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FIFTY PENCE

"I entered Parliament with what I thought to be the lowest possible opinion of the average member. I came out with one still lower."

John Stuart Mill

T.I.N.(C.)S. not T.I.N.A. **THERE IS NO (CAPITALIST) SOLUTION**

Since, apparently, 'confidence' in the country, in the government, in capitalism, would appear to be the secret weapon for the financial and economic ills facing all the prosperous countries of the First World, it was not surprising to read a *Guardian* (18th January) headline 'Lamont sees rosy glow in economy', or *The Independent's* (23rd January) 'Poll shows rise in consumer confidence' based on a Gallup poll which found that "consumer

confidence rose sharply in January, the third successive month in which confidence has improved". Another survey warrants the headline 'CBI firms hopeful of recovery' (*Guardian*, 26th January).

As we write these lines the government has, to every pundit's surprise, reduced bank interest rates by 1% for a second time. Only a few days before the Governor of the Bank of England was warning "against sharp interest cuts" whereas all the industrialists could think of nothing else to bring about recovery, and they were joined by the economic experts, for the media and, now one learns, the Chancellor's own expert advisers.

and bank interest rates leaving more cash in people's pockets to spend.

It's true that many workers of modest means who were conned by Thatcherism into becoming property-owners will get some relief, but as previous interest rates cuts have shown, they use the savings to pay off their plastic card debts which were also part of the Thatcherite version of 'you-have-never-had-it-so-good'. And any extra spending will inevitably increase imports and add to the balance of payments deficit.

The industrialists are the ones who benefit by rates cuts - 1% or even 1/2% when you owe millions to the banks is good business! But to imagine that the industrialists will now borrow more money to invest in expanding their industries when they cannot sell what they already produce is pure wishful thinking. In fact we are sure

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JOHN MAJOR PM 'Merchant of Death'

Our Prime Minister (PM) has proved himself more successful in selling arms to the Sheiks of Araby than in resolving the (in our opinion insoluble) problems facing the capitalist system.

Surrounded by a posse of detectives, businessmen, including insurance agents and arms dealers (Mrs Thatcher when she did the rounds made sure that young Mark T. was included in the caravan!), Mr Major apparently did no business in India (Russia's boss, Yeltsin, got there at the same time and made a 'generous' gesture in reducing India's billion dollar debt and one assumes he sold them a few missiles and other hardware which will surely help to reduce the general poverty, but not in India!)

No, Major's real 'success' was with the Arabs. To one nation, too small for one to remember its name, he sold 24 of Britain's 'latest' tanks. And in his flying visit to Saudi Arabia he sold 48 of British industry's most lethal bombs - a contract worth many billions of pounds and which would maintain employment for 19,000 wage slaves for some time to come.

When will those 19,000 workers revolt and declare to the world that first and foremost we have to provide for the basic necessities of life - food, shelter, clothing, but also ensure that we have all the leisure to enjoy our cultural heritage, our

They will retail the usual rubbish about the effects of reduced interest rates "the lowest since November 1977" - more investment by industry, reductions in mortgage

The Price of 'Free Enterprise' ... OUR SAFETY

The Shetlands oil tanker disaster has already lost the headlines and in the meantime another even bigger oil tanker (225,000 tons) has come to grief in the Far East but is obviously too far away for it to receive the same media attention.

Worldwide there are some 3,250 ocean-going oil tankers, yet the average ship-owner's fleet is only 1.7 vessels, so not only are there some 1,900 operators but also more and

more of them are registering ships under 'flags of convenience' in order to cut costs. Liberia has 12.5%, followed by Panama with 11% and Japan with 5.7%. Britain is 19th with only 1.3%.

No less than a quarter of the tonnage lost in 1991 was registered in Panama and Cyprus. It's not the age of the vessels but the lack of proper maintenance that accounts for the accidents. The government has been warned by the Merchant Navy Officers' Union (Mumast) of the dangers of allowing what they call 'coffin ships' to carry dangerous goods around our coasts. But we have not read any suggestion that these monster tankers are *undermanned*. From the reports, the largest tanker of 225,000 tons had a crew of only 24. Assuming three eight-hour turns it would mean that at any time only eight men were on duty - in the engine

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personal and community relationships and whatever gives us the feeling that life is worth living.

Spending a working lifetime making tanks and warplanes is a job but does it provide 'work satisfaction'? If it does, then surely we are living in a sick society!

As for the politicians, what can we say other than that they are sick!

The Price of 'Free Enterprise' ... OUR SAFETY

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room, the galley and on the bridge. The cause of the accident was, that two giant tankers collided. Can one imagine this being possible with all the so-called technology with which ships are equipped with other than that the human element was not there? Eight people at any time in a 24-hour day to operate a 225,000 ton monster! These ships cannot change course in an emergency: they require miles to do so. Which means that they not only require more than the usual precautions (human and mechanical) to avoid collisions but this means more, and more than usual qualified, crews.

It has recently been revealed that in the case of another tanker disaster, that of the Torrey Canyon, the master who took a short route to catch a tide had by then spent eight months on board without a day off.

The European Community countries have just debated what steps should be taken to avoid disasters such as that of the Shetlands, and before that the equally disastrous oil spill on the north coast of Spain. Not surprisingly with financial interests involved they came to no practical solutions; certainly no reference to these giant tankers being undermanned and/or the crew being unskilled and overworked with the dire consequences so far as the safety of the ship is concerned.

As we go to press a report on safety on the railways gives an encouraging picture of the past year, though it recognises that a number of accidents result from drivers taking trains through red signals. Cash shortages, according to British Rail, have forced it to delay introducing a £600 million safety programme with the installation of automatic train protection.

Similarly the report on air accidents attributes a large number to pilot errors on landing, in spite of sophisticated computers.

In our opinion (which has no pretensions of being expert in these matters) the human 'computer' is more reliable than the mechanical computer in that the human 'computer' can cope with

the unpredictable situation whereas the mechanical computer can only cope with what it has been programmed to deal with.

For this reason we think that safety on all our public services is being put at risk because as more equipment is being introduced fewer people are involved. That a train transporting as many as 600 people at anything up to 80mph should be entrusted to just one man is sheer lunacy. And privatisation will, without doubt, put staff and public at even greater risk.

Footnote

As we go to press, *The Guardian* (29th January) reports that "7,000 British Rail jobs will disappear by the end of March" with "the threat of a further 20,000 in the run-up to privatisation next year."

Jimmy Knapp, general secretary of the railway workers union (RMT) who has expressed concern about safety on the network, said that "warnings had already been given that up to 20,000 jobs could go on track maintenance, which is being increasingly contracted out to private firms" (our italics).

This is a very important question for passengers. How does one measure 'efficiency' in maintaining safety on the tracks? We have no doubt that "contracted out to private firms" means safety is at risk.

T.I.N.(C.)S. not T.I.N.A. THERE IS NO (CAPITALIST) SOLUTION

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that not even the Chancellor believes this for one moment but, like the industrialists, the Exchequer has an interest in the reduction of interest rates. Having to borrow an estimated £40-50 billion this year from the money-lenders, 1% off is £400-500 million - enough to subsidise twenty coal pits and save on 20,000 miners collecting redundancy and the dole!

In the capitalist system - because it is an unequal and unjust society dominated by a sizeable privileged minority (not in brains but in pelf and entrenched power) - no decisions taken by government ever benefit all the community. The government boasts that in the last three years interest rates have been reduced by 7% or 8%. Those who benefit are those who can borrow money. Those who lose out are mainly the elderly who have supplemented their old age pensions by savings over a working lifetime. Not only has the purchasing power of their savings been decimated by inflation over the years, but now even the interest is being whittled down.

Before any 'real' anarchist critic accuses us of seeking to reform the capitalist system, we hasten to point out, not for the first time, that we believe the capitalist system, in spite of its virtual world monopoly, is bankrupt and we are concerned to demonstrate that such is the case but that capitalism will continue so long as there is no serious opposition on a massive scale to the present corrupt - at all levels - political, financial, legal system world-wide.

It will be only when enough people are incensed by the injustices of present society to want to change it that alternative economies and ideologies will emerge which will satisfy the needs of different communities. To expect, as do some respondents to the 'Freedom Readership Survey', that *Freedom* should be producing the anarchist alternative blueprint for a world utopia is pure intellectual fantasy. In *Freedom* our purpose is to maintain a constant convincing attack on privilege and injustice in the society in which we live our daily lives.

We don't envy the rich and powerful. We want the majority who are exploited by them to stop being their slaves and cast off their chains. Then we shall be able to talk of alternatives in detail!

News and Views

Hospitals in North, East and North West London were placed on yellow alert in January for the first time since the influenza epidemic of 1989-90, but this time there was no epidemic and the authorities claimed to be at a loss to explain the sudden shortage of beds. A yellow alert means that non-urgent patient admissions are restricted and is only a short step from a red alert in which non-urgent admissions are stopped altogether. How could this happen when we are constantly being told that London has too many hospital beds and there are proposals to close down completely several of our famous hospitals? Is it part of a general plan to scale down medical provision for most of us, whilst diverting resources to the private sector to the benefit of a small wealthy elite? The non-urgent patient may

recover but often becomes an urgent case or dies. Either way the health service saves money and needs fewer beds. The medical tenet that successful treatment depends on early treatment is ignored.

Applying capitalist market economics to hospital treatment makes need dependent on the ability to pay. This means that the general practitioner working in poor deprived areas will run out of money to buy hospital treatment earlier in the financial year or will delay seeking a bed for his or her patient until the case becomes urgent. Consequently, as we approach the end of the financial year, hospital beds stay empty and operating theatres remain idle because the hospital has run out of money. More resources for the private sector? Moral of this story: choose carefully your time to be sick.

The US patriot anti-missile missiles are back in the Gulf to defend Kuwait, land of milk, honey and oil, though you could be forgiven for thinking that they never left. The political mainstream now readily admits that the Gulf war was fought by the US and its satellite states to protect the oil supply, but another important benefit was the opportunity it gave to boost commercial sales of US military hardware. When President Bush announced to cheering crowds that the Patriot had intercepted 41 of the 42 scuds from Iraq, orders from 'friendly' states rolled in. But that was then. Now, if we have been reading the small print, we know differently. After the American Congressional Research Service had investigated classified Pentagon data, one member was reported as saying that he was only convinced that one patriot missile had actually destroyed a scud warhead. So the president lied, did he? Actually no, for, as one of his generals later explained, intercept meant only that a patriot and scud had passed each other in the sky. But by then the orders had all been placed and paid for.

Are Twyford Down and Oxleas Wood doomed to be destroyed by the motor car? They are the sites of the two most recent attempts to prevent a new motorway vandalising a bit more of rural England.

The attempt to save Twyford Down may be lost but for Oxleas Wood there is still hope.

Given to Winchester College in 1955 to protect it from development, Twyford Down was sold to the Department of Transport for £300,000 so that the M3 motorway could be extended, to reduce the car journey from London to Southampton by five minutes.

