mistake. This is not a region ripe with radical ideas.

And it is precisely because the condition awaits the fantasy of the *big drug break-through* that care has been relegated to the bare necessities. The outlook is deemed to be irreversible. It has meant that hundreds of thousands of captives are shunted into a "not-yet" space. Not surprisingly a sense of hopelessness is attached to these folk. Particularly as no one can work out any ransom demand.

The NHS, ever keen to unload chronic conditions, strives to off-load as many as possible into nursing homes. Such nursing homes run on strict business lines. The staff are among the most poorly paid and the quality of care is often suspect. It's a system of care, apart from the occasional public outrage, that no one really questions. The old Victorian asylum adage applies: So long as the place looks tidy on the outside what goes on within is comfortably out of sight/out of mind.

Alzheimer's may be seen as a Cinderella service. Care easily becomes reduced to unchanging patterns of routine. One nursing home is much like the other. People are corralled into institutional spaces. The large day-room is made up of clusters of wing-backed chairs where drug-induced people snooze away the routines of the day. Every day room has its unwatched television. There is one, maybe two corridors lined with bedrooms. There will be a cramped dining room smelling of disinfectant. And the Matron's office creaks with the demands of bureaucratic paperwork. All day the telephones ring, alarm bells buzz and the staff are noisy and endlessly busy. It does not take the curious observer long to realise that many confused elders seem intent on activities that bear no relation to services management provide. Many captives pace up and down the corridor as if in search of something lost. Doors are opened, cupboards explored and hour upon hour can be spent in repetitive activity.

Institutions that care for Alzheimer's are structurally identical to the old workhouses in design. The air is heavy with the heritage of all quasi-medical hierarchies. Buildings not only come to define the role of staff, they also shape the kind of care given to residents. Needs become filtered through traditional approaches to care. It's a relationship that widely misses its mark. Listen carefully to the dialogue of Alzheimer's prisoners. The content is displaced. Over and over go the conversations: questioning, re-assessing, worrying, re-arranging, recollecting. Such dialogues have no need of higher cortical capabilities. And they are markedly out of place with a procedurally-driven regime.

One day it will be possible to work out a real ideal of care. An ideal of care far removed from the dictates of drug

companies and the orderliness of business management. A free society would start with the building. Mainly because attempts to think about the care we give to people are limited by the very structures that house them. The concept of the Dome is offered as a structural attempt to unthink this seemingly absurd period of life.

Central to the Dome's imagery is the large tribal playground. Like every other aspect of the structure it is circular. People are free to wander and encounter living trees. Herein birds sing and dogs, chosen for their comfort, are on patrol. There are chairs and day beds in a variety of designs. Places to eat and things to drink. There are, of course, care staff available. Small groups of carers to tidy and clean and make sure food and liquid are being taken. But there is little emphasis on arranging people so they sit obediently in day-rooms. What would be evident is a strong emphasis on respecting the dialogue of people who may perhaps speak from another age. A meaning understood as *preparation* rather than some pathological symptom.

On the outer ring of the dome wide corridors marked by quietness and panoramic views of the outside world offers a place of contemplation and a refuge from the activity of the playground.

It is characteristic of Alzheimer's kidnappers to invert the power of memory in its captives. Recent events are dimmed in the same proportion that earlier memories are made clearer. Life is lived less in the present and even less in the future. There is only a cursory need of the higher assumptions laid determined by procedurally-driven regimes. This is a world at the absurd end of life. A messy and brittle region of life. One given over to constant recollection and a preparation for an entry into some future and unimaginable timespace. Everyone of these prisoners need caring for with an almost spiritual respect and every one of them deserves the very best of our creativity. Such an approach, I believe, is only possible in a free society.

Peter Good (a member of the editorial board of *The Cunningham Amendment*)

Artwork credits: Simon Lindley

Survival of the Fittest

It is curious that Maggie Thatcher announced that there was no such thing as society just as evolutionary theory was becoming dominated by the most extreme form of Individualism; this was in the 1980s, as the centenary of Darwin's death was being much celebrated.

Darwin had shown a receptive Capitalist audience that "The Origin of Species" (1859) that life was a struggle; the contestants were individuals and the result was the survival of the fittest. Not every scientist was convinced. Kropotkin famously rebelled with his great work, "Mutual Aid", which showed the extent to which individuals of the same and different species depended on one another in the harsh environment of Siberia. He was never accepted by the mainstream of scientists and it was not until the 1960s that Darwinian Individualism was forced to consider the significance of co-operative, i.e., group, evolution.

V.C. Wynne-Edwards then published a heavy work on animal dispersal which seemed to demonstrate the universal operation of altruism in the evolutionary process: individuals, he said, would subordinate their self-interest to the well-being of their group, to the point of self-sacrifice. It followed that groups were a key element in evolution and in life itself.

Darwinism treats such ideas as heresy. Darwin's evolutionary machine is driven by competition between self-interested individuals. Groups are Thatcherite agglomerations of no importance. It was not long before Darwin's followers evolved a response.

The difficulty they had had to face was that individuals do sometimes jump into fast-flowing rivers to rescue virgins in clinging white dresses and their mothers; soldiers do throw themselves over live grenades; a hen will face up to a dog to defend her chicks.

The solution was re-definition: the unit of evolution was reduced to the gene, while the individual organism - you and me, for instance - was conceptualised as its robotic carrier. This became the "selfish gene" theory of evolution and it has proved its fitness; it

so permeates academic and popular thought that it seldom appears in need of explanation. Listen to David Attenborough or almost any wildlife commentator on television and not many minutes will pass before some action is described as - quite obviously - serving the individual's genes.

It is a fact that the gene is in a way the basic unit of life, since it survives from generation to generation - though it is not eternal - while we individuals, having toted that bale, keep on dying.

But it is a remarkably boring bit of life, a complex of instructions written by a computer nerd; while we, along with whales, meercats, spiders et al, are interesting: we do things; we struggle, we co-operate, we survive. If human people aren't the point of human life, then nothing is.

Leaving that aside, the pendulum has swung away from genetic Individualism, and not because of me. I attacked the theory in a widely unread book, "The Social Gene" in 1999, and, following Kropotkin, found co-operation throughout the living world - more than enough to ground Anarchism in nature. I argued that co-operation had played the major part in evolution from the beginning of life until the present. It followed, I said, that altruism, unselfishness and co-operative living were fundamental and that such behaviour was genetically programmed in social species - which includes us.

