

out of state in the accounts of the usual suspects. But even the money that does come back to the corporations largely goes to compensate the people who work in the executive offices, just as in all corporations. Some of these corporations pay out dividends to share-holders, but these payments, even if paid out regularly, are generally small and are seen as gifts and spent quickly, instead of being used to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities on an ongoing basis.

Which brings me to the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD), another uniquely Alaskan phenomenon. When the oil industry started up years ago, the state politicians established a permanent fund, into which they put the tax money paid by oil companies to extract petroleum, enabling the state government to function without extorting an income tax from residents. This money gets invested in the stock market and elsewhere and the proceeds not only help fund the state government, but enable every resident who has been here at least one calendar year to get an annual payout, expected to be around \$1000 this year. Residents feel absolutely entitled to this money, as compensation for the oil companies profiting from "our" oil. It, like "native" corporation dividends, generally gets spent quickly, often on a down payment for a new SUV or some other toy, and has no long term effect on bettering peoples' living standards. While I would certainly prefer to see the money from oil production benefit people of limited means rather than further enrich the oil company managers and stockholders, this annual welfare payment to all residents encourages people to look at government as a egalitarian, benevolent source of handouts.

But government in Alaska is no more egalitarian than it is elsewhere. It grants privileges to some and penalizes others. Its employees consider themselves our masters and us their servants. And while many look to government as a means of protection against discrimination, inequitable treatment is institutionalized in government agencies and programs. The authorities classify and categorize people according to ethnic characteristics, and then treat them differently based on these criteria. Politicians and bureaucrats crow about the wonders of diversity, but in doing so drive people further into their tribes and their identities. Reports on the "achievements" of public schools break all their data down according to colour and ethnicity at the direction of higher levels of government, all the way up to the feds. This teaches students early on that superficial differences between people are much more important in relating to others than is recognizing each individual's uniqueness and value.

Government treatment of Alaska "natives" demonstrates how far officials have institutionalized such bigoted nonsense. In this era of "multiculturalism," American Indians, Aleut, and Eskimo people in Alaska (and elsewhere in the united states) are funnelled into a segregated health care system, which is, needless to say, another creature of government funding. Because it is free to people using it, most "native" people without insurance utilize this system, which is riddled with waste, patronage, and discriminatory hiring prac-

tices. Many clients are dissatisfied with the care they receive, but those without insurance are trapped in it, while, as is the case with the "native" corporations, large numbers of the employees, and most nurses and doctors, who make a living off the system are not Eskimo, Aleut, or American Indian themselves. The unequal status and treatment of Aleut, Eskimo, and American Indian Alaskans is only further demonstrated by incarceration statistics which reveal that the percentage of prisoners in this state who are "native" is twice the percentage of "native" people in the Alaskan population at large. This high rate of imprisonment can be traced, at least in part, to higher poverty rates among these groups of people, which government programs and money aimed at "native" institutions have done little to alleviate.

So there you have it. Alaska is no libertarian outpost where people can turn to lead their lives as they see fit, unmolested by the state. Most Alaskans accept and support government institutions. People look to the cops and courts to settle disputes, and hope that government action will enrich them at the expense of others. Government employees intervene in people's lives in countless ways, considering it their right to order others around. And government agencies encourage identity politics and discourage individualism, while they run or fund institutions that discriminate based on ethnicity. Of course, all of this is just business as usual in a statist society. None of these phenomena are unique to Alaska, but that is the point; Alaska may have physical features not found elsewhere, but social, economic, and political life here are hardly exceptional.

Oil production, mining, fisheries and tourism produce much real wealth, and there is a strong service sector in the Alaskan economy, but without federal money, and the huge military presence in the state, Alaska could not exist in the form it does today. While Alaskans see themselves as a self-sufficient breed and bitch about intervention from "Outside" (which means the rest of the united states), they are completely at ease accepting the federal money which Alaska's politicians in Washington are able to extort from taxpayers elsewhere. Closer to home, they may resent some of the rules and regulations of the state government, but they are happy to pocket their PFD each year.

One hundred years ago life in Alaska was different. There were fewer amenities, but people had greater freedom of action. Then, as government extended its reach into more and more areas of people's lives, and people received social and economic benefits from government programs, they became more and more willing to put up with the social control which government demands in exchange. Just like "Outside," Alaskans let bureaucrats tell them where and how they can build their house, who can fix their teeth, how their children are to be educated, what they can smoke, and whom they can marry. Starting next summer you won't even be allowed to smoke tobacco in a bar in Anchorage. Now what kind of frontier is that?

Joe Peacott

TOTAL LIBERTY

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EDITORIAL

Insight and wisdom can come from strange sources at times. In the present era, religious extremism is driving events both on a domestic and international level. In Britain in recent years we have seen ever more faith schools established, for all the religions are ever eager to indoctrinate the young to their viewpoint. In the wider society Christian, Muslim and other religious groups have attempted to spread their influence over issues such as abortion, sexual relationships and lifestyle. In the realm of culture they have sought to censor and cancel shows such as the musical *Jerry Springer the Opera*.

In Lebanon hundreds of thousands of refugees have been driven from their homes and land, innocent civilians have been targeted by the Israeli armed forces and hundreds deliberately killed. A not insignificant number of innocent citizens in Israel have been killed by rockets fired by Hezbollah. While in recent years substantial numbers have been targeted and killed by Muslim terrorists in western capital cities, (New York, Madrid, London). Yet despite the often murderous influence of organised and fundamentalist religion, despite the fact that most anarchists, this writer included, are atheist or humanist in their outlook, it is evident that at least some anarchists derive part of their inspiration and ideas from religious sources. This may be, to coin a phrase, *anathema* to some amongst us, but the anarchist spectrum has long included the religious as well as secular. The Diggers in the English Civil War period come to mind, as do the writings of Tolstoy. The anarchist group *Jesus*

Radicals held a conference this year in Leeds attended by one of Total Liberty's regular writers. His comments as to the main difference between this and other *secular* anarchist gatherings were "I was warmly greeted as a stranger, the ratio of women and men was fairly even, the talks and workshops started and finished on time, there was a greater emphasis on listening than speaking. It was all very refreshing. I came away quite liking these people. Most choose to live a very simple life; they are as anti-hierarchical and anti-state as the rest of us. A lot of ideas floating around and a pronounced absence of dogma. It brought home to me the importance of tolerance and integrity needed in a free community."

"Do the small things" is a saying attributed to Saint David, a 6th century religious figure from Wales, but it is as valid today for non-religious individuals, small groups and also for anarchist politics. To welcome new comrades, to listen to others, to be open to new ideas and interpretations, these are vital if anarchists are to keep in touch with being human, and also if the ideas of anarchism are to grow and be renewed for the current difficult times. Why should people listen to us if we don't listen to them? How can our ideas develop if we treat them as a sacred text never to be re-evaluated or updated. The dead hand of tradition and the past is as tyrannical as that of any government. An inward looking clique, a closed mindset, an unfriendly welcome, are among the things which will turn people away from anarchists as people, and from anarchism as an idea. We need to move away from such an outlook.

Outside of the big cities, most anarchists lead lives with very little contact with other anarchists. Our ideas are marginal and little noticed by others. Some of us have the confidence to be open with all we meet about our views, others among us are more circumspect. Many of us have little opportunity to put our ideas to work in any meaningful way except in our personal approach and attitude to others, respecting "the other because it is other" to paraphrase a writer in *The Cunningham Amendment*. So to do *the small things* is human, is indeed *anarchist* and is a practical way for the isolated individual anarchist to implement something of our ideas in our everyday lives now.

Jonathan Simcock

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The Critics of Clone Towns: Only Partly Justified and Even Then For the Wrong Reasons

Clone Towns

It has been hard to ignore growing criticism of "clone towns". This is the idea that national and multi-national chain-stores are driving out small shops leading to towns losing their individual identity and character and becoming "clones" of each other.

Perhaps, perhaps not. In any case, these criticisms are often misplaced except in respects which, however, are seldom raised by anti-cloners since they involve a radical libertarian critique of our present political, economic and legal system. All that they want is much like we have now only "prettier".

The following are a few thoughts on at least some of the reasons why the anti-clone critique is misplaced, followed by some real libertarian criticisms and some suggested further reading.

Voting with their Feet (and Wallets)

The first thing to do is to highlight the obvious point to anyone valuing individual liberty (which, I assume, is the attitude of most readers of *Total Liberty*). I don't know of a single person who has ever been marched at gunpoint away from Arkwright's Corner Shop and towards the local Sainsbury's. Yet many carry on as if this is exactly the case. I have heard with my own ears shoppers in my local Waitrose complaining how chain stores "Won't let the small man live". It is only some old-fashioned English reticence that prevents me from exclaiming, "Well, what the hell are you doing in here then?!" (Keep in mind that I live in the London suburbs, hardly a commercial wasteland.) They're here because a large store with a wide range of goods under one roof is simply much more convenient.