The good burghers of Winchester and mainstream environmentalist groups have campaigned for twenty years against the proposal, but last autumn they gave up the fight and turned their backs on the peaceful, mostly young, protesters who had come from all over the country to camp on the Downs in the path of the bulldozers and to harass the constructors using non-violent direct action. Last December their protest was met with violence. Some 100 private security guards, recruited from the unemployed, possibly stiffened by unidentifiable soldiers, viciously attacked the protesters and drove them away. Undeterred and in spite of their injuries the protesters returned on 18th January and stopped work for the day at three construction sites along the M3 route. Disappointed by the lack of support from the green and anarchist movements, sadly they are too few to stop the road being built.

Oxleas Wood is 25 acres of an 8,000 year old stand of ancient woodland, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, that was bought partly by public subscription early this century to save it from urban sprawl and dedicated for the enjoyment of the people of London in perpetuity. But it stands in the way of a proposed six-lane motorway linked to a new East London river crossing. In the original plan the road continued right across densely populated South London, but spontaneous campaigns from South London residents in the path of the new road forced the government to abandon that part of the scheme. The proposal to build the bridge and desecrate Oxleas Wood remains and is at present being contested by local residents, supported by environmental organisations. They now await the court's decision. What will happen next if this goes against them?

HS

FAXING THE 'ALMIGHTY'

With the royalty scandal dominating the tabloids the politicians are spending overtime worrying about the relationship of church and state. But only about the formalities, if and when Charles puts on the crown. They seem to overlook the fact that the vast majority of the population are pagans who never set foot in a church to worship and who are more interested in Mammon than in God. No wonder the church is proposing to copy its American cousins and launch out on the commercial television advertising waves.

But they have still to catch up on their Papist and Jewish rivals in seeking preference up in the clouds.

Just recently the Israeli Telecommunications Company installed a fax machine at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem so that Jews worldwide could send their prayers direct! The news item did not mention whether the messages would be affixed to the wall (on extra payment presumably) or could then be faxed to the Almighty (for a consideration).

Not to be outdone, the organisers of the annual church fair in Vicenza (Italy) this coming May are, according to *The Observer's* correspondent, proposing "to challenge traditional doctrine by providing busy businessmen the option of confessing the sins

of lust, Mammon and omission - by fax machine".

Just as among the Anglican fraternity in this country the ordination of women has upset dedicated souls such as our Agricultural Minister, Selwyn Gummer, to the point of leaving the church (but not of capitalism and Mammon!), the traditional Catholics are up in arms arguing that "the sacrament requires the presence of the priest and the person confessing and that priest cannot assess the tone of the penitent over the phone". Even the priests would appear to be good trade unionists!

The Observer mentions one objector to this proposed 'confaxion'. No less than the President of the Commission for Sacred Art in the diocese of Milan who complains that the show's organisers have "turned the confessional into a space-age telephone booth". But what about all the devout Christians who direct all their wants and their problems to the 'Almighty' daily and without a fax or telephone booth and are convinced that they are being received? What a busy and confused time the Old Man in the Clouds must be having! These people live in cloud-cuckoo-land if this is what they believe. Meanwhile, the entrepreneurs exploit them!

Cars, Casualties and Children

In his book *Freedom To Go*, Colin Ward makes the startling point that between 1913 and 1976 three times more Americans were killed on the road than have perished in all of America's wars. This fact puts a slightly different gloss on the culture of America that has worshipped the 'freedom' of the car from Route 66 to Kerouac's *On the Road*. Yet the US has the safest roads in the world, and things are no better in the United Kingdom: where between 1926 and 1976 331,214 people were killed on the roads, over 25,000 more than total UK casualties in the Second World War. However, we mustn't worry too much, as the government currently has a road safety campaign that aims, through increased police activity and education, to reduce current UK casualties by a third over the decade 1990-2000. And things are improving, with figures for 1991 showing that only 4,568 people died on the roads, with a mere 56,173 being seriously injured. These figures compare with average yearly deaths in the period 1981-85 of 5,598, with the average annual number of serious injuries in the same period standing at 80,130. The total number of deaths and serious injuries combined for 1981-85 being 321,912. Should the decline in road deaths and injuries respond to the current government campaign as they hope, then figures for the year 2000 should be around 3,700 deaths and 53,000 serious injuries. And in some areas, it seems that this reduction by a third may well be reached.

A recent article by Jim Dunn in *The Scotsman* focused on Fife, which is the most successful area in Britain as far as this road safety campaign is concerned. Fife police began an "aggressive road safety campaign in October 1987 [and] the number of casualties in Fife have dropped from more than 1,300 to just over 1,000, the number of seriously injured from 307 to 189 and ... the number of deaths from 38 to around 20." This success has been achieved by stronger enforcement of existing road safety legislation, widespread cautioning of drivers, increased breath testing (from 3,000 to 22,500 a year), a region-wide education programme aimed particularly at drink-driving and speeding, and reviews of aspects of road engineering, such as signpost locations at known accident spots. However, the police are aware that often the victims of road accidents are not vehicle users themselves, and they have organised a road safety campaign that has reached every primary school child in Fife. And it is this area that we can see that the freedom of the private motorist is mirrored by the loss of freedom of those, like children, who are not themselves motorists.

An article by Anne Karpf in *The Guardian* (12th January 1993, 'You'll Never Walk Alone') cites figures from a recent Policy Studies Institute report that gives graphic evidence of the further decline in the autonomous lives of children, thanks to the car. In 1971 80% of seven to ten year olds were allowed to go to school on their own, but by 1990 only 9% went unaccompanied to school. The primary reason for this dramatic change in the lives of children is fears about their road safety. Ironically, this widespread fear among parents had led to increasing numbers of them to deliver their children to school by car, thereby increasing that very danger. The inability to walk safely to school is also matched by the loss of streets and roads as safe

playgrounds, and yet for most children there are few other open spaces available. The street that I played in as a child in the 1960s is now lined on both sides with cars and, not surprisingly, the gangs of kids that used to rush up and down that street are no longer to be seen. The physical environment of childhood has been drastically eroded in the last few decades, just as their imaginative environment has been undermined by the spread of consumer-capitalism into more and more areas of children's lives. And one change feeds upon the other, for as there is less physical space for children, so there are more opportunities for companies to sell children products with which to fill their free time, the current computer game craze being an excellent example.

As I argued in my booklet *Children in Society*, the increasing loss of autonomous play has serious

The new year announced itself with the news that another foreign student, a Libyan this time, had had a glass shoved in his face by a local in a bar brawl. The annual culture clash which will reach its peak in the summer has got off to an early start.

Bournemouth boasts the largest number of foreign language schools outside London and the summer influx is impressive. A chance for the people of Europe and the rest of the world to meet in a healthy exchange of experience and culture? Not a bit of it.

The attitude of the locals is all too often both fearful and predatory. The fear is perhaps shown by one focus of local worry: that great public institution - the queue - which is under serious threat. Take for example a letter from R. Whitehead to the local press last year on this touchy matter. Mr Whitehead (ex-RAF Berlin 1961) gave us some advice:

"... before the barriers come tumbling down at the end of 1992, we native born had better be prepared to stand our ground and fight, if necessary, to preserve our sense of fair play and protection of the weaker among us against the alien hordes from the east.

It will help if we remember Agincourt, Trafalgar, Waterloo, the Battle of Britain, El Alamein, the Falklands, etc., I hope, for all our sakes, such history is still taught in our schools."

The idea that queues could have something to do with the lack of a decent bus service is less often entertained. Nor is it realised that the students' tendency to group together is a somewhat natural reaction to such a hostile atmosphere. Much of this is evidence of a sickening racism which brews in the subconscious of many local residents. One chap I know well, and quite like in many ways, when chatting in a group not so long ago expressed the view that the petrol-bombing of Turkish children in Germany recently was "understandable". Such anecdotes could be multiplied. Mr Whitehead's comments become more frightening than laughable.

But as I say, if fear of cultural domination is

consequences. The fear of the car and its physical presence (along with the fear of abuse) has driven children from the free spaces of childhood into areas increasingly regulated by adults, the adult imagination and adult imperatives, be they sports clubs, dancing classes, computer games or videos. Yet children's lives are already heavily dominated by adults, through the mechanisms of family life, and the demands of schooling. Just as children are losing the physical space to be themselves thanks to the car culture, so they are losing the freedom-enhancing ability to create their own worlds, and indulge in their own priorities through the world of free, unregulated, uncontrolled, imaginative play. And that was, and is, the only area

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Children in Society:
a libertarian critique
published by Freedom Press
43 pages, £1.20 (post free inland)

of children's lives that is truly autonomous. And that has consequences not only for the lives of children, but also for those of adults. For patterns of behaviour acquired in childhood live on in the adult, and if one does not acquire the habit of autonomous activity in childhood then it will prove difficult to acquire as an adult. Further, the status of independent action is downgraded by peer-group pressure if children are made to feel that only organised activity is of value, and people will make an easy, unthinking transition from school and organised leisure to work and organised leisure. And in a world where people are constantly occupied by such activities there will be less time for free thought, reflection and personal independence from the organisers.

The immediate answer to the usurpation by the car-owner of the rights of the pedestrian are to recognise, firstly, that car ownership itself is not an untrammelled benefit. It brings with it the possession of an asset that rapidly depreciates in value, all the stresses of modern driving, fear of theft, more taxes, insurance payments, accidents and self-pollution. Meanwhile, the weaker non-car owning elements in society, the young, the old and

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Dorset Diary

one of the concerns some of the more liberal among us are predatory in tone. For example a local teacher, again in the local press, asks the rhetorical question: "Is not the whole point of students being here money?" Now I'm not pointing an accusing finger at some local dole receiver with a family who wants to up his or her non-taxed income by filling spare rooms with a foreign student at £40 a week and then filling them with burgers and beans. Seemingly, however, this economic relationship is where it ends, as shown by evidence from the students themselves.

Foreign students have given the locals a general thumbs down saying we are unfriendly and boring. A local survey from the Bournemouth Business School shows as many as four out of ten feel this way, complaining that host families spend too much time in front of the television and little inclination to make conversation. As Johnny Rotten once said, "The tourists are money" and they don't seem to be much else besides. The economic view of Europe shoved down our throats by the pro-EECers comes down the line all the way.

However, the story is not all doom and gloom (73% of the students think us polite and 50% appreciate our sense of humour) and there are certainly instances where the cultural divide has seen some attempts at being bridged.

The Rotarians, that bastion of bigotry, sexism, elitism and capital 'C' conservatism, is perhaps the last place to look for progressive ideas (maybe in true blue Dorset where a crossbreed of most politicians and Hitler would produce a nicer Hitler the situation is special). But back to the Rotarians (wasn't Bakunin a freemason or something?), why mention them in the illustrious pages of *Freedom*?

For some years now Dorset Rotarians have

twinning with a group in the Loire Valley. Once every other year the chair'men', committees, honorary presidents et al, organise a coachload to visit their French counterparts. Participants put time into trying to learn French the better to relate to their hosts. The next year the exchange is completed with a return visit. They are working together (as Rotarians do) on joint charitable projects in both countries (the local one being a garden centre run by the mentally disabled). Small cheese perhaps, but a small step away from xenophobia.