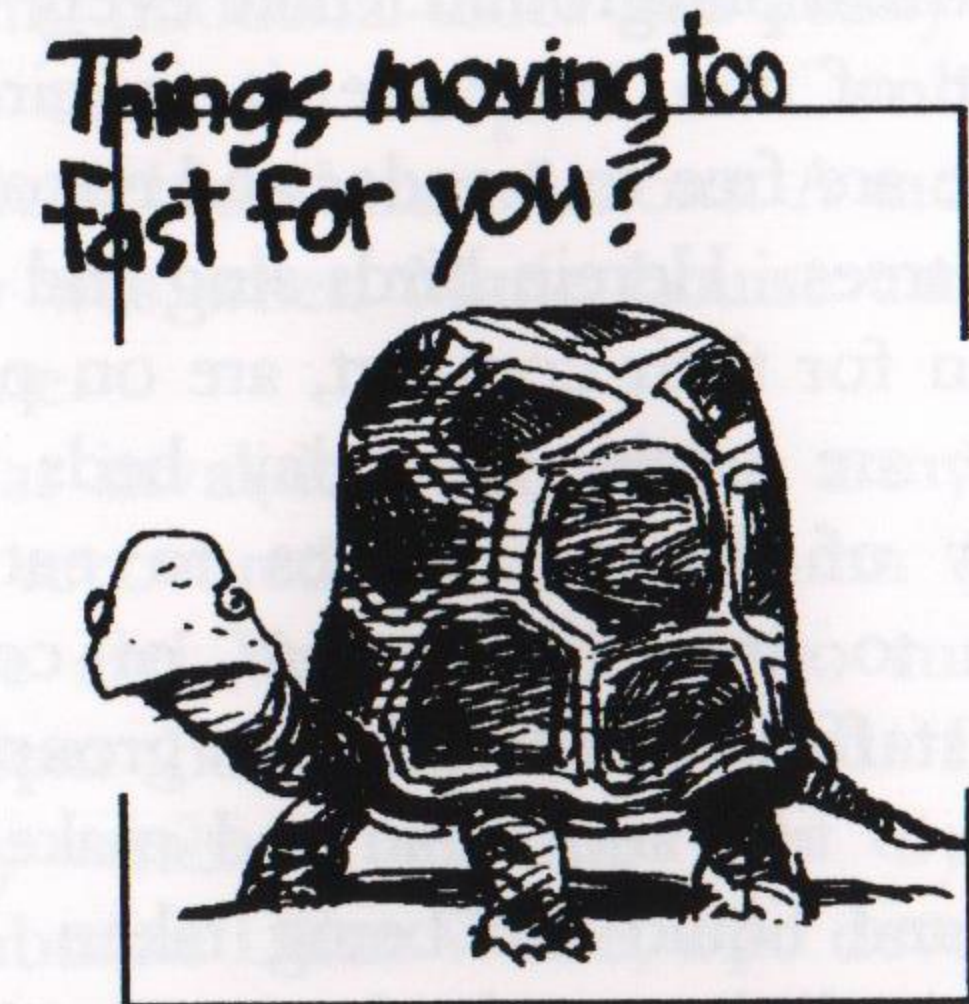
I continue to seek evidence to support my ideas and am amused to see how much mainstream thinking was already ahead of me: some of the research had been published; some has come out over the last few years.

Co-operation by unrelated males in a species of newt was reported in a recent edition of *New Scientist*. (My conclusion - that Anarchism is right and true and essential - isn't yet respectable).

I have just read "Darwin's Cathedral" by D.S. Wilson, which is concerned with understanding religions as adaptive social groups. Leaving aside religions, it contains some points I wish to steal. It quotes a lump of Darwin I should have known, and shows the complexity of his ideas. Darwin says in "The Ascent of Man" (I quote from Wilson) p 266

... "advancement of the standard of morality (of a tribe) will certainly give an immense advantage of one tribe over another. There can be no doubt that a

tribe including many members who, from possessing a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes and this would be natural selection."



That appears to be group selection, but strict Darwinists, while accepting Darwin's conclusion, define the behaviours he lists as the outcome of the self-interested struggle of individual genes. I see them as aspects of our universal social behaviour.

Wilson is with me there; he says such behaviour is widespread and is the basis for the cohering of individuals into adaptive groups, which have a survival advantage over lesser group competitors. He goes on: "in general 'right' coincides with group welfare and 'wrong' with self serving acts at the expense of others in the group".

I came to exactly that conclusion in *The Social Gene*. My conviction is that we, and all social species, are genetically programmed to behave in ways which will help sustain our group. That is, we are co-operative, altruistic to the point of death, conformist, tolerant, conservative, rule-making and rule-keeping, etc. Hence I follow Rousseau in saying that people are naturally good.

With Wilson, and against entrenched philosophical objection, I conclude that this is a universal ethic: the basis of all human morality is the well-being of the group to which we belong and from which our own well-being arises.

However, Wilson says not that we are naturally co-operative groups, but that "special conditions" are required for group behaviour (i.e., altruism, co-operation, solidarity) to evolve. He says that hunter gatherers are co-operative and egalitarian, not because they lack selfish impulses but because selfish

impulses are effectively controlled by other members of the group. Similarly, the altruistic behaviour of a blackbird in warning of a predator and in the process calling attention to itself, has to be reinforced by avian group pressure (I did not really understand how).

I am more utopian. I believe that altruism and group behaviour are very ancient adaptations, long pre-dating the arrival of primates, mammals, trilobites or whatever. Wilson notes that the formation of the eukaryotic cell, without which no life of any complexity would exist, is an example of co-operation. That happened a good 800 million years ago. I noted recently that we share a third of our genes with bacteria.

I conclude that the genetic abc of social behaviour was being written in the DNA of simple organisms long, long ago. Any social species which subsequently evolved inevitably carried genes for the aspects of social behaviour which it needed. No single example, whether brave blackbirds sounding a warning call or a brave human smothering a grenade, needs to be explained in itself and nor can it be: it is a manifestation of an ancient virtue, deeply entrenched, curiously grown.

I should make it clear that I am not preaching genetic determinism. We are genetically programmed to behave socially but the ways in which the social virtues manifest themselves are enormously varied. They depend on - and probably define - cultures, which are human constructs, and they are uniquely tweaked by each individual: when we are free to live the life of free people, we do what we must for the good of our community but each in our own way.

In the meantime, the social virtues are used and abused in the interests of power and oppression, with often dreadful results.

Dick Frost

The Social Gene and the Survival of the Fit Enough. Available from the author, Richard Frost, 3 Chester Cottages, Warcop, Appleby CA16 6PD price £8 incl p&sp.

Darwin's Cathedral, D.S. Wilson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London; 2002. *Animal dispersal in relation to social behaviour*, V.C. Wynne-Edwards, Oliver and Boyd, London 1962

RESPONSIBILITY

You are responsible for the state of the world. I am responsible for the state of the world. We are responsible for the conditions that prevail.

It is no use our blaming Tony Bush or George W Blair, or abstractions like 'global Capitalism', 'the state', 'the class struggle' or 'original sin' for the way it is, in an attempt to deflect attention away from my own personal responsibility. The abstractions may be useful as explanatory tools, but they are also dangerous because they are seductive. Everything comes back to the particular, to the individual. I have driven my car 14,000 miles this year. You have dumped 140 tons of waste into that landfill site. Together, passively, we have supported the elitist, racist society, and have not fought enough for justice and equality. Our individual actions have consequences. We are all well aware of these consequences. We know that other types of actions are possible, indeed desirable. We do not choose to act differently. Our problems build, one on top of the other. They condense, they coagulate. This is our responsibility. This is our guilt.

There are two aspects to this matter of responsibility. The first belongs to the individual. I choose to look the other way. The second is collective. We conspire to create a climate or culture where 'looking the other way' is condoned. These two feed into each other in a circle, but by far the most important part of it, and the key to breaking the cycle, is the individual. The individual chooses the life he or she leads. The individual chooses to be an accountant or a sales rep, with the commuter lifestyle, the office, the journey into town by car, chooses the materialism, the shopping mall, the brand names. The individual chooses the fast food restaurant, the cultural icons to idolise, the political parties, the bank financing that oppressive regime. This is how it is - that vast mesh of competing

individual choices adds up to the whole. Totalitarianism, oppression, machine like conformity.