Unjustified Romanticisation and Demonisation

Many seem to hold to an often unwarranted romanticisation of notions such as "smallness", "localism", "a simpler and more natural way of life", "community" and so on. This often goes hand-in-hand with an equally unwarranted demonisation of "large scale", "cities and urban living", "anonymity" and so on. Urban life certainly has its drawbacks, but for every example it is easy to point out the downside of rural and small town life such as the lack of opportunity and choice and a tendency towards stultifying conformity. When it comes to aesthetics, and as much as I enjoy an occasional visit to the Kent countryside, for me Mother Nature has never produced anything as beautiful as the London skyline seen at night. It's a matter of personal taste.

Another anecdote. My local parade of shops has both a very good branch of Waitrose and a fair number of independent shops, many of which directly overlap with Waitrose's range of goods. One of these is a grocer. I was walking past it one day when some fruit fell off the stall outside the shop. Anyone who knows suburban pavements will ruefully testify that one of their major uses is as a taxpayer-funded public toilet for dogs. Good old traditional local shopkeeper simply collected up the fruit now rolling around on the ground and plonked it back onto the stall. I suggest washing anything that you buy from there very thoroughly indeed.

I also regard it as important that the very thing that many critics of chain-stores see as one of their major failings i.e. that they are impersonal and that there's little individual attention, is what many of us like about them. It's simply nice being able to wander up and down the aisles and floors without the hassle of a person behind the counter trying to get you to buy something.

The Real Problems with Chain-Stores

Despite this, there are real libertarian criticisms to be made of chain-stores, and indeed "big business" generally. It is not directly that they are big, multinational, make huge sums of money or even that they drive out of business smaller enterprises. These are merely the consequences of the far more profound problems that can only be examined by considering how they got so big in the first place. Put simply, because of the lack of a *true* free market, the voluntary exchange for mutual satisfaction of goods and services is neither hindered nor helped by state action. A true free market is not to be confused with the economic, political and legal condition of the Western world today which can best be described as "mixed economy, corporate capitalism" or, as I prefer, "actually existing business" (and I should admit that many "right-wing" or "capitalist" libertarians, including myself, have got themselves into a terrible mess over the years by confusing the two).

I don't have the space to go into much detail, so I shall just mention some of the most egregious barriers to, or perversions of, a true free market that we see

today.

The most obvious is the massive direct and indirect subsidies that big business receives from the taxpayer via the state. Direct subsidies include state funding of R&D, particularly in areas such as the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries. Indirect subsidies include items such as transport infrastructure. If the taxpayer didn't pay for nice, hard, smooth roads then it would be much more costly for Sainsbury's to whiz their goods around the country in huge articulated lorries from their central depots to their local (*sic*) stores. In short, big businesses have been able to socialise the costs whilst internalising the profits.

Another major barrier has been the artificial legal notion of "intellectual property" that has prevented competition and facilitated the massive accumulation of wealth in the hands of a relatively small number of businesses and individuals. Microsoft and Bill Gates would still be operating out of a garage but for the protection afforded by copyright. This might not be directly relevant to the subject of clone towns, but it's part and parcel of the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few. In brief, the libertarian philosophical critique of intellectual property is that "real property" needs to have the properties (*sic*) of alienability and transferability, i.e. it has to be possible to alienate it from one person and transfer it to another. In other words, only one person can use (say) a spade at any one time and so the concept of property is needed to enable decisions about who gets to use it at any given moment (this is irrespective of the economic system under which the decision is being made). However, "intellectual property" is really pseudo-property. The idea of the code for (say) a Microsoft operating system can be used by many at once *without depriving anyone else of using it*. Therefore there needs to be no decisions about allocating its use and hence no concept of property in such things in the first place.

The issue of limited liability, i.e. businesses that in the UK have "Ltd" or "plc" after their names, is the most obscure of the barriers that I have space to mention. In a nutshell, the relevant libertarian critique of limited liability is that being endowed with a separate, artificial personality and therefore protecting the individuals that own them from the consequences of failure has been partly responsible for big business being so prominent in the world's economy.

But What Would the World Look Like in True Free Market Economy?

There is perhaps an irony to this. I have suggested my preference for "modern, urban" living. But it is undoubtedly true that much of it that we see today is bound up with these very perversions of a true free market found in our world of "actually existing business". How would things look if there'd never been "intellectual property" and so on? I've no idea! Now, *that* would be an interesting exercise in counterfactual history...

Nigel Meek

Further Reading

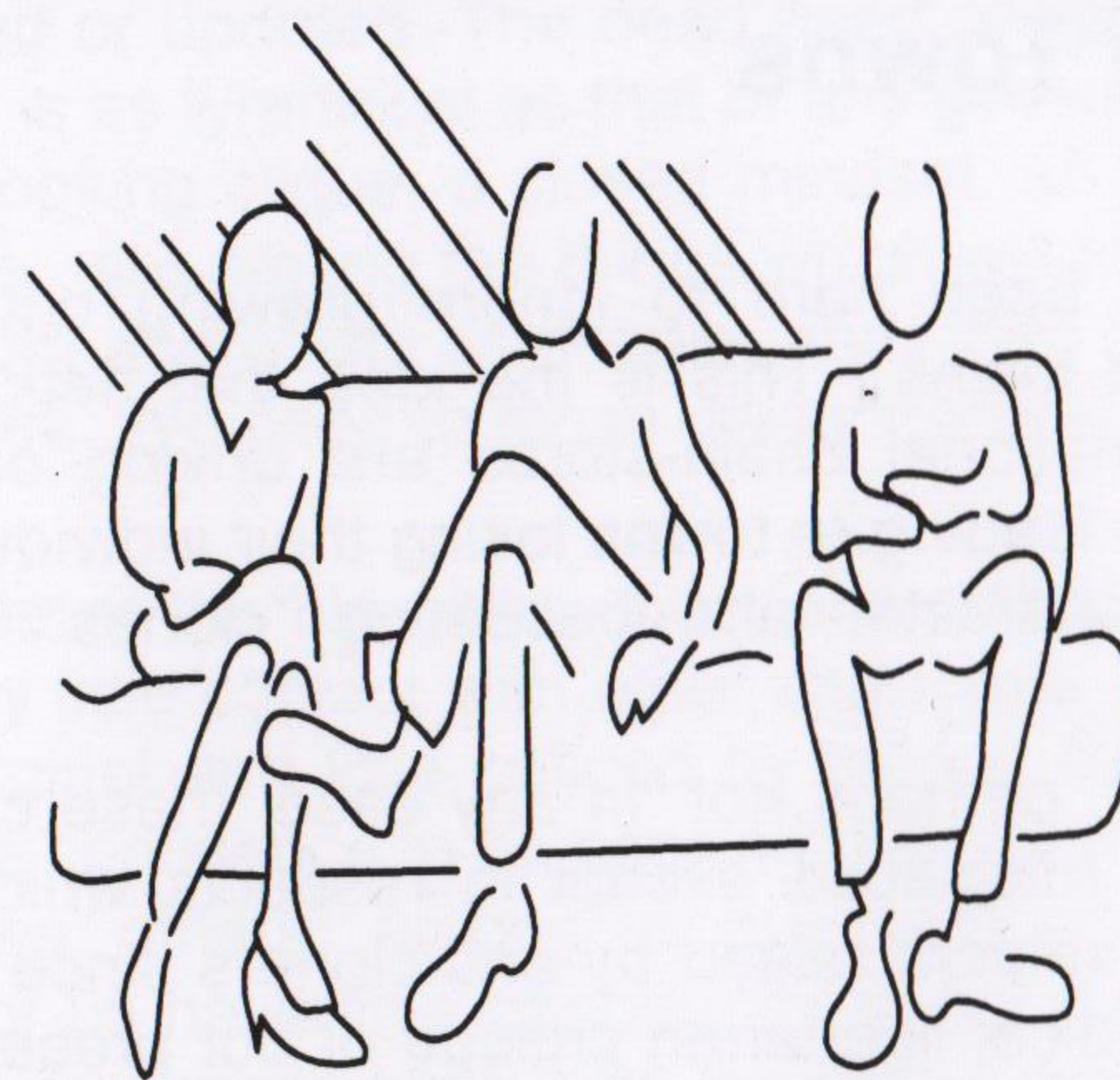
The following capitalist anarchist or individualist anarchist critiques of intellectual property, state capitalism and limited liability have all been published by the Libertarian Alliance and are available free from the LA's website.

Nigel Meek, *An Individualist Anarchist Critique of "Intellectual Property": The Views of Benjamin Tucker (1854-1939)*, 2002, www.libertarian.co.uk/lapubs/libhe/libhe023.pdf.