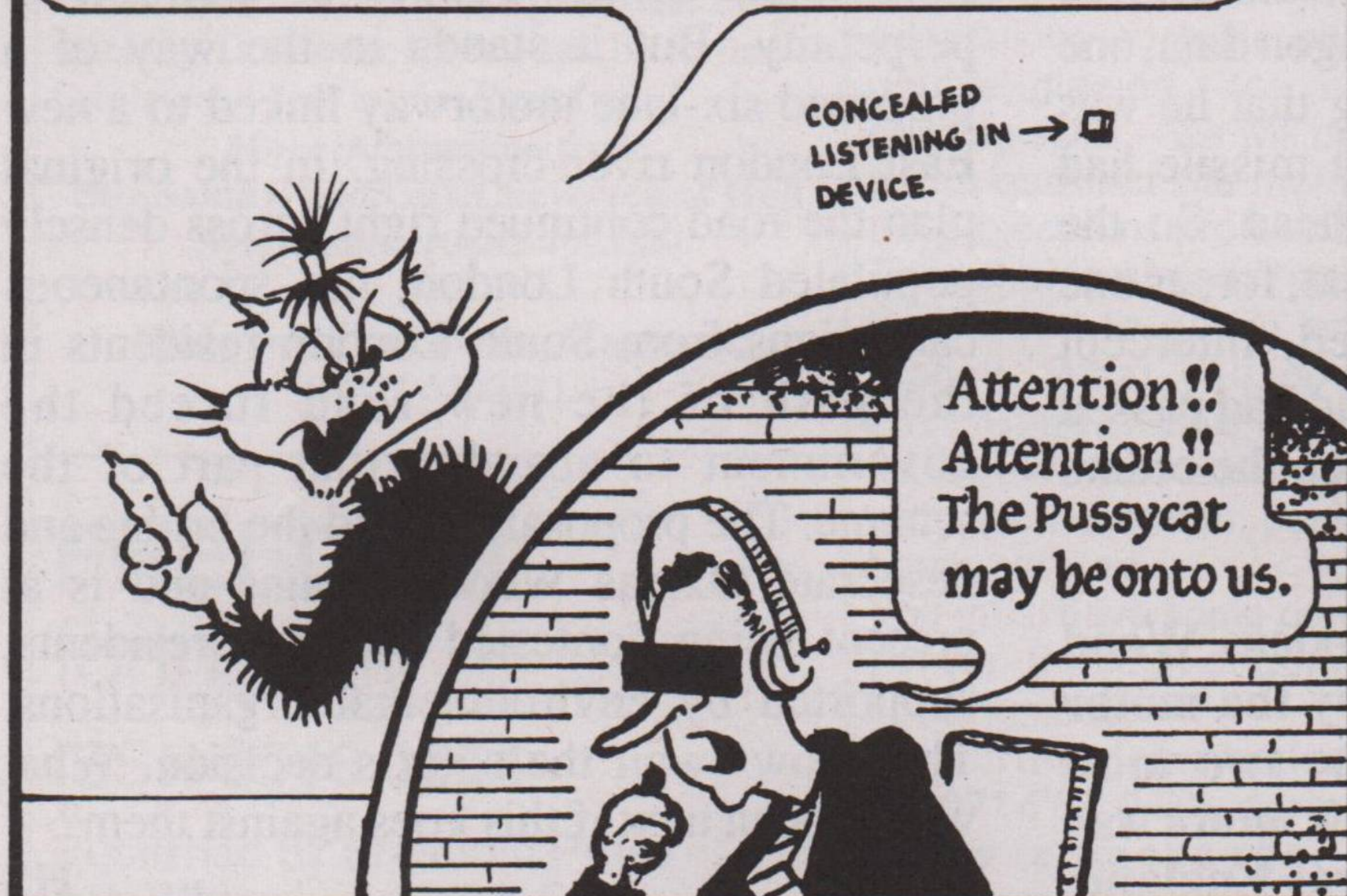
The twinning idea carries on with many local towns. Poole is twinned with Cherbourg. Trips are organised to allow participants to meet with people on the other side of the Channel and a flourishing French Circle (committees, Hon Presidents, etc.) brings together locals with a genuine interest in another culture.

Could this be of interest to anarchists? I don't know if there is a Cherbourg branch of the French Anarchists federation, must try to find out sometime, but London is twinned with Paris, Madrid, etc., and Birmingham with Lyon, Frankfurt and good old Barcelona, and down the line it goes with towns twinning along the lines of size. Non-hierarchical forms of organisation would lend themselves well to the idea of twinning and such internationalism would be welcome. Exchange of information and visits could lead to other things. Who knows?

Xenophobia and racism thrive on the fear of the unknown. Human relationships other than economic ones are much of the way forward as anarchists have always realised but we need to forge contact to start the process. I remember a couple of years ago when our local branch of the NUT was appointing a 'racism officer' one teacher said we didn't need one because there were almost no black or Asian children in our schools. Perhaps that was precisely the reason why we did.

Neil Birrell

WILDCAT MI5 needs world-class secrecy because, if people knew what MI5 was really up to, not even a Tory government would tolerate it.



MI5's greatest secret is that it was founded for the purpose of setting up a military dictatorship, and has never stopped working for that purpose.



MI5 needs world-class secrecy because its greatest secret is that it knows nothing about terrorists or spies, has found out nothing, has never caught anyone, and is a total waste of public money.



Cars, Casualties and Children

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the poor, also pay a high price for the car culture in terms of death, injury, loss of their physical environment, and sheer fear. And both groups pay in terms of a depreciating physical environment, increased taxation to pay for roads, the cost of the emergency services, hospitalisation, compensation, and lost tax revenue that arise from accidents. Added to that are the questions of the global struggle for oil (viz the Gulf War) and the damage to the natural world from the effects on the ozone layer to oil slicks in Shetland. An explicit and continuing recognition of these by-products of our car culture might begin to make people look to alternatives.

Immediate solutions could include using catchment area knowledge about school populations and constructing pedestrian-only access to schools, thereby increasing the numbers of children walking to school and decreasing school journeys made by cars. Similarly, more streets could be made car-free, except for access governed by bollards, sleeping policemen and trees. The transport of cities could also be overhauled, with a commitment to free public transport which, as Arthur Moysé has pointed out, "is simplicity itself, for it works on the same workable principle of any library in that anyone who so wishes uses that service" (quoted in Ward's *Freedom To Go*). Increased access to an improved and free or very cheap public transport system, combined with decreased access for cars and the acceptance of the general rights of pedestrians, would be a very good step. However, in the end we will have to understand the great, and often hidden, costs of the car culture, from deaths and maiming to the distortion of childhood, and fundamentally readjust the way in which we live.

Steve Cullen

Brazil – the landless ones

For one month, a representative of the Movement of the Landless of Brazil (MST) gave several talks all over France, under the auspices of the French Anarchist Federation (FAF), the Guatemala Collective and the review *Nitassinan*. Here is a statement from the MST.

Several movements started to spring up during the years 1978-79; before that time they were suppressed by the military dictatorship. One of the biggest problems in Brazil, which gives rise to other problems, is the land question. Government agriculture policy is a laissez faire policy aiming for extensive monoculture for exportation had provoked a massive forced exodus from the countryside and an aggrandisement of the shanty towns.

Here are a few figures which explain the socio-economic situation in Brazil. Out of a population of 155 million, 40 million are hungry (even when there is no famine), whilst Brazil remains the fourth largest food exporting country. 46% of farmed land belongs to 0.9% of land owners. It goes without saying that we are talking of the most fertile land. For example, one property extends to 2.5 million hectares (three times the size of Corsica).

American, Japanese and European multi-nationals control 36 million hectares ... eight million peasants are landless. This is the situation that gave rise to the landless movement which is independent of all religion and politics.

MST has a presence in 19 out of 24 of the state which make up Brazil. What is the nature of its struggle? Right now, it is trying to sensitise Brazilians to the idea of agrarian reform and to put pressure on local and federal managers by organising demonstrations in towns, by organising marches (some over 400 kilometres) for the whole

family, and by occupying the National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). But its main activity is to expropriate the lands of the 'latifundus' (properties of over 500 hectares) by occupying them and then working them. Camps are set up on the target land for several months. Some camps lasted more than two years, with an average of 600 families (one should reckon on four members to each family) per encampment. One site had 1,800 families on it!

Therefore we have to be well organised. The landless share out the work required for different services such as hygiene, food and education of both the young and the adult population, of whom 60% are illiterate or semi-literate.

How are decisions taken? These are discussed in each group (an average of twenty families) then referred to assemblies and then voted on ...

To give an idea of the extent of the struggle, one can cite the fact that currently 1,400 families are camping on lands in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and in the state of Parana there are more than 30 encampments.

Obviously the authorities (of all political persuasions) don't sit around with their arms crossed; one third of federal MPs are large land owners. There is not only police oppression aiming to evict peasants from their camps and to imprison them, sometimes without trial. There are also murders carried out by the militias – more than one hundred over the last two years! All this brings great joy to the Brazilian media, who only speak of

the agrarian problem when there is violent repression. The struggle for re-expropriation and the survival of the peasants doesn't interest the media. Everything is done to ensure that MST stays marginalised and swept under the carpet.

The new government of Itamar Franco (the vice president who took over the Brazilian presidency after the eviction of Fernando Collor) following in the footsteps of previous military regimes, has already indicated that it will not undertake any agrarian reform. What a surprise! All the same, the Minister for Agriculture, with the aid of the UN, has had a report drawn up (which he will not publish) on the results achieved by peasants who successfully took over land (25 hectares per family on average) which affected 100,000 families.

Most land is worked individually. However, there are more than 300 associations and 30 co-operatives on these lands which have been taken over, which have proved necessary for increased yield, the purchase of agricultural machinery and to fight the monopoly over distribution and agribusiness which sets prices. In addition to this, services have been set up, such as education to combat literacy, to give technical training and to train teachers who will teach in schools built by MST. It would be sad to lose a sense of spirit which has appeared since the encampments were set up.

It is good to know that in general a family which is working a piece of land which has been taken over has seen its purchasing power double, and what's more, and interestingly, that infant mortality is well below the national average according to a ministerial report ...

(English translation by Neil Birrell)

Bosnian Barbarism

In an article entitled 'Culture: The Inculcation of Hate', *Freedom*, 12th December 1992, in which I attempted to show that the term 'culture' is misused by politicians to describe what is, in fact, nationalist-religious hatred, I noted the curious absence of any reports in the press of statements from religious leaders in the Bosnia tragedy. Now, a report from Roger Boyes in *The Times* (6th January) confirms that the holy men are up to their usual nefarious tricks.

Mr Boyes reported: "Today is the Orthodox Christmas. Some serb fighters in Bosnia will merely be given an alcohol ration, but other will receive a visit from chaplains who will bless their guns and the conflict against Islam."

Well, there is nothing new in that; students of history, and those who are long enough in the tooth, will recall the blessing of Italian guns by priests in preparation for the rape of Abyssinia in the 1930s. But, according to Mr Boyes, while the rank and file Orthodox clergy brazenly bless the guns, the Orthodox hierarchy "seems to be siding with the opposition in Belgrade". Again, there is nothing new in that; whether it be Bosnia, Northern Ireland or Timbuktu, hierarchies are not going to be daft enough to commit themselves to that extent – that dirty work can be left to their holy troops.