The key is that the individual could choose otherwise. If nobody went to the fast food restaurant, it would not have the money to chop down the tropical rain forest. Above, I said 'the individual chooses the life he or she leads'. Fundamentally, this is true. Yet many of these choices are made passively, by default. People drift into accountancy, drift into watching East-Enders. Nothing better came along. They haven't really questioned it. To the extent that these decisions are made passively, by omission, people become diminished; until in the end all we are left with is the oblivion of a kind of shell suited slug-like moronic consumption unit slouched in front of the TV set.

Allied to the passive character of some decisions are cynicism and apathy. The individual chooses apathy, because it is a softer option than actively getting up and trying to change things. It is always easier to sneer than to construct.

Responsibility is not just causal, it is also moral. There is a cold Utilitarian, mechanistic sense of the term, which states that some choices promote well being, strengthen the organism, while others lead to its annihilation. Responsibility is not neutral, because wrong choices taint and warp the personality. Lies, crime and immorality do not bring psychological wholeness. Cause and effect are included, but also warmth, friendship, honesty, the soul. Values transcend mere pragmatism. It is a matter of self definition, in just the same way as a driver must take a firm hold of the steering wheel to direct the car, or a soldier must point the gun in exactly the right direction to hit the target. Our actions and choices define who we are.

We could choose otherwise. In analysing the situation, I should never leave behind the fact of my own involvement in this. I could choose

otherwise. I am responsible. I am to blame for my cynicism, apathy, my silence, ineffectiveness, the luxury of my own materialistic lifestyle. Yet there is a collective, a social aspect to the question of responsibility, which we need to examine. Coming into the social situation afresh, the young person is surrounded by the political culture, assailed by images of lifestyle choices, constrained into certain channels by propaganda, education and economics. We are drawn in, become implicated, get mortgages. The social structure exists prior to my involvement, the social structure functions outside what I think or feel about it, yet even so, I have no option but to share in its problems.

This is not the whole story though. Can I value that social context? Is it not possible to think of a better? Here I think of culture, and the responsibility of writers and publishers to create a better climate of thinking. Here is a metaphor for that cultural climate: Every day, on the news stands, the front pages of downmarket tabloids show pictures of sluttish women with their legs splayed wide apart. Every night, TV soaps scour every low point of life; cancer, drug taking, thieving, domestic violence, child abuse, adultery. News programmes vomit forth a continuous splurge of politicians' lies. Every evening, violent American films show shoot ups, serial killers torturing their victims, rape, murder, prostitution, ads for high-tech American weaponry, car chases. What kind of climate does this create?

Chicken and egg. The impressions left by culture lead to the fact of social decay. A famous recent Gerald Scarfe cartoon shows John Logie Baird being drowned in a raging torrent of excrement gushing from his own invention. This is extreme, but expresses an important truth. The TV schedules and newspaper agenda are handed over to the likes of Harold Shipman, Blair and Myra Hindley to determine. In

newspapers, the Enron directors, Yorkshire Ripper, the James Bulger killers, and Fred West have been given free reign to decide what we read, how we think.

How far have we gone along with this, or sold out? Collective political movements and campaigns suffer from similar problems of corruption. The internet has many benefits, but is not the panacea many hoped for. It saps energy and becomes an excuse for inactivity. There is a superficiality there, and the rest is viagra ads. Postmodernism leads to absolute scepticism, open corruption, the belief that beauty, truth and justice do not matter. They have created an urban landscape full of ugliness, lies, and sadistic cruelty. But we allow this. I am responsible for it. First of all, I could reject it in my own thoughts, aspirations, choices and actions. Secondly I could join with other people who feel the same way, and participate in co-ordinated actions directed towards changing things for the better. The individual needs to stand on a firm island of hope rising above all this corruption. We need somewhere 'outside'. We need to be quite ruthless about this, and root out all tendencies which cause us to lapse backwards into conformity, collusion, apathy and inaction. We are responsible for the state of our world.

Stephen Booth

Fred Woodworth on 'Anarchism'

Reprinted from The Match!
Number 100 Summer 2003

The Match is sticking with the A-Word. As promised some time ago, I've decided what to do about the word "Anarchism". With, I must admit, some reluctance, I'm keeping the label for this publication, but will preface the A-word with "Ethical" as I've been doing for the past several issues.

The problem isn't that I've changed, but that Anarchism to a large degree has. Over this last decade, the humane and anti-authoritarian character of Anarchism has become harder and harder to find; rigid neo-Marxist ideology has wrapped itself in the label

and in the increasingly undependable symbol of the Circle-A, to such an extent that the average decent person's misconception of what Anarchism is about is actually beginning to converge on the truth. Thugs - true criminals - who haven't got the tiniest shred of respect or love for individual rights are pretty widely passing themselves off now as Anarchists, and the TV and newspapers lap it up. They lap it up just like we would if a major political candidate was a released-from-prison child molester or serial killer, but the difference is that in that case the major political party being tarred by association would simply repudiate the nasty exemplar, and that would be the end of the story. When it comes to such people invading the ranks of Anarchism, we may repudiate them, but the mass media which reach far more people are going to publicise the hideous examples as the real Anarchists. Meanwhile, the Mao-inspired Marxoids and their ilk who profess to loathe Capitalism so much never seem to wonder why it is that the Capitalist reporters delight so much in disseminating the image of window-breaking, ski-masked communists as the "real" opposition to the present misshapen civilisation.

However, Anarchism (meaning opposition to coercive behaviour and social organisation) really *is* the proper label for our own philosophy and the general critical stance of this journal. It is also true that many other political labels vary widely in meaning, depending on what other words go with them. For example, a Republican may be somebody who believes in the establishment of a republic, as opposed to a monarchy, or it may be a member of a generally religious and unsympathetic American political party for rich people. Referring to "Republican Guards", however, puts people in mind of the brutal torturers maintained by the unlamented Saddam Hussein, and there doesn't seem to be any carry-over denigrating the USA's Republican Party. "Democrats" are mainstream-respectable; *Social* Democrats are some faction identified with England or Germany. Socialists are tiresome leftists, but tolerated; *National* Socialists are Nazis and liable to be run out of town.

So it seems to me that Ethical Anarchism can revolve in its orbit several light-years at least removed from

the Unabomber-Loving, We-Shop-Lift-Creeps - and if it doesn't yet appear to the uninformed observer to occupy that position it will soon. While I wince at the now-somewhat deserved reputation Anarchism has come to have, and continue to grieve at what the vandals, rights-violators and disguised commies have done to the simple old word, I think we can ride on past the mess they are creating, and not have their viciousness interfere too badly with our effort to show people that there's a better, more peaceful way to live.

STATISM PREDISPOSES TO CHAOS

Of course, modern leftoid statist aren't the main reason for "Anarchism's" negative image. Some of it is built into the language, and the only help for it is to keep portraying our philosophy differently and to behave with decency and - yes - ethics in our personal interactions with other people.

It's also important to keep hammering away at what truly chaotic monstrousness governments themselves introduce into human affairs - systematic, institutionalised violence and theft far beyond the scale that individual criminals could ever practice amid an armed, alert, and *free* populace. Usually every social upheaval actually caused by states or state-like gangs is, however, branded as "anarchy" when horrible disruptions occur as a result of temporary power vacuums. In April the New York Times blared: "*When Freedom Leads to Anarchy: Now, in part because of negligent planning in Washington, the notion is taking root in Baghdad that freedom means Anarchy.*" If only it would!