Kevin Carson, *Austrian & Marxist Theories of Monopoly-Capital: A Mutualist Synthesis*, 2004, www.libertarian.co.uk/lapubs/econn/econn102.pdf.

Kevin Carson, *Nothing Like a Free Market: Corporate Capitalism in the USA*, 2006, www.libertarian.co.uk/lapubs/econn/econn106.pdf.

Frank van Dun, *Personal Freedom versus Corporate Liberties: A Libertarian Critique of Limited Liability*, 2006, www.libertarian.co.uk/lapubs/philm/philm076.pdf.



Three Examples of Free Association

To people who have never come across the word 'anarchy' except as it is commonly used in the media – to indicate chaos – key anarchist ideas like mutuality and free association seem, for most people, to be 'fine in theory, but unlikely in practice'. But, as Colin Ward so memorably explained in his classic text, *Anarchy in Action* (first published in 1973), such ideas are inherently practical, and, furthermore, actually govern a large slice of our lives, particularly our more satisfying and useful lives, away from the demands of the 'free' market and the state. This idea, that most people in a large part of their lives are actually living anarchist lives without realising it, is an idea that can stand repeating and rehearsing at every opportunity. It has been my experience that the one anarchist argument that is guaranteed to get even the most sceptical listener to pause, and think, is the idea that anarchy is all around us in our everyday lives. People experience anarchy

when they decide who will do the washing up, when they join the swimming club, or the cricket club, their local football club, or golf club, or get involved in the Scout Association, or the Woodcraft Folk, or local history society, British Legion, allotment holders' association, or any other group that is characterised by free association and mutuality. And these groups can often have vital, as well as leisure, roles to play in society.

A graphic illustration of this truth was presented to me on a recent walking holiday on the north Norfolk coast. While walking from Sheringham to Cley-Next-The-Sea, I came across three examples of free association, of anarchy in action, within, literally, a few hundred yards of each other. For those readers who do not know north Norfolk, or England, for that matter, it is important to note that the area is a stronghold of political Conservatism. It has not always been like that; for example, in the 1945 general election (when the Labour Party won its great victory and brought the era of the social democratic welfare state to Britain) Norfolk was a Labour stronghold. But times have changed, and state funding for agriculture (first through the UK state, then via the European Union in its various guises), and state provision of good road links to London, have transformed the region, bringing a new middle class to the area, keen on their 'free market' wealth, which owes so much to the state. So, perhaps one would not expect to see three examples of anarchy in action in such an area. But there they were as I walked along the cliff tops overlooking the North Sea.

The first came with a notice board, from which hung a collecting box. The board stood outside a neatly painted white wooden hut, containing a bloke in a white shirt looking out to sea with powerful field glasses. He wasn't a coast guard or customs official, because there are none for this stretch of the coast. He was a volunteer of 'Sheringham Coastwatch'. The notice explained how the state had withdrawn the coast guard from this coast, with its small fishing boats, walkers, bathers, divers, yachtsmen and women, bird-watchers, sea anglers, and families on the beaches. As a response to the government's decision to end the coverage of the coast for all these groups, local people had banded together to provide their own safety watch on the cliffs, coastline, beaches, and sea. These volunteers are unpaid, and provide an essential watch over their fellows citizens who use the coast and the sea for work or leisure. As they say themselves on their notice board:

'WHY DO WE DO IT?' The Coastguard no longer keep any form of lookout over the sea or shoreline. The last visual watchtower was closed in 1994. Several in-shore incidents around the coast over the years have shown the importance of a visual watch. Once the alarm is raised, then the Coastguard will take responsibility for the incident and co-ordinate the rescue services'.

Without this free association of amateur (in the finest sense of the word) coast guards, the safety of all those who use the area would be greatly reduced.

Having put my few pounds into the collecting tin hanging from the notice board and gone even more cheerfully on my way, I quickly came across two old pillboxes from 1940 (Type 24s, for those who are interested). Unlike most of the wartime defence works that one can find on this stretch of the English coast, these two pillboxes are still very much in use. And in a very happy case of 'swords into ploughshares', they are used by the Sheringham Bird Observatory. One of the pillboxes has been turned into a hide. The concrete front, and its brick shuttering, has been cut away and replaced by a wooden structure for the local 'twitchers' to watch for incoming birds, as opposed to incoming German bombers. The other pillbox appears to be the observatory clubhouse. The embrasures have been glassed in, and a stove pipe protrudes from one wall, while a small wooden ladder gives access to the roof, and even better views of sea birds and waders. This suggested to me a happy conviviality of Sheringham bird watchers during the very cold winter months of bird migrations, and Siberian winds.

Even more pleased with the strength and life-affirming free association of these cliff tops, I saw, almost immediately, the third example of the triumph of free association, as an inshore rescue craft of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) hove into view. The RNLI must be one of the world's most famous voluntary organisations, and is the backbone of Britain's sea rescue services. RNLI boats go out in all weathers, rescuing people even when the air force's helicopters cannot fly. This is, along with volunteer cliff and mountain rescue services the type of organisation that Sheringham Coastwatch call out when they raise the alarm. And, as we all know, RNLI volunteers have frequently paid a very high price for their altruism and humanity. As a plaque on another shoreline building (this time in East Sussex) commemorates:

'This lifeboat house has not been used since one awful day in 1928. Seventeen men set off from here in the lifeboat *The Mary Stanford*. They braved a stormy sea to rescue the sailors of *The Alice of Riga*. Tragedy struck and all the lifeboat crew lost their lives'.

Not for money, or profit, but for humanity. And although the coastwatchers, bird watchers and lifeboat men and women of the north Norfolk coast may not be conscious of it, they are perfect models of anarchy in action.

Steve Cullen

The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.

Gustav Landauer

A Rebirth of Anarchism?

Are-birth of anarchism is occurring. Twenty-five years ago, only 24 countries had some level of anarchist activities. The majority of anarchists were Western European and elsewhere had a marginal influence (1). Today there are anarchists in an additional 38 countries (2). Most of the countries on the list of a generation ago have also seen a deepening of anarchist activity.

I think there is a four stage process of the development of an anarchist movement. The First Stage consists of a few individuals, sometimes even only one or two people, making propaganda with a zine, web site or pamphlets. The Second Stage sees small action groups in the largest cities. At the Third Stage, anarchists become an organizational force, building a functioning syndicalist union, or having some importance in the student, environmental, or anti-globalist movements. Irregular zines are replaced by weekly newspapers or professional-looking magazines. There might be a radio station. Most towns will have a group and large cities will have several. The ultimate Fourth Stage, which has yet to occur, anarchism, both organizationally, and as an ideology, becomes the major social force.

Some of the new anarchism is at the first stage, but the majority of the countries where anarchism is now present have actual groups. Some "new anarchists" have moved beyond the initial stages. For example, the Nigerian section of the International Workers Association has around 1000 members and its own radio station. Other anarchists have moved toward stage three. France has more than 220 groups in 121 cities and Italy has at least 140 groups in 66 cities. Spain has too many groups for me to bother counting. Activities include community centres, newspapers, radio stations and book shops. Twenty-five years ago, only Spain and Sweden had functioning syndicalist unions; today Italy, Greece and France have them. In the US the IWW is doing serious organizing. Greek and Quebecois anarchists are a force in their respective student and anti-globalist movements (3).

Background to the rebirth of Anarchism.

The collapse of totalitarian regimes, both Stalinist and right-wing, has allowed anarchist groups to form (or re-form) and thus is a major contribution to the breadth of the contemporary movement. The spread of communications technology such as fax machines and Internet has also greatly speeded this process. Publications and documents that once took weeks of research to find are available in seconds on the Internet. So too, the ease of communications. But these

are not the only aspects. Veteran anarcho-syndicalist, Laurens Otter once told me that the level of activity of the English anarchist movement was tied to the level of militancy of the labour movement. Take this observation and extend it beyond labour to include the social movements and it can be applied to anarchism in a global context.

Labour

While the occupations and mass picketing in Argentina are the most spectacular aspect of labour's regroupment during the past five years, strikes and unrest have become common in many countries. France, Italy, Greece, Ireland have all seen major strikes against neo-liberalism. As I write, teachers and miners are on strike in Mexico and teachers threaten a strike in British Columbia. Wherever possible, anarchists are involved in these strikes and where syndicalist unions exist, they are at the forefront.

Antiwar Movement

In spite of domination by liberals or Trotskyites, the anti-war movement is a major source of radicalization. When millions demonstrate, many people new to protest are able to make contact with anarchist ideas for the first time from the anarchists present at these gatherings. For radicalized youth, anarchism, or at least ideas taken from anarchism, are more acceptable than the rigid ideologies of the authoritarian left.