The Russian leaders appear to be playing the same game. Boyes reported: "Moscow seems on the surface to be aligned with United Nations policy on Serbia" suggesting "Moscow's support for policing the 'no-fly' zone over Bosnia". But, apparently, there are two volunteer brigades in training outside Moscow for combat in Bosnia and a few hundred Russians already on the Bosnian front who are there, according to a St Petersburg nationalist deputy, Yuri Belyayev, to support the Serbs because "they are Orthodox, and ... because they are Slavs".

In a *Times* report (8th January), John Phillips wrote that the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch, Pavle, had "declined to attend a meeting of

European church leaders led by the Pope" at Assisi to pray for peace in the Balkans. The Archbishop of Canterbury would not be attending for "family reasons", but "there is speculation in diplomatic circles that Lambeth Palace may wish to distance itself from the strident calls by the Vatican over the past few weeks for the West to intervene militarily to disarm the Serbs".

Meanwhile, in Banja Luka, a large Bosnian, Serb-controlled town which, before this war, contained 120,000 people, half of whom were Serbs, a quarter Croats and a quarter Muslims, *Times* reporter Tim Judah wrote (8th January):

"Yesterday Orthodox Serbs celebrated Christmas. As is the custom, hundreds of worshippers crowded into their cathedral at 4.30am ... outside scores of drunken soldiers and young men pumped thousands of rounds of automatic rifle fire into the clock tower of the neighbouring Catholic (Croat) cathedral".

And what of the Muslims? *Times* reporter Bill Frost's report of 1st January at the front line near Turbe told us that a wave of Islamic fervour had "gripped the fighters ... They carry the Koran into battle and many take their inspiration from Teheran". A colonel explained that the war was both to regain territory and reassert old religious values and, putting another cart before another horse, the colonel said: "The fighting has made religion important once more", and some of his young troops justified each new bloodthirsty excess with talk of jihad and infidels. Emir, a "cultured" young man, said: "It is war, holy war".

What the Croats are doing and saying can no doubt be assumed to be in a similar vein. It is fairly obvious that religious divisions have fuelled the fighting rather than assisting a peaceful outcome.

And, to cut a long story short, while the redundant Lord Owen and the geriatric Cyrus Vance play politics with that little lot, NATO is busy offloading its surplus heavy weaponry onto Greece and Turkey because it is easier to

The Illusion of 'Political Correctness'

Over the past few months an irritating import from the USA has begun to find wider acceptance and use in this country and seems certain to cause radicals as much aggravation here as it has there. Political correctness is a term used more widely all the time and occurs in *The Guardian*, in *Freedom* (letters page, 14th November), a BBC2 televised debate on it ('Open Space', 28th October), reviews of *1492* and *Last of the Mohicans*, there have even been articles in *Cosmopolitan* and the *Radio Times* which although of no great stature are periodicals read by many. Whilst it can be seen as just a buzz-word, I feel there is a danger with this term as there is with all generalising labels.

The term is usually applied to those who raise issues which confront the 'norm' and 'accepted truths' and this is why those on the libertarian left will surely find it applied to them. From what can be seen so far in Britain and the United States, political correctness is a tool of those who wish to dismiss or undermine challenges to the accepted order with this simple, unexplained label and here is where the danger lies for no explanation is given, no debate is entered into. Clearly it works in the same way as 'loony left' did, deriding and/or dismissing as dogmatic those who would do things differently from the way the 'norm' expects whilst the actual reasons and justifications for the alternative opinions are ignored. Labels are easy devices that enable people to not think, to have a simple view of the world, like those of racism and nationalism.

It is typical of authoritarian 'democracies' to label as aggressor in order to safeguard it from challenges; outright oppression is disliked for it would show the complacent many in society that dictatorships take forms other than the obvious ones we learn some countries suffer from. Hence the need for thought control which is essentially what using political correctness is part of, for it allows debate to be stifled. When someone challenges an issue as sexist or imperialist the retort

get rid of them that way than destroy them; this, in spite of the fact that those two countries are heavily involved in the Balkans dispute!

Behind all this killing and the struggle for power are the men of Culture, the men of religion and politics, the Archbishops, Cardinals, Prime Ministers, Imams, and arms manufacturers.

So much for Culture.

EFC

that one is being 'politically correct' is becoming more common. For example, the growth in criticism of the 'traditional' portrayal of American Indians and efforts to show them as human beings not savage monsters, as the victims rather than the aggressor, are lumped in the political correctness category. Decades of Westerns justifying the wars and genocide against the original inhabitants of the North American continent are not seen as propaganda (though they clearly are) whilst attempts to show something of the truth are regarded as 'political correctness', a dogma of fanatics with an unreasonable grudge to bear who are assailing the accepted truths of society so many have so long accepted. If there is a political bias in films it is those like 'Far and Away' which shows a land-grab without explaining that the land the immigrants raced for was available because the Indian people had been driven further west by the endless brutality of the whites. Conversely, attempts at historical accuracy of Indian culture and rights in *Last of the Mohicans* is "a genuine attempt at some sort of political correctness" (*Guardian*, 14th November). Through these examples we can see how indoctrination by the dominant ideology resists change and how political correctness is part of the process.

As one label inherently defines one point of view as 'radical' and wrong it saves those applying the label from discussion and having to explain why they are 'right'. So when some people strive for non-sexist values, to have imperialist history portrayed as it was from the point of view of the invaded the simple term political correctness can dismiss their efforts and allow the 'norm' to be maintained without criticism being given due regard.

Authoritarianism and the destructive values of greed of capitalism breed contempt and hate but enrich a few, all of which is justified through education, government propaganda, television, advertising, etc., and many people are bought off with consumer goods. Rather than worry about the homeless and why they exist, many spend their time considering how they may one day be able to buy a more expensive car. But some seek to change this mode of living which surely makes the beneficiaries of the illustrious system unhappy as their privilege (or perceived privilege) is condemned. Political correctness label the oppressor as victim, assumes the morality of the way we are forced to live to be unquestionable and is part of the pretence that radicals are in fact the aggressors undermining this 'good' way of life. But it would be dangerous to have debate for the

(continued on page 7)

Aldous Huxley and Libertarian Socialism

Most intellectuals of the 1920s and '30s rejected the liberalism of their parental generation and embraced one form of totalitarianism or another. Only a small minority sought an alternative to liberalism in anarchism or libertarian socialism. One of that rare breed was Aldous Huxley, who showed certain sympathies toward anarchism ... *in so far as it serves as the instrument by which the ruling class preserve its privileges; in so far as it is a device for enabling paranoiacs to satisfy their lust for power ... the state is obviously worthy of abolition.* But his understanding of anarchism was limited, being equated with complete individualism, therefore he opted for a form of libertarian socialism. But few anarchists would disagree with the necessity of co-ordination of activities, the question is *how* they are co-ordinated. *In complex societies like our own the state has certain other and more useful functions ... there must be some organisation responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the various constituent groups ... If the word state is too unpleasantly associated with ideas of domestic oppression and foreign war ... let us call the necessary social machinery by some other name.*

Huxley wanted to break state power down into self-managed units, but did not opt for violence, his was to be a pacifist and gradual revolution. *So far as the state is concerned, the desirable context for reform is decentralisation and self-government all around. The desirable methods for enacting reform are the methods of non-violence.* An important application of self-government would be at the level of the workplace. Few anarchists have more bluntly characterised the authoritarianism of the capitalist industry. *Under the present dispensation the great majority of factories are petty despotisms ... Even where benevolence prevails, passive*

obedience is demanded of the workers, who are ruled by overseers, not of their election but appointed from above. In theory they may be the subjects of a democratic state; but in practice ... the subjects of a petty tyrant. Dubreuil's scheme ... would introduce genuine democracy into the factory. By means of comparatively small changes in the existing systems of local and professional organisation it would be possible to make almost every individual a member of some self-governing group.*

But industrial self-management was not enough. The community too must be made up of small self-governing units. Huxley saw that such a system could only work in the context of the breaking of state power. Where a dictatorship existed such decentralisation could only lead to the worst sort of totalitarianism, as we have seen with the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution in Cuba.

... in Japan cities were ... divided into wards of about a hundred inhabitants apiece. The people in each ward accepted a measure of liability for one and other and to some extent were responsible for good behaviour ... within

* Hyacinthe Dubreuil's book *A Chacun Sa Chance*, a call for industrial self-government by someone who worked in a factory.

All quotes taken from 'Decentralisation and Self Government', a chapter of *Ends and Means*, Huxley's 1937 pacifist work.

their own small group. That such a system lends itself to the most monstrous abuses under a dictatorial government is obvious ... It remains in any case a device worth considering by those who aspire to impose a communal pattern upon the atomistic, irresponsible life of modern city dwellers.

Huxley realised that the key to peace was the development of a libertarian society, for such a society would be impervious to the leader-cult, have little experience in passive obedience and therefore be difficult to manipulate and mobilise. *Now, a society in which the principle of self-government has been applied ... is a society which, for purely military purposes is probably decidedly inefficient.*

Libertarian socialism was not some foreign concept brought from outside by an enlightened elite, but existed in embryonic form within society. It would be only necessary to generalise these aspects of mutual aid, decentralism and federalism.

Co-operatives and mixed concerns (municipal and state-funded but autonomous institutions) already exist and work extremely well. To extend their numbers would not seem a revolutionary act ... not provoke the violent opposition which men feel towards projects involving an entirely new principle. In its effects, however, the act would be revolutionary ... The intrinsic compatibility of the co-operative enterprise and mixed concern with ... self government constitutes

yet another reason for the preference.

Perhaps Huxley was influenced by the Guild Socialists who had some prominence in intellectual circles during his youth. Guild Socialism was a kind of gentlemanly anarcho-syndicalism invented by G.D.H. Cole. Cole was a dissident Fabian, disgusted with the authoritarianism of the Webbs and company, and decided to head off in a libertarian direction. This ideology never got much hearing from workers, but certain intellectuals who were never tempted by Leninism or fascism, such as Bertrand Russell, were attracted to it. Interestingly enough, the Catholic radicals Chesterton and Belloc also developed their own form of Guild Socialism.

Larry Gambone

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— AN ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

PUBLIC MONOLITH TO PRIVATE ANARCHY

My purpose in the notebook for 9th January was to draw attention to two social facts. First the depressingly cyclical nature of economic ideologies, and secondly the current embrace of market forces in both governmental policies and popular sentiment all round the world from Chile to the Czech Republic, including the last great bastion of communist dictatorship, the People's Republic of China.

My view was that the British government's flirtation with privatisation, even including functions like parcel post and prisons, seen as a government monopoly for centuries, was going to peter out, to be replaced by efforts at job creation in public works, as happened in Britain, the US and Germany in the 1930s as preparation for war pulled the economy out of depression.