In reality that "anarchy" is only the irresistible result of statism and fanatical control by religion. Behold a people who have been living for many generations under severe repression; now remove all their restraints; then deplore their failure to behave with friendly, civilised forbearance. Comparably, one could take note of the panic, convulsions, and other symptoms experienced by an addict suddenly deprived of his heroin, and conclude that heroin is a vital ingredient for a calm functioning of the human body. In reality, left government-less, the people of Baghdad and other Iraqi cities would soon fall victim to a new criminal government the same way the junkie would soon find a new source for his

narcotic - because neither had been prepared (that is, enlightened) for the transition.

Although the New York Times' usage isn't exactly an attack on the concept of Anarchism as we mean it, the appearance of the word "anarchy" in such a context can't help but contribute to the ideas commonly held about "chaos" as a necessary result of our philosophy. In reality we're well aware of what would happen if government vanished on one day; this is why we work to get people to think about what freedom and personal responsibility mean, and what will happen to them if the smoothed-over but pervasive chaos of governmentalism continues infinitely.

Fred Woodworth



Return the Streets

My family lives in a semi-detached town house, half a mile from the famous Headingley cricket ground. We have a posh tree-lined front road, and a back street where we keep the bins. Although we own our bit of the front road, neither we, nor our neighbours spend much time looking after it. The original Macadam surface disappeared long ago, and the narrow gate at one end makes a bumpy and tricky approach, as paint scrapings on the gateposts testify. Nor is it any easier for walkers. The path is punctuated with the sockets of stolen flagstones, the road is muddy in the rain, and the street lighting is dim. Now and then the residents discuss road repairs, but we rarely agree to do much more than fill a pothole or two.

Our back street is very different. It has been adopted by the council and it is regularly resurfaced, and brightly lit, with a brand new street sign at both ends. Although the flagstones still get stolen, the council replaces them quickly with

tarmac, so the path is safe to walk on. Surely this shows that roads are a job for governments.

Not so fast! Although both streets join the same two minor roads, a steady trickle of rat running commuters use the adopted one each morning. Children are at risk every time they step out between parked cars on their way to school and some residents have asked the council to install sleeping policemen or traffic calming artificial chicanes. Not me. We don't need traffic calming on our front road, the potholes and narrow entrance do the job, and our children can play safely there all day. We even have an annual bonfire on it, which we leave to burn overnight and on which the younger children toast marshmallows the next morning. If the council would leave our back street alone the children would be equally safe there.

The advantages of private owners spending less than the council on sidestreets are not confined to safety. England is slowly being covered in tarmac and residential roads add up to thousands of square miles of the stuff. Tarmac not laid is energy saved. Grass allowed to grow is not just nice to look at, but a habitat for animals. My early rising neighbour has twice come across small deer on our unsurfaced road, but only ever seen urban foxes on the adopted one. Urban light pollution is another important problem; our dimly lit front road not only gives us the best vantage point to see comets and eclipses ourselves, but contributes in a small way to reducing the annoyance for real astronomers. Even our argumentative street meetings help us to get to know our neighbours.

Of course there are trade-offs. The dim lighting may encourage crime. Potholes damage car suspensions. The point is not to dispute this, but to argue that ownership by the residents allows those most affected to make trade-offs for themselves. Individuals can install their own intruder activated lights if they wish. As a group we could wait for potholes to form, or install traffic calming ourselves. Some residents might even put gates at one or both ends of their streets. Others might take the opposite approach and charge commuter tolls. If surrounding streets had closed off key routes, the profits might induce others to compete to provide the best rat runs, although I hope they would come up with a less

derogatory name. Many different communities owning their own roads would discover systems I cannot imagine. If they were successful new arrivals would be keen to join them. House prices would be a sensitive sign of popular policies and a powerful incentive for owners. Residents' committees would be vastly more locally responsive than even the smallest council.

As a politician I've attended many community meetings where local activists were lobbying the council to pay for road lights, calming schemes or whatever. None of them realised that the council had caused the problem in the first place, and that the residents would be better off asking for their money back so that they can decide how to organise the road themselves. The simplest way to do this is to "unadopt the roads", but for it to catch on we need a better phrase. The best I've come up with is "Return the Streets!"

The process will start with individuals petitioning their local council to return them to the residents. Politicians will hate to give up power, especially as part of the benefit to residents will be a reduced community charge. They'll demand unanimity, which will be easier in smaller streets. The first task is to get a list of interested streets from which we can select some test cases. After a few successes the process will get easier. I'm confident that this Individualist Green movement's time has come. Join me if you agree. Even if your shoes get muddy, it'll be worth it.

Jim Thornton

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REVIEWS

THE ECONOMICS OF
FREEDOM published by the
Solidarity Federation.

This pamphlet does a very good job exposing the Capitalist system. Environmental destruction, atomisation of the population, loss of community, monopolisation, increasing inequality, all are presented as the bitter fruit of global corporatism. THE ECONOMICS OF FREEDOM gets into difficulty explaining the origins

of corporate Capitalism and in presenting an alternative to this system.

Over and over again, the free market is presented as the root cause of misery. Then a few pages later, they admit the free market really doesn't exist after all. I think most readers would find this a mite confusing. Paradoxically, for a supposed Anarchist pamphlet, there is little, if any, Anarchist economics to be found here. Funny, that so many Anarchists transform themselves into Marxists the minute they begin to write about the economy. Not even very good Marxists either, I might add, but the sort of received Marxism that hovers in the air around most leftist groups. One example of this is the belief that economic crises result from overproduction. Marxists have spilled gallons of ink debating the causes of economic crises. Without going into any great detail, the Leninist sects have preferred the overproduction explanation and sophisticated Marxists like I.I. Rubin and Paul Mattick favoured of a crisis of profitability. Our SolFed economists prefer the overproduction explanation.

The authors, and I assume this pamphlet was written by a committee, seem unaware of genuine Anarchist economic thought. It is as though Pierre Proudhon, Ben Tucker, Silvio Gesell and Kevin Carson never existed. For these thinkers, unlike Marxists and their derivatives, the origins of Capitalism lie in the powers and privileges granted by government. Competition and the market, on their own, could never create the present corporate monster. Capitalism is essentially the state socialism of the rich.

One word never used in this pamphlet is *liberty* - strange for a group calling itself Anarchist. Their concept of Anarchism seems little more than direct democracy, which is certainly part of Anarchism, but by no means all. With a certain amount of presumption, Anarcho-syndicalism is considered economically libertarian communist, something many syndicalist friends of mine would strongly contest.

There is a sectarian quality to their suggested alternative to Capitalism. Rather than trying to find a common ground to unite all the opponents of Capitalism, the authors promote a communist utopia. Perhaps here lies the reason for ignoring Anarchist

economics. If *the state* is the ultimate problem, as Anarchist economists believe, the task then is to abolish it, creating a situation where people are free to choose whatever sort of non-coercive economy they desire. The Marxist idea that the market is the root cause of Capitalism serves to bolster the Anarcho-communist conviction that exchange ought to be suppressed.