The Anti-globalist Movement

Seattle 1999 and subsequent actions put anarchism in the headlines, usually for the wrong reasons. A number of young people were attracted by the militancy of the Black Bloc. But these young neo-anarchists quickly matured and are now some of the most important organizers of contemporary anarchism.

Student Movement

Quebec students were the first group in the Americas to beat back neocon policies in their lengthy strike last year. Student strikes have occurred in France, Greece and Chile. All have been successful, and all were mass movements involving more people than just the students effected. Anarchists are an important aspect of the student movements of Quebec, Greece and France. In the USA, SDS has revived and unlike previously, it is now composed of high school and post educational members as well as university students. The new SDS is also on a solid libertarian footing (4).

Environmental Movement

Even though mainstream environmental groups are co-opted, anarchists still play a role in the environ-

mental struggles. Furthermore, the decentralist, "small is beautiful" and consensus-based politics favoured by many greens serves as a natural link to anarchist thinking.

Immigrant Struggles

The French riots of last September represented the bitterness of immigrant youth. French anarchists were at the forefront of defending immigrant youth against racist attack. The May 1 strikes and demonstrations in the US against racist laws victimizing immigrants united millions of Latinos and created a potential for a mass workers movement. There is sympathy among many Latino workers for the Zapatistas, Magonistas and Bolivian peasant syndicalism. Anarchists and IWW took part in these marches and strikes.

Latin American Radicalization

The Argentine assembly, mass picketing and worker occupation movements, Bolivian peasant movements, and the Zapatistas, while not expressly anarchist, all share a direct-democratic and decentralist approach. Anarchists work closely with such movements. But Oaxaca State's Consejo Indígena Popular de Oaxaca "Ricardo Flores Magón" (CIPO-RFM) which represents 24 indigenous communities, is pointedly anarchist in ideology and is a member of International Libertarian Solidarity.

Indigenous struggles

All aware and progressive people support Aboriginal people in their struggle for justice and to preserve their way of life against the state and corporate capitalism. The communitarian, decentralized, environmental and consensus based politics are in many respects similar to anarchism. Anarchists are among the most devoted of supporters of Aboriginal peoples.

Will anarchism continue to put down roots and grow? I suspect as long as the labour and social movements remain active this will be the case. As for the Marxist-Leninists, I cannot see them re-establishing hegemony over the left as they did in the 1970's. Among most activists, the emphasis on self-management and decentralization and a hostility to manipulative, top-down politics is just too strong.

Larry Gambone

- 1.) UK, Ireland, France, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Mexico, Venezuela, Greece, Japan, Austria, Holland, Israel.
- 2.) Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Lebanon, Slovakia, Russia, South Africa, Uruguay, Czech Rep, Nigeria, Serbia, Poland, Bulgaria, Colombia, Peru, Turkey, Armenia, Cyprus, Estonia, Indonesia, Philippines, Ukraine, Iran, Bolivia, Uganda, Kenya, S. Korea, Malaya, Belarus, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, French Guyana, Luxembourg, Iceland.
- 3.) A functioning union organizes workers, and is not just a propaganda group. The CNT-F has 5000 members and the SUD unions are also syndicalist inclined. Italy's large UNICOBAS is syndicalist.
- 4.) The new SDS was founded by libertarian socialists and IWW members. As of this writing, it has 147 chapters; 22 in high schools, 82 in colleges and 43 for non-students.



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

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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.

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THE STRANGE CASE OF KROPOTKIN'S CHAIR, CLEMENT ATTLEE'S PIPE AND A BRIGHTON OMNIBUS

Britain's stuffed with museums. No matter how absurd the subject you can bet there's some museum, somewhere dedicated to its preservation and exhibition; pencils, ties, false teeth, even the Royal Family. You might expect, then, that Britain's long and dramatic history of workers' struggles from the Peasants' Revolt to the victories of New Labour might warrant a substantial national museum but think again. Have you ever heard of a "National Museum of Labour History"? Do you think there is one? Have you ever visited such a place? Well comrade, come with me on a journey of discovery down an off' neglected byway of politics.

New Clothes for Old Emperors

I've always loved museums, even the silly ones and when, in the 1970's, I discovered there actually was a "National Museum of Labour History" I had to see it. Although trade unions have existed in Britain since the early eighteenth century and the Independent Labour Party since 1893 it wasn't until 1975 that a "National Museum of Labour History" opened its doors to the public.

Fifty years earlier Labour leaders already commanded sufficient resources to create an excellent working class movement museum but preferred to channel their energies, along with national and municipal funds, into art galleries and other exhibitions dedicated to depicting the virtues of the elite and their imperial achievements. The revolutionary wing of the labour movement, admittedly hampered by limited finance, was equally neglectful of the importance of founding a museum that challenged the Establishment view of history.

Great men brought enlightenment, rich men gave to the ignorant and impoverished, and government refereed disputes, guaranteed individual rights and ensured progress and prosperity for all. Well at least that's what we are supposed to believe; the iconography of countless art galleries, museums and National Trust properties across the land. Since Victorian times, working class access to museums has been welcomed and encouraged by socialists although the political philosophy they embody and portray ranges only from the patronising to the reactionary.

Heralds of Revolt

Ignored and overlooked by the wider labour movement in the 1960's determined members of the "Trade

Union, Labour and Co-operative History Society" began to bring together and preserve unique artefacts of working class political struggle. In 1975 these enthusiasts leapt at the chance to exhibit this, by then, impressive collection in the redundant Limehouse Town Hall in London's East End and I leapt at the chance to pay a visit.

Tales of Tolpuddle, Peterloo, Chartism, Suffragettes, Marx, Syndicalism, Clarion Clubs and William Morris were told with the aid of posters, banners, bicycles and a fascinating array of other objects. It was an exhilarating experience, so different to any other museum I'd come across in Britain. Usually you're pleasantly surprised when an exhibition is less than damning

ing about working class militancy but Limehouse positively encouraged activism. It left no doubt that we might all be in the same boat but whilst most of us were rowing an elite were upstairs lounging about in the cocktail bar. The story depicted at Limehouse spoke for itself and with a very different voice to the plummy tones of London's other museums.

For over a decade a loyal band of enthusiasts struggled to keep the "National Museum of Labour History" alive despite a deafening lack of interest from political activists and an absence of funding from the salaried time-

servers of the Labour Establishment. In 1986 they finally admitted defeat, the museum closed and the collection went into storage.

Days of Hope

It appeared the end of the line but persistent lobbying by dedicated individuals eventually secured an offer of funding from the local authorities of Greater Manchester. In 1990 the "National Museum of Labour History" reopened at Princess Street, Manchester in the old Mechanic's Institute that in 1868 hosted the first meeting of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). In 1994 the museum moved along the road to occupy an old pumping station at Bridge Street, on the banks of the River Irwell and that's where I caught up with the exhibits once again.

The old Limehouse display looked amateurish with enthusiastic, hand-written labels describing and explaining the exhibits. In Manchester the whole enterprise was far more professional, a proper museum but something that had caught my attention in Limehouse seemed to be missing. During my previous visit I'd

been fascinated to come across Peter Kropotkin's desk and chair. They both bore brass plaques proclaiming that they had previously belonged to Richard Cobden, leader of the anti-corn law movement. On his departure for revolutionary Russia Kropotkin presented the chair and table to Brighton Trades Council and in the late 1960's they'd been gratefully received into the labour history society's embryonic museum collection.

Years of Doubt

Strolling around the National Museum of Labour History in its new Manchester home I grew increasingly uneasy about changes in contents and presentation since the Limehouse days and resolved to put my observations to the director, Dr Nicholas Mansfield.

In an exchange of letters I suggested that in the new presentation "exhibits betray few ideas, visitors might fairly conclude that you have assembled a motley collection of incidental objects handled by past members of the labour family, a sort of rummage through the attic of an eccentric old dynasty."

To his credit Nick Mansfield replied at some length with answers that were revealing if not reassuring. "Since the National Museum of Labour History was re-established in Manchester, high professional and academic standards have been put in place. This has enabled the museum to achieve registration with the Museums and Galleries Commission and designated status with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and so draw on a variety of funding sources, which the Limehouse museum failed to do and consequently went under."

Viability is a key issue but you can't help but wonder whether William Morris, Karl Marx and Kropotkin would be impressed to learn that they had entirely failed in founding a new Jerusalem but had succeeded in gaining designated status with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

I suggested to Dr Mansfield that, "Without raising fundamental questions and controversies casual visitors are seamlessly led towards viewing the Labour Party as the sole inheritors of a tradition they have often opposed!" Quoting Caroline Benn's observation that, "The rosy notion of the Labour movement built on foundations of consistent brotherhood is chimeric" I pointed out "that very notion is embodied by an exhibition which entirely fails to represent the fierce struggles within the wider movement. References are made to William Morris and Engels with no hint at the importance of their Anarchist and Marxist criticisms of parliamentary tactics..."