Even anarchist propagandists have to be concerned with the current climate in the outside world that they are addressing. The situation of the railways, discussed in another article on 9th January, amply illustrates our dilemma, as it pointed to the difficulties facing even the most ardent privatisers. I don't think it leads necessarily to a defence of British Rail. Everyone knows that government investment in BR has lagged behind virtually every other European country, and that it is possible to travel in private trains on public track, or (as in the US) on public trains on private track. For anarchists this is not the point. The issue was well expressed by Jimmy Knapp, general secretary of the NUR:

"The spirit of the industry has been destroyed by a management whose first resort is to disciplinary action and who create an atmosphere of intimidation by the gagging of legitimate comment and protest. These bully-boy tactics are not just seen at station and depot

level, they apply in national negotiations too. Management by imposition has replaced negotiations and agreement."¹

And this situation was, of course, forecast by anarchists. Geoffrey Ostergaard expressed the anarchist approach thirty years ago, writing fifteen years after the Labour government of 1945-51 had bought out the private companies which owned what were seen as the commanding heights of the economy:

"Until recently at least, a socialist has been defined as one who believes in common, usually state, ownership as opposed to private ownership. However, with the experience of Russia and even this country to guide us, it is becoming increasingly evident, as it has been evident to anarchists all along, that a mere change of ownership effects no radical change in social relations. When common ownership takes the form of state ownership, all that happens is that the state becomes the universal employer and the possibilities of tyranny are multiplied by the union of economic and political power. The values underlying capitalism are not changed; the worker remains essentially a thing, a commodity, a unit of labour: he has changed one set of masters, the capitalists, for another set of masters, the political and managerial bureaucrats."²

The actual structure of management of British Rail since nationalisation has been a sad history of the imposition of one management theory after another on an essentially social service, chronicled by a series of observers who have taken the trouble to absorb the immense complexities of railway operation. One of these is Dr Michael Bonavia, who comments that:

"The idea of a 'social contract' between major transport systems and transport users is not a moral or philosophical one: it is based on the very nature of the demand for transport and the nature of transport costs. Cross-subsidisation is inherent in all public transport, if only because matching supply to demand in point of time is usually impossible, there being no such thing as storage and warehousing of transport services."³

Another of these long-term analysts is Richard Hope, a railway journalist for the past thirty years, who was dragged in as a specialist adviser to the House of Commons all-party Select Committee on Transport in its inquiry into the government's proposals for British Rail privatisation, the committee which caused so many of the ardent free marketeers to experience a change of heart. There is an annual event called the Nottingham Transport Conference, bringing together members of the Passenger Transport Executives from the conurbations, like the Strathclyde PTE which provides financial support for the largest local rail network in Britain outside London, and the people responsible for Tyneside Metro or Manchester's Metrolink.

Richard Hope is addressing this year's conference on 22nd April. You and I won't be there as the fee is £330.70 plus £41.30 VAT. His subject is 'British Rail - Public Monolith to Private Anarchy'. I suspect that we would quarrel with his use of the word *anarchy* to describe the private operators who might bid for particular routes. But the first half of his title indicates how wary we should be in endorsing the current trend in British Rail. The truth is that BR has behaved for years as though it was a private industry, concerned only with profit and loss, giving investment priority to those routes that happen to be profitable. It complains correctly that its governmental status prevents it from borrowing investment money in the open market, and that official policy has been based on the assumption that it could meet the deficit through property sales. The victims have been its own staff and the travelling public. What woman reader is attracted by the idea of picking up a late train at an ill-lit and

completely unstaffed station? Consequently it is easy to withdraw services as they are so poorly used. There is ample evidence that BR has deliberately created the circumstances that lead to closures.⁴

From an anarchist point of view, British Rail has become not a service but a vast exercise in public relations which for years has been preparing itself for the so-called deregulation. And the irony is that by the time privatisation becomes feasible it will have lost its attractions and our free-market government will have been obliged by circumstances to rescue the railway industry from its own folly. There are lessons from the US experience:

"By the mid-1960s, long-distance passenger travel in the USA was becoming virtually impossible as companies either closed down passenger operations, or faced bankruptcy. In what was seen as a dangerous example of 'creeping socialism', the government intervened and established AMTRAK - the National Railroad Passenger Corporation - in 1971. AMTRAK provides a skeleton national network of long-distance passenger services using the track of the private companies. The exception is the high-speed intensively-used New York to Washington line, which AMTRAK now owns."⁵

At the same time the city regions themselves have had to develop their own metro systems.

Sadly, it is going to be our fate to go through the same experience of decline and re-invention.

Colin Ward

1. James Knapp in *Transport Review*, February 1989.
2. Geoffrey Ostergaard, 'Contracting Other Relationships' in *Anarchy*, October 1962.
3. Michael R. Bonavia, *The Twilight of British Rail* (David & Charles, 1985).
4. See Colin Ward, *Freedom To Go: after the motor age* (Freedom Press, 1991).
5. Paul Salvesson, *British Rail: the radical alternative to privatisation* (Centre for Local Economic Strategies, 1989).

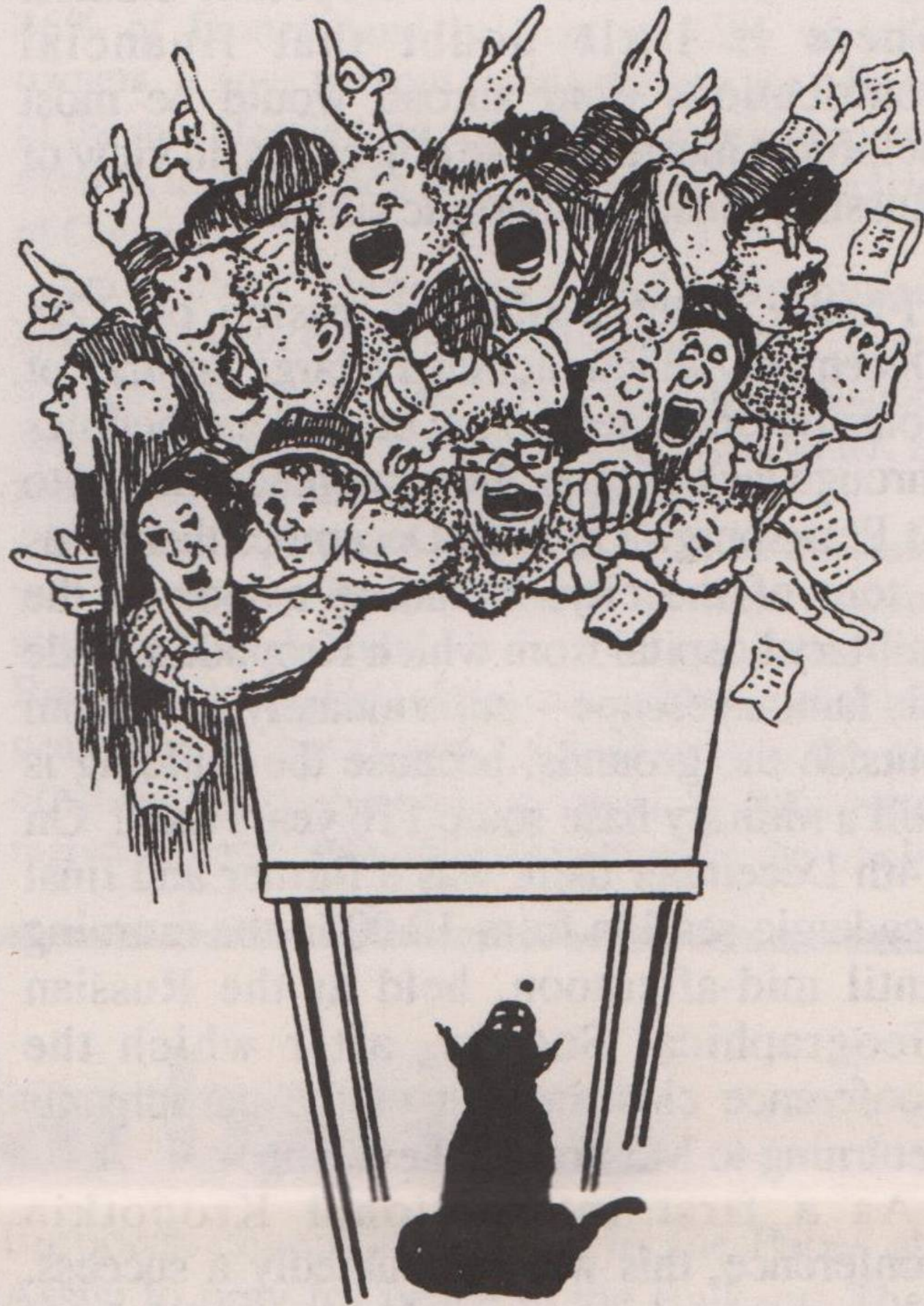
Sell-by-date heroes

1992 to 1993 was a good season that produced a fruitful harvest for character assassinations. A short harvest and a poisoned harvest, but we dined well off its sour fruit and the vomit that it regurgitates will sink and be forgotten in the indifferent sweet soil.

It is foolish to pretend that it does not make enjoyable reading for it reinforces all prejudices and justifies our own sour sense of failures within the jungle of our societies for we ask of an uncaring world how can brilliant creatures like us fail in competition with these hollow creatures, but we did and we do. While you and I wait with the curling lip of contempt for cuddly Miss Whiplash's diary to reveal the names of the 178 Tory MPs, 46 Tory Lords and 18 Labour Lords who, it is claimed, were fortunate enough to enjoy Miss Whiplash's therapeutic sexual sessions and/or participate in the physical knees up within her torture chamber we can only wait, with contempt, to enjoy it at second-hand off the printed pages of the tabloid press. Charmley in his *Churchill: the end of glory* (Hodder, £30) exposes Churchill as the man who destroyed the British Empire, placed Britain in thrall to America and Russia, and opened dem o' floodgates to socialism, must fill that waiting gap and, apart from the crazy right-wing screaming betrayal and the crazy left-wing howling applause, Churchill and I could only play out our historic role in a scenario we did not create and, as characters in a libretto, we did not write. Apart from the release of the Wavell papers that claimed that the Australian troops in 1942 were cowards, deserters, rapists, drunkards and looters instead of defending Singapore to the death reads to me, as one uninvolved, no more than the 'Happy Hour' at the Whitechapel High Street pub, 'a man is helping police with their enquiries', etc. But away with war and ignoring the alleged bizarre home life of the late Marlene Dietrich and our own Royal family, what I personally found disturbing was not Michael Coren's *The Invisible Man: the life and liberties of H.G. Wells* (Bloomsbury, £20), but Michael Foot's instant reburnishing of Coren's portrait of a rather unpleasant man with a gift of imagination and a talent as a storyteller.

It is good that the young should see every

issue as a moral issue of black or white without any intermediate shading or needs for pragmatic necessities, but of the mass they are not called upon to accept the responsibilities of decisions affecting others so that with age comes the justification of the betrayal of the dreams of youth. Of the pre-war heroes of the active Left, Michael Foot led the field. The brilliant pamphleteer and the star of every political platform he was the thinking demonstrator's Tony Benn of that day. And in the printed word was H.G. Wells, whose writings told us that that new world of socialism was ours for the taking. Unlike Shaw and his drear Bloomsbury groupies



ARTHUR MOYSES

Wells was of the masses and wrote for the masses, yet of myself my doubts came early for in 1936 the black-shirted fascist of Mosley fought to control the working class streets and political violence was the order of the hour.