Not that I have anything against Anarcho-communists. If people wish to band together and take what they need from the common pot, all well and fine, do so and good luck in your endeavour. However, to think that society in general could be run in this manner in the foreseeable future is another matter. I meet many working people critical of the present system, but have yet to meet one who thought Anarcho-communism was an answer. Suppose, miraculously out of nowhere, a ground swell of support for Anarcho-communism was to arise, how would the authors intend to put their ideology into practice? By what means do you stop people from engaging in exchange? An Anarcho-communist police force? Can a majority vote decide these sorts of things? What about the minority, are they to be suppressed? Abolition of exchange is not all that is on their agenda either. What we consume is to be decided at meetings as well. It isn't difficult to imagine the potential for abuse that might arise here. This journal for example, might be refused the paper and ink necessary to publish, since a meeting could decide these materials were better used elsewhere.

Larry Gambone

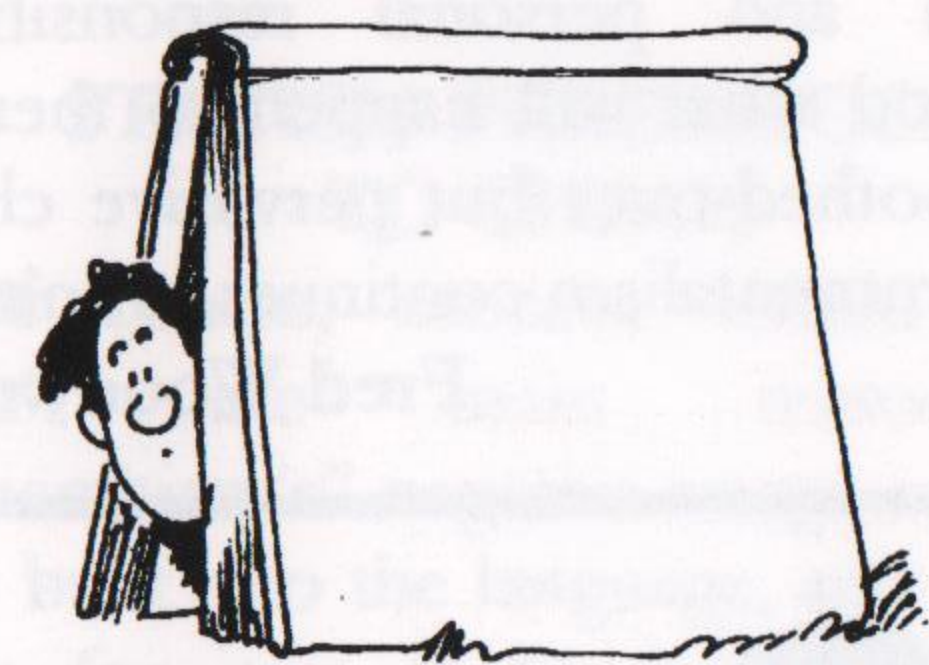
Northern Voices

(Issue 2, Winter 2004) Published by Northern Voices at Springbank, Hebden Bridge, HX7 7AA. Price £1.20 (Subscriptions £3.20 for 2 issues, post free). A5, 52pp.

It's always a refreshing change to read new local papers. Having been involved in one such paper back in the 70's, I know what a struggle it can be to put one together, and even more difficult, selling the thing. (Anyone can write but few can really "sell"! I missed out on Issue 1 so the feedback on it means little to a newcomer, but it is indicative of a commitment to taking your readers seriously, which is always a

necessary part of any publishing effort that is more than an ego-trip for the writers.

So, what do you get for your money? The magazine is neatly DTP'd and printed, with a smattering of illustrations in amongst the text (although I'd severely limit the choices of fonts available for headlines in future issues.) There's a good mixture of the political with the everyday and the overall tone avoids the hectoring / preaching approach that bedevils so many left-of-centre publications.



Urban regeneration and decay in Manchester and Burnley kick things off, with some well-deserved boots aimed at central and local government for letting things get so bad. We then have two articles bemoaning the coming of the mega-windmills. Living in Wales, I'm aware of the issues around the subject, but whilst one values the visual amenities, I do like having a steady supply of electricity and if that means big wind turbines then count me in. I'd also take issue with the romantic view of the countryside especially Snowdonia. Words such as wilderness, and "spiritual resource" seem somewhat misplaced relating to a mountain range which features a railway line up to its summit and a cafe on top.

Back then to some local rows over planning in Bury (the local market is being threatened with redevelopment). This is something we are also facing down in Carmarthen, and again the local population is up in arms yet the Council only sees the money that they'll get from allowing a developer to trash the town centre. Further afield there's a piece about a missing footbridge (or rather one that's been built but the local land-owner simply refuses to allow it to be put in place).

Manchester Earth First have an excellent (wider context) item about the Caspian Sea Mediterranean pipeline system that is planned - provided BP and the other developers can get enough public funding and there's enough troops to stop it being blown up. Events

in Iraq have recently shown just how vulnerable pipelines are to attack; given the area this one goes through it's difficult to see how it could be protected. A lengthy article on multiculturalism in Bradford rounds off the heavier items and then it's downhill all the way in "A Bit on the Side", the cultural review section, with equal dollops of farts and arts.

For some reason the editor feels the need to waste three pages explaining the articles, which they simply don't need. They're fine as they are. There's an excellent piece on a murder in Ashton-under-Lyme and how killing the murderer, who was well-known to him, played its part in persuading the Public executioner, Albert Pierrpoint, to give up his position as he saw that hanging murderers did nothing to dissuade other killers and only acted as a form of revenge.

We are then treated to a review of an "Alternative Raven" on Chomsky and his critics. The articles in this publication were originally intended to be published by Freedom Press as a special on Chomsky to celebrate his 70th Birthday. Sadly the people at Freedom turned it down, for reasons which, if this account is to be believed, were based on total ignorance of what was being argued. Anyway, the people at Northern Voices have finally made the entire publication available for a mere £3.00. (Meanwhile at Freedom Press, the Raven has been put out of its misery and publication has been stopped.)

Following a review of George Monbiot's "The Age of Consent", we arrive at the highlight of the whole magazine, well worth the asking price: Mike Fielding's second article on Rugby League in the Pennines, featuring the flutulent blind side prop "Fatty". Quite the funniest thing I've read in a long time. Anyone who has ever played or watched rugby (of whatever flavour) will enjoy this.

The mag is wrapped up with shorter items on food and wine, and the letters pages. All in all a worthwhile effort by all concerned, but there's some glaring holes in the coverage. Not a murmur of the gay and lesbian communities and it really needs a wider cultural base. One also gets the feeling that this is a middle-aged person's mag. Not that the issues aren't relevant to younger people, just the presentation and "voice" comes from the wrong (my) side of 40.

But that's just me being picky. If you haven't seen a copy and live in the "North", buy a copy and then pass it along to your friends and neighbours.

Richard Alexander

Country Diary Drawings:

36 Drawings by Clifford Harper. Agraphia 2003 £10.00

The vast quantity of art critics that this writer has had the misfortune to have come across in various newspaper supplements and periodicals over the last few years, have sent out some confusing signals to the lay person like myself, who is struggling to make sense of what the artist is trying to tell us. Gone is the day when this writer lets the critic lead him by the nose; whether it is literature, painting or any other art form. Which brings me to my allotted task - to review Clifford Harper's Country Diary Drawings. As we all interpret things differently, some may not agree with what follows here and yet Harper is not a difficult artist to decipher. There is no mystique. Pictures can speak as well as the written word.