To this Dransfield replied; "I would dispute your assertion that conflict within the labour movement is not reflected in the displays. Those on both the trade societies and the dockers show the stratified nature of labour, those on the spread of democracy illustrate the opposition to suffrage..." A neat side-step here by the Director; stratification (e.g. skilled/non-skilled) has little or nothing to do with political divisions. The former is an issue of sociological fact, the latter involves a clash of political ideas. Interestingly whilst Dransfield's second "counter-example" does involve a division over ideas both groups, suffragettes and anti-women's suffrage activists, were united in their commitment to vot-

ing and the parliamentary system.

As an anarchist my fundamental objection to the Manchester museum is that it reduces the struggle to transform human relations, to build a new Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land, to a prolonged campaign to gain the parliamentary vote and a few more crumbs from the rich man's table.

Stand Up for Kropotkin's Chair

An old Brighton anarchist who'd once sat in Kropotkin's chair in Brighton Trades' Club told me of his surprise on visiting the Manchester museum to find the chair banished to the basement but Harold Wilson's pipe prominently displayed. Incidentally the museum's registrar informs me that Wilson's pipe has now joined Kropotkin's furniture in the cellar but mitigating my disappointment he assures me "Clement Attlee's pipe is on display!" Perhaps in future years the museum might find room for Peter Mandelson's underpants.

A glimpse of Kropotkin's furniture is insufficient to incite an anarchist insurrection but the New Labour look, to the old labour museum, reinforces the vapid character of contemporary politics. Joe Soap won't hear of anarchism on Coronation Street or Newsnight so it's important that we object to anti-parliamentary politics being excluded from museum depictions of labour history.

From Class Struggle to Corporate Hospitality

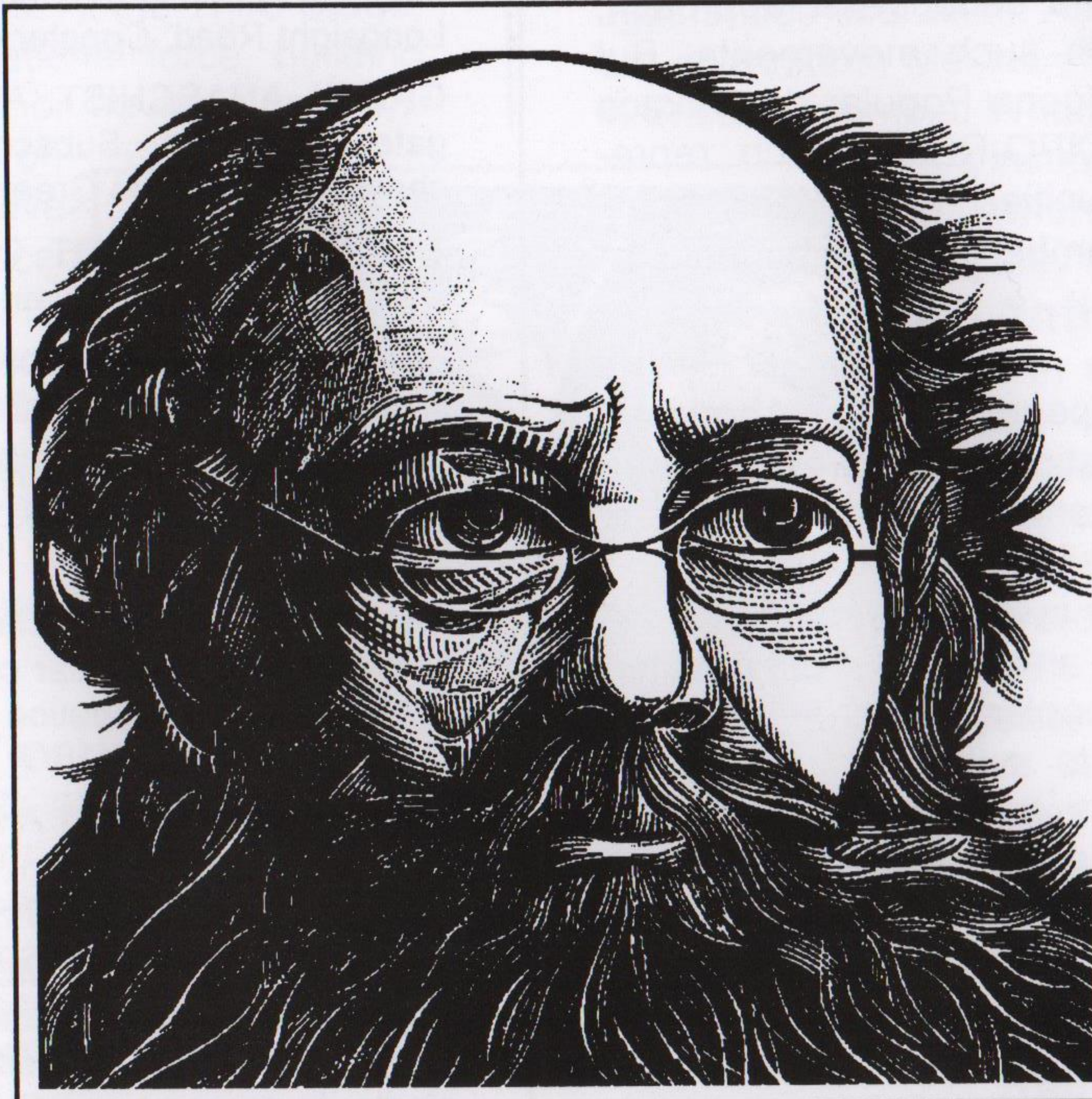
A museum originally constitutionally and philosophically part of the labour movement has been reshaped to still educate and entertain but no longer to agitate or organise. This is reflected in the shifting name of the museum. In Limehouse it was the "National Museum of Labour History". When it re-opened on its present site it officially became the double-barrelled "National Museum of Labour History and the Pump-house People's History Museum". In 2001 it adopted the simpler, more vacuous title of the "People's History Museum".

Its name now shorn of any element of political significance, the museum no longer looks to the labour movement for support. Whilst New Labour councils, governments and trades unions might balk at funding a museum that encouraged activism, even Tory authorities could hardly object to supporting a museum presenting the history of "People".

Dr Dransfield is keen to emphasise the academic respectability of the museum. My complaint that a disproportionate amount of exhibition space is given over to working class consumerism was met with, "this reflects the current academic view that this strand was overwhelmingly more important than more radical courses". More important to whom?

Depicting the Co-operative movement is fair enough but cosy, nostalgic displays on old time shopping are overdone and even more unwelcome is the museum's devotion to football. Why on earth is the trust promoting the Professional Footballers' Association? Professional football has little connection with labour activism and is surely more akin to "the opium of the people". What next, galleries featuring the National Farmers' Union or the British Union of Fascists?

"People's History" is such a useless, woolly concept that the exhibition can only grow increasingly pointless. The museum's already so anodyne and busi-



ness-friendly that it's advertised for "corporate hire".

On the Buses with the Anarchist Prince

All is not lost, anarchist iconography has appeared on the streets of Brighton where Peter Kropotkin has his own omnibus! Kropotkin's connection with Brighton began in 1882 when he got ideas for his book "Mutual Aid" from observing marine creatures in the city's aquarium. He returned to Brighton in 1912, residing at 9 Chesham Street, Kemp Town. Although he was already an old man he still regularly lectured on anarchy from a soapbox on the beach. In March 2005 the "Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company" formally named bus number 650 "Prince Petr Kropotkin" in his memory. Now a local campaign has begun to erect a blue plaque on Kropotkin's old house and readers might consider writing to Brighton's head of tourism to press the case. Kropotkin's previous home at 6 Crescent Road, Bromley has had a plaque since 1989 so the idea's a runner but at Brighton he's competing against Max Miller!

Iconography of Anarchism

Politicians frequently reinforce prejudice but seldom change minds. A blue plaque on a house, a name painted on a bus or an unusual museum exhibit all have the power to intrigue. Most will pass by uninterested but a few people will inquire further. Such subtle and gentle forms of propaganda are appealingly libertarian. Discovering places of local significance is fun in itself, publishing the information encourages others to reflect on the issues and organising walks around them creates the germ of a political group.

Whether it's offering an alternative to a museum's depiction of reality or creating an interpretative walk around your own local area, the past provides more fertile ground for raising political ideas than the present. The narrative aspect adds an attraction absent from abstract political debate and the concrete nature of museums and local buildings makes the history more real and immediate.