1936 saw the release of the film of the book of H.G. Wells' story *Things to Come*. Its screen stated that in 1940 there would be war followed by plague and revolution and that the physical and intellectual men and women of earth's society would go by rocket-ship to the moon to live out their society within huge glass domes. Magnificent hit or miss social and scientific reasoning but in that fascist black-shirted period sitting in my cheap seat I could not accept the screen's H.G. Wells future of ordered, disciplined ranks breeding their super-race. A heartless and a joyless film that seemed the manifesto of all those intellectuals who drifted off to Stalinist Communism or Hitlerist Nazi idealism. But time, I would hold, has reduced Michael Foot as no more than one who found a comfortable bandwagon to build a reputation on but never one to step down into the gutter with the mob. Of Wells I can do no more than quote Coren writing of Wells, and I can only quote, Wells with "these swarms of black and brown and dingy white and yellow people... I take it they will have to go" (he meant to be murdered), demanded euthanasia for the 'unfit' and that anti-semitism will always exist because of "the exploitative nature of all money-lenders". Betrayal is and has always been the banner of the intelligentsia, but darling little Michael, as the darling penman of the right-wing press and the idol of the proletarian left, rode both horses in the political circus of the evil 30s and he rode those two rejects from the knacker's yard well for Michael was one who had entree into the doss house and the Duchess's salon as a friend of both.

When Mosley held his infamous fascist meetings within London's Olympia bloody violence took over within the hall and spewed out into the yards beyond and within one's

small courage and physical ability one joined the small groups to defend the bloodied victims as they were kicked and beaten, but in January 1993 one understands that at a private view of the Byron Society's 'Ruskin in Tuscany' exhibition Michael, reflecting on when he was the abstract voice of the streetwise left, said: "I remember the first time I met Oswald Mosley. It was at a rally at Olympia. He was throwing anybody who made any noise down the stairs, so I kept quiet." Amid the blood and the snot and the tears, yea, and the screams of Michael, those small groups of men and women fighting to claim the bodies of those "who made any noise" did not know that listening to the floodlit black-shirted evil in its solitary isolation proscenium was the hero of the left. Fear is no crime but having accepted the plaudits of the foot soldiers then sat on one's hands while others earn their scars one should hesitate to blow the trumpet, pen the order or shout the command to charge ever again. Few now read the writings of the illustrious dead, but in a pre-television age theirs was the great necessity that one doubts that a generation spawned into an age when television gives communication that needs no concentration could understand. As in so many parts of the world one only saw the mouthpiece of the written word upon a poster or pamphlet and it is undesirable that they did and still do in isolated fighting areas defend not only the image but the abstract person. But we now have television comrades and a happy tabloid press and we must never demand of men or women that they conform to our moralities in the living of their personal lives. But in the morality that we claim to offer no one can claim to ride those two horses as a superior right of way and as a defender of that morality but only as an uncommitted observer of the social scene. Correct Michael?

Arthur Moyses

The Peter Kropotkin Commemorative Conference

At 10.30 on the morning of 9th December 1992, Kropotkin's birthday, an international group of about fifty people, comprising academics of various disciplines, anarchists of various tendencies, and surviving members of the Kropotkin family (descended not from Petr but from his brother Aleksandr), gathered outside the gates of the Novodevichi Cemetery in Moscow under red-and-black flags. After a brief wait, we went inside to stand beside the grave of Petr Alekseyevich and celebrate his life. Speeches were made by representatives of all the groups and, after a brief silence, the celebration ended. We were then taken to Fyodorov's, the cooperative restaurant on Kropotkin Street (which has now reverted to its pre-revolutionary name, Prechistenka). There we enjoyed a lunch generously supplied by the proprietor gratis to participants in the conference. After this we were bussed, a little late, to the Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which was organising the entire conference.

The first session, which lasted over four hours, was punctuated by appeals from the chairman to contributors to abbreviate their papers. It contained no fewer than six contributions, delivered under the sign of a quotation from Lenin: "Marx's teaching is omnipotent because it is true!" First came an appeal from the conference chairman, Academician L.A. Abalkin, for international help to publish the works of Kropotkin. He instanced a two-volume Russian-language collection which is ready for publication and

A personal report by a British participant in the international conference which commemorated the 150th anniversary of Kropotkin's birth in Russia in December 1992

which incorporates among other things a reconstruction from Kropotkin's notes of the second volume of *Ethics*. This collection, because of Russia's parlous economic situation, cannot be brought out without foreign sponsorship or partnership.

The next speaker was the senior representative of the surviving Kropotkin clan, Aleksei Petrovich, a natural scientist by profession. He spoke about scientific universalism as imagined in Kropotkin's time and as imagined in ours. Although he could discern some differences in universal (as opposed to specialised) scientific understanding in the intervening period, he could not describe these as advances to a general scientific understanding of the universe. He began his paper with the question whether, as observers of the world, we are standing on the shoulders of our

predecessors or have instead fallen down; his answer seemed to be the latter.

Martin Miller from the United States spoke next, trying to trace the roots of Kropotkin's early "readiness to become an anarchist" (as stated in *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*) in his early family life, a situation in which authority and love were never combined in the same person but were divided between different family members. A.A. Neiman from Russia spoke on Kropotkin's views on biology and evolutionary theory, emphasising the relevance of ideas of mutual aid in nature to environmentalist concerns for the maintenance of biodiversity.

Haruki Wada of Japan spoke about Kropotkin and Vera Figner, the titular chair of the Kropotkin Commemorative Committee until the end of the 1930s, and herself a revolutionary and long-term prisoner under Tsarism. The Committee established a Kropotkin Museum in his Moscow birth-house and administered it until its nationalisation in 1938. At the beginning of the war, in 1941, the Kropotkin Museum, like many others in the Soviet Union, was packed up and taken away for safety. A young and very enthusiastic Russian anarchist, V.V. Damie, spoke last in this session, most eloquently showing how Kropotkin's ideas had filtered down, sometimes directly and

(continued on page 7)

100 YEARS AGO

From 'Problems of Anarchism - Labor'

1. The Meaning of the Labor Question

Among the working classes today could be paralleled some of the worst phases of human suffering and degradation that the past can furnish. Even chattel slavery would appear an improvement on some features of modern wage slavery. The assured life of society as a whole is hardly compensation for the uncertain precarious and unsuccessful lives which many individuals must inevitably lead. Increased productive power, machinery, mechanical and scientific improvements, are in many ways beneficial and essential to the progress of the race. Labor-saving inventions cannot increase too fast. Wealthy capitalist and great corporate enterprises seeking their own interests are impelled to improve facilities for the production and distribution of wealth. The ever-increasing power of labor, partly through its more intelligent use and largely through increasing application of capital, results in more uniformity in the supply and price with a continual tendency to reduce the cost of all the means of life.

But the application of inventive skill is increasingly adding to the unemployed; machinery in every industry seems to replace men; the aggregation of productive wealth and the combination of capitalists set the wage-workers more and more at the mercy of their masters.

Liberty vol IX, no 37, whole no 271
New York, Saturday 13th May 1893

THE RAVEN - 20
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(continued from page 6)

sometimes through mediators like Murray Bookchin, into modern ecological thinking, and how self-organisation of the workers at the workplace could work in a post-industrial world as the embodiment of Kropotkin's anarcho-communist ideal.

The next two-and-a-half days were filled – truthfully, over-filled – with sessions relating to Kropotkin's life, thought and historic role. At one point, the conference broke up into simultaneous strands sitting in different venues and pursuing separately each of these subjects. In spite of multiple simultaneous sessions, individual contributors were still on the whole held to a maximum of thirty minutes, and little time was left for questions or discussions at the sessions themselves: anyone who wished to discuss particular papers had to seek the authors and speak to them alone, while discussion of more than one paper at a time was impossible. On the positive side, the conference was extremely informal, with participants entering or leaving the body of the hall or even the platform at will, and all participants from high to low being extremely affable and approachable. This was a refreshing change from the more

The Peter Kropotkin Commemorative Conference

formal atmosphere of many academic conferences elsewhere.

The reaction to the conference arrangements by the many anarchists present, from various parts of Russian and the Commonwealth of Independent States as well as from Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan and the United States, was not always favourable: after a day of 'strand' sessions at which no translation facilities were provided and papers were truncated without warning, a notice appeared outside the main hall inviting participants to 'Fuck Lunch' and attend open-ended lunch-time discussion sessions instead. As an academic, I used my lunch-hours to buttonhole Russian colleagues in order to discuss their contributions, make professional contacts, and so on, and therefore cannot report on these lunch-time sessions.

In general, all the foreign contributors I spoke to were struck by the hagiographical attitude to Kropotkin shown by our Russian counterparts. There was an uncritical acceptance of him and his writings which wasn't dissimilar to that shown by the smaller clique of 'cultic' Marxists in the old Soviet Union and exemplified by the Lenin quotation hanging over the speakers' heads in the main hall. Little attempt was made to discriminate between those parts of his writings which have survived the test of time and those which have not. A contribution on Malatesta and Kropotkin, which might have focussed on earlier criticisms of Kropotkin, was cut cruelly short, the Japanese contributor being unable (and justifiably unwilling) to summarise her points in a tenth of her allotted time.

On a more positive note, the conference organisers also gave us the chance to visit the houses where Kropotkin was born and died. The latter is at Dmitrov, some fifty miles from Moscow – a large two-storey 'bourgeois' residence in Russian nineteenth-century rural style, unfortunately placed between two modern four-storey blocks which completely overshadow it. It has recently been cleaned and redecorated, and is currently being turned into a museum – so far without any contents other than sets of photographs taken during Kropotkin's residence there between 1918 and 1921.

His birth-house is on Kropotkinski Pereulok

(Kropotkin Lane) in central Moscow. This runs from Prechistenka Street to Ostozhenka Street and is the address of a number of embassies and other diplomatic buildings. The Kropotkin family house is at present the official residence of the Moscow representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. During our visit, speeches were made by representatives of the PLO and the Kropotkin Commission in which it became apparent that the Palestinians would not mind moving if alternative premises were provided, thus freeing the building for restoration as a Kropotkin Museum, as it was until the 1941 evacuation. It is indeed the Kropotkin Commission's intention to restore the Kropotkin Museum here and to make it an international centre for Kropotkin studies. There is little doubt that financial contributions from abroad would be most helpful in meeting these objectives, in view of Russia's present economic situation.

Finally, after a plenary session on 12th December, which included a large number of contributors squeezed out of earlier schedules through lack of time, the conference moved to St Petersburg. On 13th December there was a tour of the city, including a look at the military hospital from which Kropotkin made his famous escape – unfortunately only from outside the grounds, because the building is still a military base some 116 years later! On 14th December there was a further and final academic session from 10.00 in the morning until mid-afternoon, held at the Russian Geographical Society, after which the conference closed, most of the participants returning to Moscow that evening.

As a first international Kropotkin conference, this was undoubtedly a success. There were of course problems, which have been frankly noted here, but on the whole they were easily outweighed by the benefit to all concerned of gathering together large numbers of people interested in Kropotkin in one place for a period of nearly a week. The presence of anarchists in addition to academic specialists made for a lively mix, though the domination of the schedule by academics gave rise to some dissatisfaction. A number of Western contributors were inspired to think of the next Kropotkin conference to continue

the series so auspiciously started in Moscow. Perhaps, in view of his long stay in Britain, this would be a desirable venue for such an event in, say 1997. Let us hope that it will be easier then for our Russian colleagues to travel here than it is at the moment.