But wait. Am I about to contradict myself? The first plate in the Agraphia Publication is not so straightforward for this observer after all. Are we looking at symbolism of flight or escape or merely something for the Guardian reader to gaze upon over his cornflakes in the morning?

Right or wrong, the former notion is preferable, one might opine. Two birds on the wing. A couple, hands clasped, held aloft and a boat on the beach, but no oars or sail.

The knowing look on the face of the fox in Plate Two has me thinking that unlike many inhabitants of the animal kingdom, this one won't finish up squashed on the tarmac. How many of us has been hunted at night, beams of light piercing our darkness? And why oh why does that distant car headlight always stop at the very spot where we crouch with dry mouth and thumping heart behind the hawthorn hedge? At times like this, four legs good, two bad!

The old church clock on the Norman looking tower. Winter time. Could be

anywhere. All is familiar, yet unknown. Looks lonely in a secular age.

Brock the badger in the fourth graphic on his own under a foul moonlight. Only poets, artists and landowners rejoice in moonlit nights. Poachers and burglars prefer wet and windy starless ones. Badgers and other nocturnal creatures are indifferent.

A loch in the Scottish Highland or a lake in Wales? Plate Five could be there with the mountains. Both countries boast such, that we know! Rugged and wild country this - not for rambles but the more hardy walker.

The following page portrays a bird central to the block of indeterminate species, but one that looks like it might feel at home on wetland or moorland.

A sprig of gorselike twig to the left helps reinforce this view. Wild and windy places. Don't let us forget these blocks of illustrations complimented the nature writings of such as Ray Collier. People that have escaped the rigours of the city to settle in the countryside. In his case he chose Scotland.

Plate Seven. A male figure bent into a south westerly, the prevailing winds of now. A stone wall snaking over hill and down dale. A tree bending to these winter gales. The far lake looks placid, perhaps sheltered from the elements. Does the man look furtive?

The hare in Figure Eight looks as if something is pursuing it. Eyes set back as nature intended at these times of stress. This animal is built low down at front and high up at the back. Those strong hind legs propel it forward up hill or bank. Being most vulnerable on the flat, this large rodent has to rely on twists and turns to escape any pursuer. At this he is very adept. When this noble animal is caught, the onlooker will never forget the shrill cries of anguish unlike any other creature that shares his immediate environs.

Plate Nine appears to be an artist's impression of sun beans (or moon?) streaming down through the clouds on to water. At least, that is how this writer interprets the picture.

At Ten we are still with nature. This time a trout in a still water hole. A willow tree, possibly reaching down to the surface of this placid area of water. The rippled effect could mean that this fish has caught a fly. One of nature's, preferably, rather than one on a line.

Moving on to Eleven. A study of tree branches in leaf. A foliage not

recognisable but meant to be oak, one is inclined to think. A sawn branch symbolises, to me at any rate, man's activities.

Twelve depicts a song bird perched on a stout tree branch. We can see that our feathered friend is singing, bill apart or at least giving out that alarm call that blackbirds do at dawn and dusk, or when mobbing the cat. Most of us can relate to this.

Thirteen. An empty motorway. Is this possible? Cutting through hill and dale. No respect for the natural world. Might this road soon be filled with missiles propelled by the infernal combustion engine? Huge lorries moving goods to those huge sheds that we see springing up like mushrooms across the countryside? Soon the only green belt will be in pictures like Clifford Harper's. Capitalism already exploits the nostalgia markets. And in this respect let us be reminded by the Czech writer Milan Kundera, "Only a great cynic would be an optimist these days".

That sawn off branch again in an otherwise placid country scene points to man and his shaping of the British countryside. The swan, a bird that cohabits with humans better than some wild creatures. A noble bird that is occasionally abused by members of the so called human race, usually the male of our species.

Snow and naked trees. Those distant hills again. Depths of winter. It would have been interesting to have seen which piece of country notes in The Guardian this picture was used for. Most certainly it would have been much appreciated by the readers, we feel sure.

Pictures at Sixteen, first glance, could have been a part man, part raptor, such is the effect of that peaked cap. But no - merely an aged man with a stick on a country path in winter or late autumn. Walking towards the hills. Not a friendly environment for old people, we might think.

The animal in Plate Seventeen was never meant for the butcher's block - more like the lamb that Mary lost - but most suitable fare for the children of gentle vegetarian Guardian families. No I'm not extracting the urine! The production of meat is cruel and wasteful anyway. May our ranks in the vegetarian and vegan movement increase in numbers.

The following page shows a farmer ploughing. Four legs and two united in

an age old task of food production. Hilly country this. Some three hundred years ago oats were grown at two thousand feet above sea level. Oil seed rape and turnips in the lower levels. The UK could be a lot more self-sufficient. Eighty three per cent of our food is imported.

On page nineteen a frog rather than a toad we feel, as the latter sports a warty skin unlike the amphibian here. Probably waiting for a fly caught by a sticky tongue faster than the human eye can see. A slowly vanishing species, the frog. In the dry eastern side of the UK this valuable ally of the gardener is fairly rare.

In Plate Twenty, a diesel engine pulls a train of coaches, windows lit, over a viaduct - its arches rising from the valley floor. A vivid example of man's works in a natural setting under a full moon that is partially obscured by cloud. Hills and valley dominate yet again.

Overleaf - this is working people's country. A land rover, driver shaking his fist at the border collie dog. Why? We might wonder! This looks like mutton country. Stone walls, a tortured tree and unmade road. Here are sheep rather than dragons. Could be Wales, Yorkshire, Derbyshire or - well - imagination is the thing.

Twenty-two shows us two figures looking down from a bridge on to a moored barge on a canal near a lock. This is leisure rather than work. A pointer to our times. Not as many working narrow-boats today.

A bird's eye view of a house in a valley set at the foot of sheer cliffs which might have been a quarry face some time ago. That sense of desolation - yet the buildings look robust enough. The fields appear to be filled but the habitation's isolation emphasises a certain loneliness that these sort of themes express.

Industry rears its unlovely head in the shape of water coolers at a power station in Plate Twenty-four. Large as life and just as ugly. In a rural setting where it would have been of greatest negative impact, aesthetically that is. Did it really have to be like this?

The picture on Page Twenty-five is a familiar scene to most of us. It could be in any town or even city. Somewhere that could have been the seat of one of the old aristocrats; now a place of learning. A museum or home to one of the 'new rich'. Well looked after

parkland could denote a local authority maybe.

Twenty-six - an avenue of deciduous trees in winter with sawn branches on the ground. Probably kindling wood for the Aga wood burning stove so beloved of the newly settled country dwellers. Dutch elm disease has created a plentiful supply of dead wood, well suited for burning. Burning wood gives off cellulose which is toxic. Not a good idea if all the neighbours in your valley burn wood.

Another deserted road through a village or town this time. The clock tower reads 4.05. Could be a.m. The trees might be evergreen and it is winter. The Georgian looking houses mean that this area is old. Probably a tourist watering-hole? We may never know.

Twenty-eight. Typical Harper, this. Know this sort of work anywhere, wouldn't we? Linear designs, swirls and heavy shading contrast with the stark outlines of the fence posts in this rural depiction. The heavy shading of hills can scarcely be told apart from the spinneys of trees, yet the very fact that we know them to be trees shows that this method works. Would the reader not think that lack of colour would make for a lesser art form?