Propaganda by the deed was an anarchist disaster, propaganda by the written word usually bores readers into rejection but anarchist iconography arouses observers' curiosity and it doesn't end with Kropotkin. It's fun to discover and promote local libertarian events and individuals. Museum displays, blue plaques, historical walks, tourist leaflets are all fruitful areas for anarchist propaganda. "Heritage" is popular but neglected by libertarians. There's little we can do to stop the sycophants and credulous from gawping at Parliament and Buckingham Palace but we could do a lot more to raise the profile of alternative images. The pen is mightier than the sword but the image is more powerful than the word. Bring back Kropotkin's chair!

Christopher Draper

(Brighton's Head of Tourism is Adam Bates, Brighton Town Hall, BN1 1JA)

(People's History Museum, Bridge Street, Manchester, M3 3ER)

CAN THERE BE SUCH A THING AS A CHRISTIAN ANARCHIST?

One cold February morning in 2003, five Roman Catholics committed to non-violence, anti-authoritarianism and hospitality decided to take seriously the words of Dorothy Day, "if they come for the innocent without stepping over your body, cursed be your religion and your life." They broke into Shannon airport, armed with hammers and proceeded to decommission a US warplane on its way to Iraq and leave a makeshift shrine on the runway. The plane had to be sent back to the USA, they stood trial and were eventually acquitted by a jury of their peers.

Welcome to the world of Christian anarchism. While not a centralised movement, it is reflected in the lifestyles of many small groups of Christians in the UK today. As Christendom fades further into the past, it is dawning on more Christians than ever that the nation state is not the glorious thing it was once thought to be, and maybe God thinks so too.

Theology is famously obsessed over words. So before we can answer the question, "can there be such a thing as a Christian anarchist?" we must first look into what we mean by the terms 'Christian' and 'anarchist'. The Christian anarchist is stuck between a rock and a hard place; the Christian who rejects and misunderstands anarchism, and the anarchist who rejects and misunderstands Christianity. It is nobody's fault after all, both schools have variously misrepresented themselves.

Secularists often take Christianity to mean creedal adherence to a violent and jealous God who uses the state as an instrument of his holy justice. An anarchist is often understood as a nihilistic utopian, whose violence and self-service would wreck civil society if unchecked. For my purposes here I reject both of these understandings.

Of the different anarchist schools of thought, Christian anarchism is closest in form to Collectivist and Mutualist anarchism. It celebrates the value of community over individualism (without reference to utilitarianism); it allows for private ownership of property within the limits of the common good, it is radical, communitarian, and aims to be free from restraint and selfishness, even celebrating the destructive urge. This is because Jesus lived a corporate life, symbolised in the sharing of food and physical touching of those on the margins of society. Christian anarchists hope they embody a return to the centrality of Jesus' way of life and interpretation of faith. Creedal Christianity focuses on a mythical tradition of Christ's birth and death and resurrection, entirely without reference to the man himself.

Christian anarchists urge that Jesus was an anarchist, which is why the "powers that be" had to crucify him. In a world where religion and state are tightly

bound, as they were in modern Europe, Jesus' teaching challenges dominant ideologies and opens up new ways of being. He called these new ways the Kingdom of God.

A sensible reader would ask why is the church so conservative and oppressive, if Jesus was such a radical. The answer can be found in a brief sketch of church history, starting with the gospel writers. Not long after the death of Jesus the Jewish temple was destroyed and the Jews fled. Both Jews and Romans were persecuting Christians, their message was radically anti-authoritarian and their lifestyles were communist and pacifist.

The followers of Jesus refused to bow to either the laws of the Jews or the totems of the Romans. They deliberately challenged the authority of the Caesar even in their writings: "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mark 1:1). The opening of Mark's gospel deliberately offends the Roman Lord: a "gospel" was a Roman royal decree marking the birth of a Son of the Caesar. At this time Caesars were considered divine and so Jesus was held up as a challenge to their monarchical feudalism. And because Jesus was a cosmic "son of God" he allowed for no temporal ruler (archy) whatsoever. All humankind are equal and free from human rulership. But even if a follower's loyalty was to another monarch, this alternative king was a model of servanthood and liberty, as shown by (Mark 10: 42-45):

"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus (Mark 10: 42-45).

We also find evidence in the early Church writings, including the Bible, of anti-Semitism and pro-monarchism. The Bible is not an ideologically consistent collection of writings. The Christian anarchist recognises this, and her anarchy extends to her reading of the Bible. It does not rule her, nor she it. However, we can safely assume that early Christians continued to refuse conscription or any temporal loyalty for at least the first three hundred years after Jesus' death. Being a Christian was illegal and dangerous, and Christians were considered enemies of the Empire. All that changed, of course, with Emperor Constantine.

Emperor Constantine, following the axiom, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em", co-opted Christianity. This would not have been an overnight event, as is sometimes suggested (it is claimed that he had a dream where a cross turned into a sword of victory). Over the centuries Christians modified their thought and practice to accommodate the Empire (while dissent continued in some Christian communities: there was no "the Church" at this stage).

Finally it became possible, with theologians such as Augustine and various conferences or "councils", to rout heresy and affirm orthodoxy, to be both a Christian and a citizen. Eventually it became impossible to

separate the identities. Baptism, once an act of defiance against the powers of this world, became a marker of citizenship into its legal and military empire.

Christianity has been living with the legacy of Constantine, and the majority of Christians have colluded with him ever since. The reformation did nothing to challenge the major supposition that led to the violent oppression Martin Luther railed against, that the State and the Church are God's tools to bless and punish an evil world.

There have always been dissenters among the Christians. Those who in one form or another have recognised the anti-authoritarian "good news" of Jesus. Before the reformation some monastic orders gave expression to the servanthood of Christ; then the Anabaptists, who exist today in various forms of dissent around the world (the Amish, and the Mennonites, for example). In the twentieth century, Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian author, also in his later years a Christian anarchist, expanded upon what it means, although he never used the term itself; and Dorothy Day, who co-founded the Catholic Worker movement, managed to bring anarchism and Catholicism together. There are numerous Christian theologians who take an anarchic approach, Jaques Ellul, Vernard Eller, John Howard Yoder (yes, Yoder!), Walter Wink, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, Ched Myers to name just a few.

As a helpful outline I have summed up some of Vernard Eller's key characteristics of a Christian anarchist:

Anarchy is a Process. For Christians "anarchy" is never an end and goal in itself. The dying-off of Power (our dying to Power) is of value only as a making of room for the Power of God.

The State Cannot Save us. Christian anarchists have no opinions as to whether secular society would be better off with anarchy than it is with all its present hierarchies. But they agree that the present system is not working: the state cannot save us and should not be looked to for salvation.

Secular anarchism is missing something. I was recently at a meeting in a squatted social centre hoping to use the experience to illuminate my own faith. I was struck by the ideological and linguistic gaps in secular anarchism that Christian anarchism is already set up for.

The Powers need us more than we need them. It is not the Powers we must fight but our dependence on them. Revolutionists fall into the trap in their intention of using good Powers to oppose and displace bad ones.

Christian anarchism is not violent. The use of violence against evil is the first step to being overcome by it. The control of others by the use or threat of violence is always evil. Not all Christian anarchists smash up aeroplanes or set up shrines on runways, but they are all involved in creative and imaginative ways of challenging the Powers, both State and Corporate, and of challenging their communities to take responsibility for their world. There are Christian

Peace-maker Teams working to bring reconciliation where armies boldly go and anti-war protestors fear to tread. There are priests who challenge the harsh exclusiveness of the established church. There are old ladies who lie down in front of Caterpillar trucks to save homes from demolition.

In June 2006 around fifty Christian anarchists met up in a Church in Leeds: Baptists, Anglicans, Quakers, Mennonites, Roman Catholics, Free Churchers, to name a few. More than once I heard people at this gathering and the lead up to it saying, "I had no idea there were other people who thought like this!" What brought them together can probably be well summed up in the words of Dave Andrews, a Christian anarchist based in Australia:

"Christlike life; lifestyle characterized by the radical non-violent sacrificial compassion of Jesus the Christ; a way of life distinguished by commitment to love and to justice; working from the bottom up to empower people, particularly the marginalized and disadvantaged, so as to enable them to realize their potential as men and women made in the image of God, through the self-directed, other-oriented intentional community groups and organization."

Keith Hebden

Book Review

Close to the Veg; a book of allotment tales, by Michael Rand, 2005, Marlin Press, Stansted, 285pp, with illustrations by the author. ISBN: 0-9547988-1-3.

Gardens, allotments, and digging are dear to the hearts of many anarchists, and have been for a long time. Michael Rand, in his *Close to the Veg*, quotes a famous English anarchist hero from the Civil Wars, Gerard Winstanley: 'The one true religion and undefiled is that each person hath land to manure'. While in the *Independent on Sunday* recently, Tom Hodgkinson wrote about discovering that his allotment harbours an inordinate number of ex-rock music plot holders, one of whom he quoted as saying, 'I still love music, but these days it's very much dominated by corporations. So digging is more punk than being in a band'. Being of a certain age, I'm quite partial to a bit of punk myself, and as a new allotment plot holder (a one year's veteran) I enjoyed Michael Rand's book on many levels.