John Slatter

People who feel able to offer help to the projects for the publication of Kropotkin's works or the restoration of the Kropotkin Museum should contact the editorial group Filsofskoye Naslediye of the Mysl Publishing House, Leninski Prospekt 15, Moscow 117071, Russia, CIS. People who would like more information should write to John Slatter, who is a member of the Kropotkin Commission of the Russian Academy of Sciences, at the Centre for European Studies, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

Britain 'the low-paid sweatshop of Europe'

Hoover are closing down their factory in Dijon and transferring business to the one in Scotland, not without job losses there too. Why? Because labour is cheaper in Scotland than in Dijon.

One of Major's 'successes' at the Maastricht conference was to exclude Britain from the Social Chapter which limits the number of working hours for wage slaves as well as establishing a minimum hourly rate for their labour. The British argument was that if the Social Chapter were applied to Britain it would result in more unemployment since many employers just could not afford to pay the minimum rate.

According to the *London Evening Standard* (28th January) "seven out of ten firms in and around London are guilty of exploiting staff by either paying poverty wages or making employees work marathon hours".

They were quoting from a joint report by the Low Pay Unit and the National Union of Civil and Public Servants which also pointed out that "over 100,000 firms nationwide have been underpaying their staff over the last twelve years". Yet only 82 were prosecuted even though "breaches of the employment laws were found in 30% of companies visited nationwide".

As a member of the Opposition put it, Britain was now turning into the "low-paid sweatshop of Europe".

The Illusion of 'Political Correctness'

(continued from page 4)

marginalised and dissenters would then gain a voice denied them for the most part and could allow alternatives to be put.

An example I recently came across was in *The Guardian* (12th October) in a short piece which told of how a statue of Columbus made in Spain had not yet found a resting place in Britain because of condemnation of the original site and concluded that due to political correctness it was hard to imagine where it might be accepted. No explanation was given as to why many condemn the legacy of oppression begun and symbolised by Columbus and that this colonist does not deserve to be lauded because he enslaved Indian people and laid waste their land and culture with great barbarity. It is enough to label dissent about his image and legacy as political correctness and so not reveal something of the true history which encapsulates the ideology still dominant in the West.

To justify the term those fearing change use extreme examples of what they say is political correctness, such as feminists who apparently wish manhole covers to be referred to as 'personholes' (according to Polly Toynbee in the intellectual giant *Radio Times*). It may be extreme but at no point did Toynbee say why it was irrelevant, the label was enough and so without intellect exercised. Such examples are touted as proof positive that anything 'politically correct' is automatically stupid or antagonistic or totalitarian rather than voicing doubt and seeking change. Yet every day the government and capitalists and those who are brainwashed into it all bleat on about the scrounging unemployed, single mothers, illegal immigrants, et al, but we don't hear the values of greed and power assailed in the same way. It may be the issues raised by radicals and dissenters are wrong, irrelevant or stupid, but clearly this is not the case most of the time and we should have debate and not thought control. Therefore it is dangerous to accept political correctness as a valid term that merely needs to be justified, as the feminist writer Andrea Dworkin attempts to do in the 'Open Space' debate, for each issue should be discussed in itself and not seen as part of a single radical agenda defined by enemies of those very issues.

As the powerful whine on that they are under assault they oppress and exploit others, which is why they need to have alternatives dismissed as easily as possible, keen as ever to portray privilege and greed as innocent and vulnerable. Political correctness is an easy escape for those who wish to hang on to the existing order in the belief Western 'civilisation' is unquestionably good and challenges as inherently bad. What is clear from this issue is how the authoritarian politics of greed expects to be accepted as just and embodying truth and how thought control, of which political correctness is a part, is used to put down alternative agencies and reduce their importance. In the language of Orwell, truth is lies when it questions the lies of 'truth'.

Ian Borrowes

News from Angel Alley

The subscription renewals are still keeping us busy. If you have renewed and not received an acknowledgement please let us know. Don't wait, as some readers do, and then months later complain at the non-arrival of *Freedom* or *The Raven*. Computers are not as marvellous as some would like us to believe!

For volume 6 (numbers 21-24) of *The Raven* topics of interest are 'Women and Anarchism', 'Crime and Anarchism' and 'Barcelona 1936 – Barcelona 1992'. We welcome practical suggestions for *Raven* issues as we also welcome contributions of interest from an anarchist point of view not particularly on a specific topic. We have been trying to produce *Ravens* on a specific topic or subject to enjoy, from a selling point of view (after all, we are propagandists who want their literature to be read), a continuing interest which a magazine cannot command.

In the last News we threatened to 'exploit' declared reader-anarcho-propagandists with suggestions as to how we can reach more

new readers. Pressure of work has prevented us from producing our proposals this time. One or two comrades have sent us their suggestions and they are very useful and we hope other readers who are concerned to see that *Freedom* has a growing readership will let us have any suggestions that they think are relevant.

The second hundred of the Reader's Survey forms have been received. We badly need a third hundred to feel that we can have a good idea of what our readers think of *Freedom* and as to how we can make it into a more successful anarchist propaganda journal. So please, those of you who haven't yet replied do so now.

In the next issue of *Freedom* we are hoping to publish 'First Impressions' on the second hundred replies by another writer.

We are in the process of reorganising all departments in our office administration. Inevitably there will be a few mistakes and delays, but you will be really helping us to get the new system running smoothly by notifying us of non-receipt of *Freedom* and/or *The Raven* as soon as you would normally expect to receive them and not wait weeks or months as some of you have done before letting us know. And literature orders normally should be dealt with within seven days.

DONATIONS

15th - 21st January 1993

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Hamburg PG £2, Norwich BAN £6, Birmingham PO £4, London JHJ £4, Helsinki TT £8.50, Crediton PT £1, Pwllheli MJ £6, Stirling AD £4, Windsor Ontario FA £10, Bolton DP £4, Louth AH £3.

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Total = £72.00
1993 total to date = £318.00

Feminism a Dogma?

Dear friends,
Over the years I have increasingly arrived at the conclusion that feminism (though I agree with Ian Borrow's argument that "feminism is no single set of ideals and goals", *Freedom*, 12th December 1992), like Marxism, is a dogma, and an authoritarian one at that.
To follow my line of argument I'm enclosing a copy of my 'Open Letter of Reply to John Cohen', the US section's member of WRI who earlier this year vehemently defended feminism in *Peace News*. *Peace News* did not print it,

apparently because it did not toe their feminist line (and they didn't give any feedback whatsoever either). Among the people I quoted in this letter is one letter by a Cliff Poxon entitled 'Sexist Crap' which appeared in your fortnightly *Freedom* on 20th March 1982, therein the author criticised the Greenham Common women for their blatant sexism!
To my mind feminism, being an ideology (all strands of feminism create the enemy image of the male!), stands in stark contrast to dynamic anarchist/libertarian ideas. I believe that women's lib (as opposed to feminism) and men's lib must go hand in hand. But, as I've said, you can read this in the 'Open Letter'.

In fact, I'm quite confident that you as anarchists will be open minded to these new insights, and indeed I've found that the most brilliant criticism of feminism has come from Emma Goldman, who did not call herself a feminist (see Alice Wexler's *Emma Goldman: An Intimate*

Life, page 94) and indeed wasn't one (she stood for true emancipation, equality and justice) as well as from the Swiss psychotherapist Alice Miller.

Feminism's fault lies with its one-sided blame on men *per se* - it denies that men are also oppressed (on different levels than women) and can be oppressed by women as well. Also it assumes that all men have power over all women. This simply is not true. And if we want to abolish power structures we need to oppose whoever wields power.

Sexism works both ways: let us, men and women, work *together* towards a better society, excluding one sex or the other is totally unhealthy.

Yours for a non-sexist society, peace, freedom, love and anarchy.

Peter

[We hope to include our correspondent's 'Open Letter' in the forthcoming issue of our quarterly journal *The Raven* on 'Women' which is being edited by Silvie Edwards. Any other would-be contributors to this issue should write to Silvie c/o Freedom Press - Editors.]

Quintana replies

Dear Comrades,
I really must protest at Tony Gibson's utterly predictable and puerile response (*Freedom*, 23rd January) to my letter (*Freedom*, 9th January).

He has only to read *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer and *The Natural Superiority of Women* by Ashley Montagu to realise that there is an urgent need for better understanding and treatment of women, and who better to do this vital service than *Freedom*? It is not sexist nonsense to ask for a women's page. It would be a vital service. There is no need for a men's page. The mainstream anarchist movement is predominantly male, and no woman is taking anything from them.

It is almost beneath my dignity to state that in requesting a more spiritual aspect of life to be in *Freedom*, I was certainly not requesting cookery recipes or horoscopes. To say so is a rotten cliché, and if this is Tony Gibson's experience of women and life then God help and pardon him. Where has he and so many other male anarchists been living all this time?

There is nothing wrong or false in believing in your soul and seeking its welfare and salvation. Spirituality is not at war with freedom. Freedom and male chauvinism is at war with anything to do with the soul. This is a terrible fault in an otherwise eminently sane and humane movement.

Mary Quintana

Too much socio-political jargon!

Dear *Freedom*,
Mary Quintana's sympathetic and open-ended letter drawing attention to the relative failure of *Freedom* to attract support among women calls for more intellectual generosity than Tony Gibson gave it. His hissing outburst against Quintana's proposal for a women's page may be funny but it should not kill the possibility of discussion on the broader issues she raises.

If I had to choose between Kaffe Fawcett's knitting and Gibson's (k)nit-picking or between Gypsy Rose's horoscope and industrial man's 'scientific forecasts' I'd be with Gibson's "intuition-guided bitches" every time.

And what's this about supporters of authoritarian institutions?

Quintana's comments on the excessive grinding out of a socio-political standpoint in *Freedom* is no small matter. It drives off a lot of potential readers, male and female. This same standpoint characterised by the excessive use of abstract, rational, professional (anal) language (from which neither Gibson nor I are immune) also advertises those who as Ernie Crosswell notes "have qualified through and lectured and operated within a state controlled institution on which they depend(ed) for a living". Let's not turn the Readers' Page into a nit-pickers page.

Denis Pym

The Dogma of Class Revisited

Dear *Freedom*,
I'm pleased that an article by myself should generate such a large response ('The Dogma of Class Denied', *Freedom*, 14th November 1992). It's very difficult (I find) to break away from the Dogma of Class because the notion of 'class' colours so much of our political thinking. Even the anodyne and platitudinous Mr Major speaks of a

'classless society'. We try to break free from the constraints and assumptions present in the terminology of our political culture, only to find they are still there in words like class and capitalism.

I think I largely agree with Peter Owen that private property and the money system dominate us. I am trying to find another way of looking at the problem because the machine dominates me in more ways than the economic - culturally, intellectually, aesthetically, linguistically. 'Class' is not just about economics, it's about how people talk and dress, status symbols, the goods they consume, legitimation, ethos, the (both monetary based and non-monetary) value systems they hold to. I concede that a lot of this is related to wealth, but I believe that the Marxist analysis of the problem is radically incomplete, if not fundamentally flawed. I want to get behind the limitations of their talk about class and discover how this value system works.