Ah! A female figure. They do tend to be thin on the ground in this series. Not by design I'm sure. Surely that's not a Mills & Boon she is reading? Even the swans look interested. A summer's day to be sure. The yacht on The Broads surely? Reeds and a fairly flat landscape. Billows of white cloud, under which trees are in leaf. Another summer day and softer, unlike some of the previous pictures.

To finish off, the writer would quote from the Foreword by Richard Boston: "Harper's work is changing and developing. Since he wrote this Foreword, Harper has done a further five Country Diary Drawings. There will be, I'm sure, much else. His work is varied and rewards attention, and the Country Diary Drawings are a good place to start."

Mick Cropper

Utopia Britannica
British Utopian Experiments
1325 - 1945 by Chris Coates
Pub: Diggers & Dreamers 2001
ISBN 0-9514945-8-9 £16.50

Utopia Britannica is one of the best accounts of Intentional Communities within Britain currently in print. Reaching back to the religious utopias of the pre-reformation era - through the radical religious sects of 16th and 17th centuries. It includes chapters on the radical movements of Chartists, utopian socialists in the 18th/19th century, the Tolstoyan Anarchist colony of Whiteway and many lesser known communities and movements. This is an inspiring read, with guest contributions from Colin

Ward, Dennis Hardy and Peter Marshall among others. The editor is an Anarchist from Leicester currently living in Preston and a member of the Diggers and Dreamers group.

The variety and richness of this hidden history is a timely reminder that decentralist and Anarchist visions of community, individual freedom and the 'good-life' are an integral part of the radical, and leftwing movements in this country. Sadly this branch of history was not one that was taught as part of the history curriculum in my days when the ambitions of Kings and Queens and imperialist tales were more the norm.

The only disappointment I felt with the book was that its references to intentional communities in America could have been more widely researched. Chris Coates seems to have missed the

linkages between Robert Owen's communities in America and the subsequent series of communities founded there by Josiah Warren during the 1840s and 1850s. That point aside, the gazetteer of intentional communities across Britain provides an interesting itinerary for a radical tour of Britain. And shows us as well that many of us continue to re-invent the wheel, as many of our forebears have walked the same path using the same Anarchist vision as their guide many years ago.

Jonathan Simcock

Emerging Futures, can we wait?

Richard Heinberg, writing in his comprehensive study of what is likely to happen when the oil runs out, states, quite confidently: "Over the long-term, however, the prospects for maintaining the coherence of large nation states like the US, regardless of the philosophy governing their political apparatus, appears dim. Lacking an industrial infrastructure of production, transportation, communication, and control, large nations may eventually devolve into regional enclaves - which, depending on the local circumstances, could be either democratic or authoritarian".⁽¹⁾

This reads like both good and bad news for Anarchists. Good in that the State structure will devolve under its own weight when energy becomes short, but bad as this is seen as a long-term view and an apparently desirable situation will not happen without much chaos and bloodshed.

The information in this book should be in the heads of all Anarchists, including the most impatient, as it sets the stage for the sort of future anyone under 40 will have to face. Not that oil energy will suddenly disappear, or that all possible efforts will not be made to substitute for it, rather it is anticipated that there will be a slide into shortage,

the decline roughly matching the rate of growth in consumption since 1950.

The bare facts would appear to be these. At the present rate of consumption, total world oil production will peak around 2010. America, which consumes almost one third of the world output, is already setting itself up to control as much of what remains as it can. Nineteen new military bases have been built in the Caspian Sea area, and the West African off shore fields have been quietly subsumed, both while the world's eyes have been on the Middle East. Britain's wasted oil is drying up and we are setting up deals with Russia and Norway to use their North Sea pipelines to import natural gas (last winter). The shortage is already happening.

What about food? The increase in global population has been fuelled by oil. This is potentially the most disastrous area of our energy dependency. We get our life-energy from food (and drink), but from producer to plate, food production uses oil energy - much more than the energy it produces. Sometimes the energy input is four times greater than output, sometimes two or three hundred times as much. So when the oil runs out, how many can be fed? If we go back to pre-oil agriculture, the

figure is one quarter of the present population - and this is optimistic. Fisheries and soils weren't as exhausted and polluted then as they are now, and the skills have been lost.

Do not seek comfort in the illusion that 'alternatives' will be found. True, alternative sources of energy will expand, and possibly new sources will be found, but it is practically impossible to replace the convenience and availability of the amount of energy you can get from a gallon of petrol. (Due to the quirks of hydrocarbon chemistry, there is more hydrogen in a gallon of petrol than in a gallon of liquid hydrogen.) Hydrogen is currently being touted as the answer for the millions of anxious car drivers. The problem is, although technically feasible, it takes more energy to break the H from the H₂O of water than the H will produce. If you have abundant free hydro energy, as they do in Norway, you could produce an energy gain from hydrogen - if you could store and shift it efficiently.

But I want to write about slime mould. Slime mould (*Dictyoselsum-discoidium*) is something which should be familiar to all Anarchists. For those not yet acquainted with this instructive life-form, it is a reddish brown mould, visible with

the naked eye, typically living on damp wood bark. Most of these sorts of beings live as individual single celled organisms - thousands of them in the same group. And so does slime mould - most of the time. Now the amazing bit - when they want to move on, all the single units of slime mould form up into a sort of animate being, 'look' around, and head off. Toshiyuki Nakagaki (a Japanese Scientist) has discovered that slime mould can find the shortest route to food through a maze. When it gets to the food, it disperses into its separate independent parts once more.⁽²⁾

Of course, an amoeba-like organism of this incredibly primitive nature does not have a nervous system, let alone anything resembling a brain. Yet it spends its time between being a coherent 'it' and a dispersed 'they'. How do they/it do it? Conventional biologists followed the theory that there must be 'pacemaker' cells - leaders of the mob. But they couldn't find them: each cell was the same as all the others.

If Alan Turing, one of the proto-computing geniuses working on the World War II Enigma code breaking effort, hadn't been driven to suicide over his indulgence in some mild mutual masturbatory episode, we might lead the world in computer technology. But like many clever people Alan Turing was interested in many things. Working on morphogenesis, how things grow to form different shapes, he developed a mathematical model wherein many simple things, following simple rules, could produce amazingly complex structures. This is the key to the slime mould's behaviour.

There are no leaders. The group of cells is self organising: you know, like Anarchists. And this ability is based on what they have in common. In the case of slime mould the commonality is a pheromone, acrasin, aka cyclic AMP. When sufficient amounts of this are released by cells and others join in, the cells aggregate and they become it. A bit as in direct democracy decisions.

What the slime mould is demonstrating is classed as emergent behaviour. Emergence is the egg which evolutionary processes lay, but in this case the emergent behaviour can reverse itself, unlike most things which emerge from evolution. The important things to note about emergent behaviour (whether or not it is reversible) are these. It is a matter of self organisation, no leaders,

no delegation, just a consensus around commonalities. It is adaptive, and the intelligence of any behaviour comes from the bottom (the simplest units) 'up' to the complex whole, not from the top down. This is an example of the synergy which makes wholes greater than the sum of their parts.

Because of our primate background we (humans, that is) have a biological attachment to the structured hierarchy. In the good old days this led to the 'best' male breeding with more of the 'best' females than the others. Since the emergence of awareness and reflective consciousness we have recognised that some things can be bad. So we picked up the seemingly perpetual conflict between good and bad, or evil as some think of it. The history of humans can be seen as the failed attempt to deal with the bad or unacceptable in our nature through the hierarchical structure which derives from another part of our nature (that centred on testicular/testosterone motivation).