There is, indeed, a punk-rock fan in Rand's account of life and labour on the Fitzroy Park allotments, Highgate. The punk is a 90 year old former architect with strong views on *The Damned*, *The Clash* and *The Buzzcocks* and was a pioneer of the Modern Movement in British architecture, which may, or may not, be a good thing, according to taste; and he is just one of a parade of marvellously eccentric plot holders that people *Close to the Veg*. However, there is a good deal more to this book than a series of funny stories

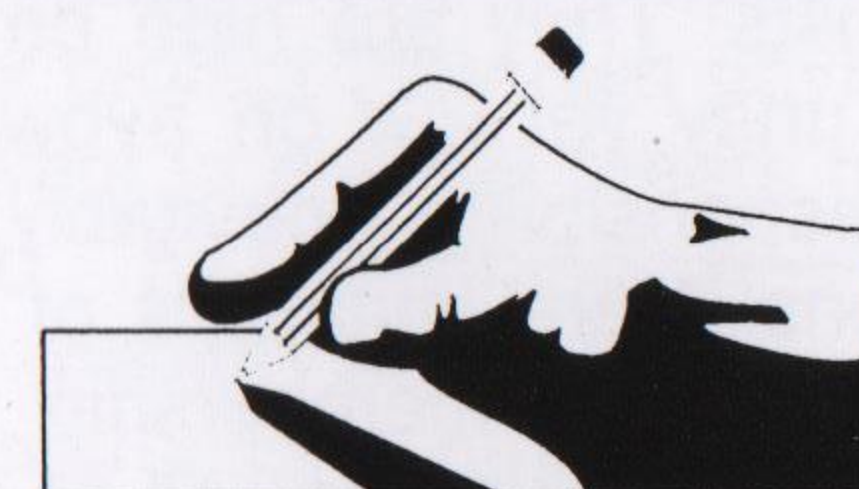
about stout-booted allotmenters. For a plot holder, the book is full of hard won advice, especially about growing on clay soil, which is the soil type I wrestle with in the West Midlands. Rand's chapter on diseases is, however, a horror. After reading his account of the rapid slaughter brought to potatoes and tomatoes by blight (which triggered off a faint, 30 year old memory of reading Cecil Woodham-Smith's terrible account of the Irish potato famine) I only just prevented myself rushing off to my plot to check if the potatoes still lived. And Rand's descriptions of slugs struck a very clear chord. After the nasty little things' endless depredations during the wet May just past, I can only agree with Rand that slugs are 'that hell-spawned brood, [or] in Spenserian mode: immovable, resistless and without end'. Yes, it is so, they are, without any shadow of doubt, 'the Blinking Bogies of Beelzebub'. However, his eventual tactic of removing slugs by hand seem far too kind a method. I am afraid that I murder them, in my garden, with my trusty Swiss Army pen knife, while, sad to say, after the loss of all my runner bean seedlings, I resorted to 'blue murder' on my plot.

Rand also interlaces the story of his own plot with the larger history of the allotment site itself, as well as expounding on the history of London, and the origin of allotments. The Fitzroy allotment has an interesting history, and I liked the way he resorted to amateur archaeology at the beginning of his quest for the history of the site. Having read his account of how clay pipe bowls and stems, what he calls 'the cigarette butts of their day', found their way to dung heaps, then to fields, I was pleased to hoe up on my plot, the very next day, a pipe stem. Shades of agriculture in my suburb, before the railway, and, perhaps, before the canal, when only the road ran, dog-legged, where it still does. His notes on London are fascinating too, and are as easy to take in as those to be found in Iain Sinclair's *London Orbital* (which provides a frontispiece quotation to Rand's book), or those in Christopher Fowler's marvellous 'Bryant and May' mystery novels. However, there is, perhaps, more to be said about the history of allotments, for although Rand deals with the emergence of rural allotments out of the great rebellion under Captain Swing's banner, he does not mention Henry George and the Land Reform Movement which, failing in its central aim, nonetheless gave birth to urban and suburban allotments.

There is also the life of Michael Rand himself, which keeps surfacing, like flints, pebbles, or old bones through the soil. Rand admits that his fortunes were at a very low ebb when he got his plot, at the end of 1992, and that, in many ways, it has kept him afloat, when other things contrived to pull him under. I have a great deal of sympathy for that, and found myself identifying with Rand - we are the same age, and I was offered my plot after a series of employment disasters, which seemed to sum up my inability to navigate properly through what increasingly feels like a totally alien culture, rightly symbolised by that god-monster, globalisation. I, too, can confirm that digging your own patch, eating your own produce, and finding yet another way to share something with neighbours, is a life-enhancing experience. Hilaire Belloc once

wrote that 'time grows young in a garden'. It might not in literal terms, but it feels like it to me, in the garden and on the allotment. Or, as Rand puts it at the end of his enthusiastic, readable book: 'If I stop for a moment to dwell on the not infrequent past occasions that I've screwed up my chances in life: in work, in love, and so on, I find, from out of this hilariously miserable, general wrack - lashed together to rise above it - that I'm in lucky possession of a raft of experience of a different and far happier sort [...] In some areas of our lives - maybe too many - second, third, fourth chances don't always appear when we hope they would. But gardening itself ever defies this dismal fact'.

Steve Cullen.



Letters

Dear Editor

Thank you so much for the not so recently received Spring / Summer issue of TL - very much appreciated.

I very much enjoyed reading TL Vol. 5. No. 2. Chris Draper's 'Is this the Right Room for an Argument?' hit a particularly important nail right on the head I feel, with John Griffin's views on the letters page illustrating the point beautifully.

My own political sympathies have, from almost the outset of my youthful interest in matters social and economic lain with the individual rather the collective and the voluntary rather than the coercive. My early interest in anarchism, however, faded and became moribund at least in part because I felt utterly isolated ideologically. My own interpretations have at times seemed nothing less than diametrically opposed to what most folk describing themselves as 'anarchist' appear to believe in. With my interest in politics only relatively recently re-awakened, it was only when I came across The Cunningham Amendment, and through those pages Total Liberty, that I finally realised that there are others (anarchists) out there with whom I actually appear to have something in common - it has been reassuring and something of a 'boost' to find this out.

Indeed I hope in the not too distant future, to be able to submit one or two 'articles' (for want of a better description!!) for your perusal, as I would like, if possible, to make more of my interest this time around.

Whatever, I look forward to receiving the next issue of TL.

Peter Wraith

Dear Editor

Dick Frost in his recent article on "Family Matters" says that "it is all but impossible to find evidence for anything like family life in the archaeological record",

but then he proceeds to tell us all about that life. He is largely right on the first matter, although that record does contain some material on the subject. On the multitude of unverified pronouncements on our early ancestors he is in many ways far off the mark.

To say that hardly any hunter-gatherers never depended on big game for as much as 50% of their food overlooks the peoples of Siberia, the American Indians who dwell in Alaska, most all of Canada and the Indians of southern South America as well as the famous American Plains Indian buffalo hunters. Big game hunting was characteristic of Upper Paleolithic peoples and I recall that well over half of the food intake of Neanderthals has been estimated to be meat. Further it is known that before the days of big game hunting humans depended heavily upon scavenging meat from dead animals. Among modern hunter-gatherers it is well known that meat is the most cherished food and that the successful hunter has the greatest prestige in the community. If hunting mammoths is a mystery to Dick Frost it certainly wasn't to the people who hunted them and gradually helped cause their extinction as a result.

The claim that hunter-gatherers or early human society was egalitarian, affluent, with no division of labour, no power hierarchy, no shortages and no private property suggests that the writer should read a few ethnographies. Egalitarianism in practically all societies is pretty much limited to adult male egalitarianism. Pygmies are an exception.

The affluent society popularized by Marshall Sahlins is an exaggeration. When he suggested it was a very leisured society he only took into account the amount of time devoted to actually hunting or collecting food. He neglected to note that hunter-gatherers spend a great deal of time making clothing, containers, numerous kinds of tools and housing. Many spend time burning fields while others divert water to encourage certain kinds of plant growth. Religious rituals take a great deal of time and energy and are considered essential. As I recall Sahlins claimed 2-3 hours a day as "work" while later estimates have been more in the order of 8-10. No human society lacks a division of labour. If there is nothing else there is at least a sexual division of labour. There are some activities that are always reserved for women and some for men and what these are depends on the particular culture.