We don't have to follow the *Sunday Telegraph* in accepting that the sole determinant of a person's significance is their income. Perhaps the most damning thing about the Dogma of Class when it asserts that 'real change must come from

Weak on Economics

Dear *Freedom*,
I am astonished by Ann Sinclair's contention (letters, 23rd January) that no anarchist seems competent to refute Marx's theory of value. The validity of a theory is tested by the truth of its predictions, and predictions following from Marx's theory of value are plainly false. If Marx himself had lived to see his theory so contradicted by events, he would surely have retracted it.

The errors are obvious to anyone who studies Marx's *Capital* as a work of economic theory, rather than as a quasi-religious text. A short cut, for those who do not wish to undertake such heavy reading, is Brian Moseley's *Marxism versus Reality*,* which neatly describes Marx's theory, using quotations from Marx.
To put it simply, Marx held that a commodity "has value only because human labour ... has been embodied or materialised in it", and "the magnitude of this value [is] to be measured ... by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article". It follows that an article made with the aid of labour-saving devices has less value than the same article made without them: "the use of machinery ... converts what was formerly variable capital, invested in labour-power, into machinery which, being constant capital, does not produce surplus value". So the increasing use of machinery, "the gradual and relative growth of the constant over the variable capital must necessarily lead to a gradual fall in the average rate of profit". (All words in quotation marks are direct quotations from *Capital* volume 1.)

Marx's prediction, that using machinery to increase production causes profits to fall, is hilariously false; and as Marx wrote, it is a prediction which necessarily follows from his theory of value. Far from being difficult to refute, the theory is practically impossible to defend.

Donald Room

* From Freedom Press Bookshop, £1 post free inland, please add 20p when ordering from abroad.

The Ecology Debate goes on

Dear Editors,
In regard to Donald Room's condescending observations on the social ecology / deep ecology debate (letters, 9th January), in which he celebrates his own lack of knowledge of the issue, may I suggest that he read a book I recently wrote, *Remaking Society* (1990) that is only about 200 pages in length and that is not overly burdened with four-syllable words. If this slender volume contains too much of the "windy rhetoric" to which Room objects in my writings, he might care to consult my 'What Is Social Ecology?' in *Environmental Philosophy* (Prentice-Hall, 1993) which is only 19 pages long. If finally this essay still contains too much "windy rhetoric" and he really believes that the "essentials of anarchism, fascism, thermodynamics, palaeontology, ecology, deep ecology, Christianity or Renaissance humanism can indeed be put in a few hundred words", perhaps he should get a small and not very demanding desk encyclopaedia, if he doesn't have one already. Sarcasm has its place in disputes from which people can learn something, but hardly in self-defeating displays of arrogant ignorance.

Murray Bookchin

Sociology

Dear Editors,
If Ernie Crosswell (*Freedom*, 23rd January) wishes to maintain his comic position as the anarchist Norman Tebbit that is his privilege. He may not, however, imply during this process that the absence of woman writers in *Raven 19* was some sort of sexual discrimination on my part. No woman offered a piece, good or bad, and those I approached had other commitments. Nevertheless, women were hardly ignored. If he had actually read *Raven's 18 and 19* (they really ought to be taken together) he would have found his suggestion untenable.

In *Raven 18* Colin Ward's excellent essay 'Anarchy in Milton Keynes' was a discussion of a path-breaking book by a woman anthropologist. Harold Barclay devoted three pages to the problem of patriarchy, while Angus Calder had some pretty pointed remarks to make about African versions of that problem.

In *Raven 19* the topic is specifically raised by David Lee as part of a discussion of change in sociological ideas, while my own discussion of the nature of human nature largely revolves around gender and cites five female writers. With considerable approbation I might add.

The suggestion that sociologists are

below is that it accepts and internalises this 'value' judgement. I want to question it, undermine it.

I don't take issue with the use of the idea of class in a *descriptive* sense. I think that many of the remarks made by SM and Peter Owen belong in this register. The criterion here is utility - whether or not it enables admen to sell more washing powder, or pollsters to help return another Tory government. This does not preclude our being able to use it in this sort of limited way. The point is that talk about 'Basildon C2's' must work within the admen or pollster's framework, otherwise they would change their terminology, because they are guided by whether it works and achieves its purpose, and are not shackled to ideology in the way that Marxists are.

When Marx & Co move from description to their large-scale predicative use of class, I think they go beyond the power of the evidence. Far from having discovered the 'Iron Laws' behind the patterns of history, they have merely projected their own wishful thinking on to it.

I think that the sense of class homogeneity through exploitation mentioned by Peter Owen is fine as a description, but I don't see how we can move from reporting this fact that we are all exploited, to conclusions about the class of exploited people as a *force for* revolution. I think that our oppression is more than just the economic condition of being exploited but also about our coercion, our insignificance as people against the machine, our democratic devaluation, the fact that we are constantly lied to, and not listened to, our being culturally overshadowed, our being railroaded into things like the Gulf War, etc., etc. - in short, our *nullification*.

The problem is not just about economics, nor particularly about our own attitude towards the plastic, imposed robotic world, it's more about the attitude of that world towards us, our negation or annihilation within it. Hence the example of the £60k pa executive. The point made by SM about the computer executive would seem to reinforce my critique of the Dogma of Class in that were the executive to successfully break free from his/her oppression, this would disprove the assertion made in the Dogma of Class that 'real change *must* come from below'.

I didn't intend the bit about proximity to be taken in a merely geographical sense. In the earlier article 'Class and Society - two pernicious errors' (27th June 1992) I say: "It matters not whether

creatures of government would appear to be refuted by Dr Ebbrell's letter in the same issue of *Freedom*. I must however contest the charge of jargon. The contributions to *Raven 19* were remarkably jargon-free and the one cited example, 'post-modernism', stems from literary/artistic sources not from sociology.

Mr Crosswell may well have a case that we should drop all other activity to stop the war in Bosnia. That could be said though of every branch of human activity and presumes a degree of political power that sociologists, along with anarchists, do not have. Our discipline does have utility, as David Lee clearly shows, but our successes, like those of anarchism itself, tend to be on a less apocalyptic level.

Mr Crosswell apparently likes to picture himself as an anarchist version of the man in the Basildon pub and pretends unawareness of the major intellectual currents of our time. It is difficult to see this as admirable. Bloody mindedness may be a component in the anarchist position but philistine bloody mindedness is not. Nor, to use his own example, will it help stop the war in Bosnia. Finally he can hardly reject philosophy on utilitarian grounds or any other. To do so would be to reject anarchism itself because, among other things, that is what anarchism is.

John Pilgrim

we think in geographical or temporal distances" - I give examples such as friendship, people working together, neighbours fixing fences. Here I'm trying to concentrate on the specific, concrete and particular details of the relationship, which make it work. I agree with SM that empathy can play a part in this.

Lastly, 'No anarchists could hold the Dogma of Class' was a tongue-in-cheek bit of provocation on my part, but I think the point it makes is valid. We cannot, as anarchists, reject the idea of government, while at the same time believing in the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' - that one group of people however large can rule over another group.

I intend to develop my ideas further, and all the comments your contributors wrote are helpful. Thanks for showing an interest in what I said, and taking the trouble to reply to my article.

Stephen Booth

Civil Disobedience

Dear Editors,
Peter Dodson (Letters, 23rd January) is right to say that direct action involving civil disobedience in the nuclear disarmament movement wasn't started by the Committee of 100 - though no one involved in it would have said that it was - but his chronology of events is incomplete and inaccurate.

The first demonstration of civil disobedience against nuclear weapons in Britain was a small sit-down at the War Office on 11th January 1952. There was a small lie-down at Mildenhall nuclear air base in June 1952, and a spontaneous sit-down in Downing Street after the launch meeting of CND in February 1958. The Direct Action Committee held properly organised sit-downs at Aldermaston in September 1958, at North Pickenham (near Swaffham) in December 1958, and at Harrington in January 1960. There were also sit-downs at Foulness in April and May 1960 and at Finningley in July 1960. DAC organised the direct action at Holy Loch in May 1961, and Polar Action operated there during Spring and Summer 1961. The Committee of 100 held its first sit-downs in London from February 1961, but its first direct action against nuclear bases was at Holy Loch in September 1961 and then during the multiple demonstrations in December 1961.

NW

Anarchist Forum

Fridays at about 8.00pm at the Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square (via Cosmo Street off Southampton Row), London WC1.

1993 SEASON OF MEETINGS

29th January - General discussion
5th February - 'Anarchism and Feminism' (speaker Lisa Bendall)
12th February - 'Prison in an Anarchist Society' (speaker Peter Lumsden)
19th February - Open discussion
26th February - 'Extremism and Moderation in Anarchist Thought' (speaker Andrew Lainton)

5th March - Open discussion
12th March - 'Sexual Harassment and Feminism' (speaker Adrian Williams)
19th March - Open discussion
26th March - 'Anarchism and the Labour Party' (speaker Peter Neville)
23rd April - 'Anarchism and the Collapse of the Cold War and the New World Order' (speaker Dave Dane)
30th April - Open discussion
Monday 3rd May at 2pm - May Day Picnic in Osterley Park, Hounslow. Details later. *There are vacancies for speakers from 7th May to 2nd July*
9th July - Last meeting: planning the 1993/94 programme

Libertarian Left Co-operation Conference

last weekend in February

Anarchists / Libertarian Socialists / Syndicalists, who are active within (or oriented to) broad campaigns such as Trades' Councils, Miners' Support Groups, Women's Groups or Claimants' Unions, are invited to a conference for the last weekend in February. The Stapleton Commune (the oldest Anarcho-pacifist community in the country) has offered the use of its premises. People reaching Doncaster by rail can be ferried to Stapleton, which is near Pontefract.

More information from:

Sue Samuel and Guy Cheverton of Hull
 Syndicalists (0482-492388)
 or
 Hilda and Len Gibson, Stapleton,
 (0977-620381).

FREEDOM fortnightly

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The Anarchist Research Group

Saturday afternoon from 2-5pm

at the

1 in 12 Club

21/23 Albion Street, Bradford 1

13th February - Paul Rosen
 'Anarchic Technology: Technics Out of Control or a Technology of Freedom?'

For further information contact David Goodway (tel: 0535 604049) or Jon Purkis (tel: 0484 847764)

Red Rambles

A programme of free walks in the White Peak for Greens, Socialists, Libertarians and Anarchists.

Sunday 7th February - Hidden Valley Walk. Meet at 1pm at Dale End (half a mile west of Elton). Length 4 miles.

Sunday 7th March - Derbyshire 'Edges'. Meet at 11am at the National Trust Car Park (next to Robin Hood pub on A619 Baslow to Chesterfield road). Length 8 miles.

Sunday 4th April - Belper/Blackbrook, meet approx 1pm at the junction of Long Walls Lane with A517 at Blackbrook. Circular walk 3 miles approx.

Sunday 9th May - Kirk Ireton circular walk. Meet 11am outside Barley Mow Pub. Length 2-3 miles.

Sunday 6th June - Canal and Woodland walk. Meet at 1pm at High Peak Junction Car Park. Length 4 miles.

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