Hegel was largely right when he said "History teaches us that people never learn anything from history." Our inherent conflict brings us to the point where perpetual war is for perpetual peace as Gore Vidal puts it.⁽³⁾ As Anarchists we instinctively, emotionally, and intellectually oppose hierarchical social structures because they cannot avoid being authoritarian. So where do we go, particularly in a post-oil energy context? Right back to the slime mould.

Anarchy may be (so far) weak on philosophy and over emotional in some reactions, but we do have a framework of simple rules for the 'good'. These rules result in the forms of social organisation we favour, co-operatives, federations, and other self-organising groups. The word to describe these organisations, and the relationship between other similar, is the network. This is what unites the slime mould at all times, the network of its existence. That of humans would be/is more complex, but it arises from the right source in our being. The network is a reflection of the way a conscious mind emerges from the cluster of unconscious but interconnected neurons in our brains.

In *The Hidden Connections*, Fritjof Capra, says "...The rise of the network society has gone hand in hand with the decline of the sovereignty, authority and legitimacy of the nation state. At the same time, mainstream religions have

not developed an ethic appropriate for the age of globalization, ..."⁽⁴⁾ Although this may seem over-optimistic, he is referring to the way anti-globalisation demonstrations have organised themselves.

And the view of networks as self organising entities is currently emerging from many directions. As Steven Johnson says, "In fact, the needs of most progressive movements are uniquely suited to adaptive, self organising systems: both have a keen ear for collective wisdom; both are naturally hostile to excessive concentrations of power; and both are friendly to change. For any movement that aims to be truly global in scope, making it almost impossible to rely on centralised power, adaptive self organisation may be the only road available."⁽⁵⁾ I think we can agree with that.

What then should Anarchists do? The immediate pathway seems clear: communicate at as many levels as possible to encourage networks to grow and refine the Anarchist proposition. We have also to accept that globalisation is unavoidable - except by near total disaster. But globalisation can take different forms, like that of consciousness where we have global knowledge but live in locally based networks, forming aggregates as required and dispersing to units once the need has been met.

This is the choice we offer, reject life as slaves of hierarchical multinational authoritarian institutional corporations which control the Earth, to live as free emergent individual human beings expressing the further potential of their commonality. As *The New York Times* put it concerning emergence, "it is not just a fascinating quirk of science: it's the future." We have to decide whether it is to be 'theirs' or 'ours', and make it happen.

Colin Johnson

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- 1 *The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies*, Richard Heinberg, New Society Publishers, Canada, page 190
- 2 *Emergence: the Contracted Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software*, Steven Johnson, Penguin Books, 2001.
- 3 *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* Gore Vidal, Clairview, London, 2002.
- 4 *The Hidden Connections*, Fritjof Capra, 2002, p 191. Published by Harper Collins, London.
- 5 See 2 above.



Dear Total Liberty

Following the Autumn/Winter 2003 edition I would like to pursue matters arising from my contribution (on welfare) along with those from Joe Peacott and Patrick Macleod Cullen.

Readers may have noticed that Joe's article on inequality, written from an Individualist perspective, devoted just one line to the needs of those dependent on welfare. Yet the unemployed, elderly and incapacitated constitute about 20% of the UK population, and are of course the most economically and socially deprived! In my own article seeking alternatives to state welfare provision is a key concern (*Well Favours the State* Total Liberty Vol. 4 Number 1.) but Joe dismisses the problem with reference to services provided by voluntary agencies. So, how many claimants do you know who are not supported by the State? I know of absolutely none. Existing claimants, grown used to the deceptions practised on them by governments, may well feel relieved that Joe's ideas are not about to be implemented.

For Anarchists *voluntarist* solutions to problems will always be preferable, but on this showing it would be logical to conclude that Individualists have few workable proposals in mind. Indeed my suspicion is that Individualist recipes will never match current state benefits - and Joe does not claim that they would. Forgive me if this sounds like sectarian point scoring, but Joe's article is entitled *Individualism and Inequality*, it is he who introduces ideological preference.

What existing claimants should want to hear from Anarchists of whatever persuasion, are clear proposals for meeting their needs. Instead, for the most part we offer only silence. We don't seem to want to grapple with the one issue which gives the modern liberal-democratic state so much of its legitimacy.

We need perhaps to ask ourselves if we are serious about trying to achieve

widespread social change. It seems to me that we are afflicted with certain rigidities in our thinking processes, that there are barriers we need desperately to overcome, for instance:

- Trying to find workable solutions are likely to conflict with voluntarist preferences.
- There is a near universal human tendency to avoid problems which are big and intractable.
- Welfare considerations tend to point to some embarrassing hypocrisies in that some Anarchists accept state benefits to indirectly finance their own anti-state activities
- Sheer apathy and inertia

It's not just welfare that needs some hard thinking; there are other areas where our theory is seriously deficient: economics in general, and group psychology for example. So it comes as no surprise to me that young Patrick is much concerned with the unfortunate and persistent association between Anarchism and chaos. From the above, it should be obvious that the source for the problem does not lie solely with the State and its press; plenty of the chaos is generated by ourselves.

There are very few of us, who are prepared to venture into writing about practical alternatives to State and Capital that go beyond blasé reference to past achievements in Spain all those years ago. Isn't it about time that we woke up?

Yours

John Griffin
London

Dear Total Liberty

In TL Vol.4. No.1, Joe Peacott makes his utopia of a "private property" based Anarchist Individualist world sound all nice and rosy on paper. Now I don't begrudge the Individualist who wants their own personal space and personal possessions and who wants their own small plot as long as they don't encroach and impose artificial scarcity upon the rest of the community. And I admire the position taken by the rural village communes in the Spanish Revolution who tolerated the Individualists rather than demand they integrate into the commune.

Nonetheless as a libertarian communist I do not consent in any

genuine way to a situation where the bulk of the land and resources are fenced off and walled off as "private property" EVEN IF I were to own a little lonely bit of it myself. What I desire is that the bulk of the land and resources are left open as common land with free access for the community to enjoy. There has always been an historic need for different forms of common land, public open space, social space and social resource at different times.

Today these are heavily under attack from enclosure by bureaucracy and / or privatisation. It would be sad to just add to this miserable process of enclosure by inventing our own forms of Anarchist alienation and mutual estrangement in the form of Anarchist "private property".

Paul Petard
Reading, UK

Dear Editor

Thanks for the latest issue of Total Liberty. I really liked the article "Trafficking with Anarchists". Its light tone and inspiring ending made the whole issue for me.

The reviews were also of value. The two books reviewed are definitely something I'm going to keep my eyes open for.

I don't know if I agree with the psychology of authoritarianism due to repression of children. I don't deny that if authoritarians had a better upbringing they might not be plaguing us.

All of this makes you think though. So I appreciate getting Total Liberty. Please keep me on your mailing list. I've enclosed some money to help you get the next issue out. Thanks.

Sincerely
Paul Johnson
Chicago
USA

Dear Editor

Howdy! Thanks for the T.L. and the 'book'. We really enjoyed "The Origins of Authoritarianism" by Larry Gambone. We've been trying to figure out lately what made General Franco such an incredibly horrible man. That article shed a bit of light on the subject. Also I enjoyed Peter Good's "Trafficking with Anarchists". I recognise his name from the few issues of TCA I've received to date. A great little publication TCA.