Again in all societies there are some people who have more influence than others, even in an anarchist group. And there are many which are dominated by bullies, shamans and the like. Shortages are well known to large numbers of hunter-gatherers. Dene Indians of northern Canada, for instance, in winter engage in "gormandizing", eating enormous amounts of meat in anticipation of starvation times ahead. And private property is known to all peoples. There are different ideas about what "private property" means. Thus, private ownership in land is a very rare concept, but one may have a private fishing place, boat, sled, clothes, containers, house etc. There is even private ownership of songs or poems.

Dick Frost, like some *primitivists*, likes to portray the life of the hunter-gatherers as one of love and roses.

He overlooks the fact that life was quite short - you were lucky to reach thirty years: You could easily be finished off by a predator, an enemy set on revenge, a fatal accident, infection.

Frost apparently doesn't like family life. Certainly family has numerous problems but it has been characteristic of all human societies for several thousand years and any institution which has lasted so long and so universally must have some utility and have originated a mighty long time ago - certainly before the Late Palaeolithic as claimed by Frost. Where did he come up with that number? His claim that it is nonsense for two people to have responsibility for child rearing overlooks the fact that in a very considerable number of families throughout the world the children are not just a responsibility of mother and father but of an extended family including grandparents, uncles aunts and cousins. The traditional peasant family and hunter-gatherers families are commonly of an extended type.

I will let the unsubstantiated if not inflammatory remarks about anthropologists and other perhaps lesser problems pass.

Harold Barclay

Dear Total Liberty

Those of us who feel that Anarchism is the closest approximation to the good life sometimes find it difficult to decide whether the theory has suffered most at the hands of its defenders or in the hands of its critics. Since the latter are intentionally bent on giving Anarchism a bad name and the former can occasionally be an embarrassment to their allies it's not uncommon for your ordinary Anarchist to find themselves adrift in a sort of theoretical no-man's-land.

There is little point in arguing with those who have the most to lose from a free society. Since most of their authority is dependent upon dominant belief systems one is unlikely to make gains in argument whether rationally or otherwise. Best to leave them to their Daily Mails and Socialist Workers.

Perhaps the saddest shift in contemporary Anarchism has been the move into class struggle analysis and a barely disguised "soft" Marxism. Given the world-wide collapse of this most humourless of 'isms' it is difficult to know why this should be the case. Exactly how much evidence do we want before we realise that everywhere Marxism set up its power base it survived only by the grace of hastily formed departments of secret police?

Closely tied-in with this is the knowledge that if you set out to address issues through the narrow lens of class analysis then you more or less are guaranteed to reach predictable conclusions.

This is not to say I am against an everyday Joe or Jennifer. Or indeed anyone who must scratch a living or find themselves entombed in 25-year mortgage scams. I can only say that every time I am on their side. What I cannot take sides with is the romanticised notion that workers' committees somehow contain the necessary wisdom to decide on other people's lives.

It's a nonsense and if you ever came up against a right-wing shop steward or a hairy-armed socialist you would know that hitherto powerless people - upon adopting positions of power - are just as capable of acting like arseholes as have those with privilege already wired-in.

Power, for the Anarchist, is always the issue. And power must always be contrasted against Freedom. Both these words are freely banded about. We live in a self-described free society. Yet it's a free society that pretends freedom doesn't really matter. It's a free society only as long as you conform to the prevailing social norms.

One is saddened to skim the journals of class-struggle anarchists. They are high on words like organisation and unity yet low on avowals of freedom and personal responsibility. Inevitably, they become tight organisations. Mere imitations of formal bureaucratic structures: Subs, membership vetting, formal meetings and even expulsions. All of this enforces a certain conformity, a theoretical retreat to narrow gauge reasoning. These are not places to toss around free-floating ideas.

But this letter is written to congratulate *Total Liberty* for having the balls to publish an article from the *Society for Individual Freedom*. While I can't profess allegiance to their faith in parliament and the judiciary they act as a forceful reminder that no society is worth much if it doesn't promote personal responsibility as its starting point. Without responsibility there can be no Freedom. A free individual is one who takes responsibility for the consequences for their own acts. Licence is the 'anarchy' of the media. Do what you want and don't give a flying toss for what effect it has upon others.

Doreen Frampton

THE LAST FRONTIER

The Last Frontier. The Great Land. For many, Alaska brings to mind an image of a vast untamed land populated by subsistence hunter-gatherers and other hardy individualists who came here in order to live by their own rules. This is largely a myth, however. The climate and remote location of Alaska do make life here different from other places, but the ways in which people relate to each other, the land, and social institutions are in fact quite similar to those found anywhere in the world. Alaska is huge, and most of it is sparsely populated, but 80% of residents live in cities and towns. Although there are still hundreds of small villages where people hunt and fish for their food, most Alaskans have jobs and work for wages. And even those who do live off the road system out in the bush are firmly entrenched to the modern, technological world with televisions, snowmobiles motorized boats and government schools. Telehealth systems tie village health centres to technologically advanced hospitals in Anchorage and air transport is available to get people into the city for care

when needed. Isolation is really a relative term in the modern world.

Alaskans demonstrate no greater love for individual freedom than people anywhere else. Though they complain when they feel personally slighted by government action, especially when some regulation restricts their "right" to slaughter other animals, it doesn't seem to bother them at all when the state pushes other people around. Not only do they accept the bullying and intolerance of government, many actively promote it. In referenda in recent years, voters have passed measures to keep cannabis illegal and outlaw marriages between people of the same sex. Alaskans are happy to use the government as their personal enforcer when they want to impose their views on other people or protect their own privileges. Whether it is those who want to prevent others from living in their neighbourhood by claiming bogus public health hazards from new construction, busybodies who wish to keep others from purchasing sex or drugs, dentists who want to prevent mid-level practitioners from providing care for people's teeth, or coastal property owners who want to maintain their monopoly over access to the shoreline, residents of this state are just as likely to call on the government to back them up in disputes with their neighbours or competitors as people anywhere. Alaskans may like to portray themselves as tough guys who shun government rules and regulations, but the state is well established and widely supported here.

In some ways government is even more of an invasive presence in Alaska than it is in other parts of the united states. Alaska has 365,500,000 acres (~148,000,000 hectares) of land, but only 40,100,000 acres are "privately" owned. Although part of this government owned land is occupied by military forces, most of it is considered public land. This does not mean that regular people are free to use and enjoy it as they wish, however. One cannot enter a federal building, including the social security offices and the public lands building, without producing identification and passing through a metal detector; and people are hemmed in by all sorts of regulations when they want to camp, hunt, hike, fish, or otherwise utilize the various wilderness areas around the state. Representatives of a number of government agencies, often uniformed and armed, patrol and police these public lands, telling people how, when, and where they may go about their business when travelling or staying in these areas. And when the bureaucrats decide to spend tax money elsewhere, those who run these parks and refuges simply close them to the "public" who are the purported proprietors.

Not only does the government own most of the land here, it provide employment to large numbers of peo-

ple as well. In addition to the 21,000 uniformed military personnel, there are another 81,000 people who work for the federal, state, local and tribal authorities; this is around 30% of all non-farm employees in the state. The state university system, for instance, employs twice as many people as the largest private employer. Besides direct employees, however, there are many others whose jobs are inextricably tied to funds from the government, i.e., money stolen from working people through taxation. Some of these jobs are in the many non-profit organizations which receive grant money from government agencies. Some are funded by government payments to private corporations to "promote" one industry or another. Others are in the construction industry, where many large and profitable projects, like road building or construction of government agency offices and convention centres, are paid



for with tax money; and this sector will grow rapidly in coming years if the natural gas pipeline and a couple of big bridge-building projects (the "bridges to nowhere" you may have read about) get approved. Overall, the federal government alone is responsible for 35% of the jobs in Alaska's cash economy, with almost \$2 in federal spending in the state for every \$1 paid in federal income tax by Alaska residents.

Such indirect government jobs exist everywhere, of course, but Alaska has a class of corporations not found elsewhere which specialize in siphoning off gov-

ernment funds, while pretending to produce wealth. These are the "native" corporations created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), allegedly to compensate Eskimo, Aleut, and American Indian people who were dispossessed or otherwise harmed by the actions of later settlers and the government institutions they brought with them. The feds spent millions of dollars setting up these corporations and granted them 37,000,000 acres of land, which makes up the bulk of privately owned land in the state. Much of the initial money ended up in the pockets of non "native" lawyers, so, since then, the corporations have been preferentially granted government contracts, many of them military. These tax-funded contracts, sometimes for hundreds of millions of dollars, are essential to the continued existence of these corporations. While the argument goes that this dependence on government largesse is OK because it serves to compensate people for prior injustices, the people whom the ANCSA was supposedly designed to help are largely kept away from the money these corporations bring in. Few of the people employed by the corporations are Aleut, American Indian, or Eskimo, so the corporations have done little to enable people to better their lives through decently paid work. Then, in order to obtain some of the bigger government contracts, the corporations partner with other companies, like Halliburton, so that much of the money ends up