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FIFTY PENCE

"Bureaucracy is a giant mechanism operated by pygmies."
Honoré de Balzac

THE (LUNATIC) ASYLUM BILL LOOKING FOR SCAPEGOATS

The Home Secretary was assuring Parliament that the purpose of the Asylum Bill with its tough measures (which have shocked liberal opinion) is of course not intended to keep out 'genuine refugees' but to deal with those greedy go-getters from the third world and now from the 'liberated' countries of Eastern Europe who are simply wanting to improve their living standards in the affluent West.

It is surely no coincidence that the tough line on immigration is not just a British manifestation. The *soi-disant* socialist French and Spanish governments, as well as the German and Italian, are also taking draconian measures to keep out the so-called 'economic asylum seekers'.

The difference, however, between the 'problem' faced by the British government and our neighbours in Europe is, of course, one of numbers. Kenneth Baker the accident-prone former Tory chairman, Minister of Education, etc., and now Home

Secretary, is panicking over some 50,000 would-be immigrants this year (compared with only 5,000 last year) instead of lamenting the fact that even would-be fortune seekers from the third world or Eastern Europe are looking elsewhere! For France and Germany are having to

The Tory government denies that the Asylum Bill discriminates against coloured would-be immigrants. Kenneth Baker insisted his policy was non-racist. "It would apply to people whether they come from Africa, Asia or Eastern Europe". The only whites mentioned are the Eastern Europeans who, so far as the Tories are concerned, can be lumped with the Asiatics and Africans. The whites, blacks and yellows with cheque books are welcome worldwide.

deal with hundreds of thousands. They also have militant fascist and Nazi embryonic movements to deal with. In France the right wing former President Giscard d'Estaing has spoken of 'invasion' by immigrants and his remarks have been approved by both the Gaullist mayor of Paris Jacques Chirac, and the 'socialist' Prime Minister Edith Cresson herself. In cosy little Austria the so-called Freedom Party,* which is in fact the anti-immigration party, as a result of its campaign to the effect that the Austrian capital risks being overrun by foreign immigrants, tripled its vote in the local elections to become the second strongest force in the Vienna city government.

In Spain, according to *The Independent's* correspondent Adela
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*Its leader Joerg Haider publicly praised Nazi Germany's labour laws and practices earlier this year, which lost him his job as governor of the Carinthia province, but the anti immigration campaign has now won him support and votes for his party.

THATCHER'S WEALTH PRODUCERS

As we go to press the October trade figures have been published showing that imports exceeded exports by £800 million. It would appear that the adjusted deficit for the three months to October is some £2,000 million, larger than forecast thanks to a bit of fiddling of the books in August and September which made the situation for those months seem brighter (or not as bad) than it really was.

At the same time the pound sterling has hit an all time low against the Deutsche mark which some city 'experts' believe might lead to the government having to increase interest rates. Meanwhile the Bank of England is intervening by mopping up some of the surplus sterling in the market with some of their reserves of Deutsche marks and pesetas. One of the causes of the currency 'crisis' is that when sterling was riding high, speculators were buying Deutsche marks and pesetas because they were low. In clearing the surplus marks and pesetas — just like in any capitalist market — there were more pounds sterling available and less of the

other two, sterling became cheaper and the other two increased in value. And the speculators went into reverse and bought back more sterling with the same amount of foreign currency than they had started with!

These are Thatcher's wealth producers. When she was passionately defending our 'sovereignty' in the recent two day debate in the Commons, her main attack was on the idea of a single currency for Europe. And it was only on this issue that she called for a referendum.

The majority of people in Europe couldn't care less whether we had the ecu or sterling or francs or Deutsche marks as our currency. But imagine how the speculators in currency would feel about it. The London money market is the largest in the world. Something like \$69,000 million a day are shuffled around the world from London. And there are a lot of dealers, speculators, not to mention governments, who do very well most times, and especially when there are 'crises'.



The joke is from a German postcard. *Bild* is the West German equivalent of *The Sun*, *Neues Deutschland* was the paper of the East German 'Communist' Party.

The (Lunatic) Asylum Bill LOOKING FOR SCAPEGOATS

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Gooch, the anniversary of Franco's death was celebrated by:

"... a motley gathering of young neo-Nazis and nostalgic Franco supporters: skinheads and jackboots next to fur coats and Barbours — all riddled with contradictions. 'We're Spanish nationalists', said Jorge, 15. 'No we're not, we're Spanish national socialists' said his friend. 'That's right, Spanish Nazis', added a third. They are all still at school. Why were they here?

'Well, you've got to get rid of the dross; prostitutes, homosexuals, drug-pushers and all those immigrants — blacks, Jews'.

However concerned governments may appear to be about these fascist, Nazi manifestations they are much more interested in exploiting the immigration 'problem' for political reasons. The French 'socialist' government is obviously concerned to neutralise the right wing opposition (from the extreme right of Le Pen to the Chirac/Giscard official right). In Germany the right wing Kohl government, according to Martin Woollacott in *The Guardian* 'Europe' 15th November, is playing a discreet game compared with the French, and they know they cannot get, at least at this stage, the changes they want.

"Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the Christian Democrats have managed to cast themselves in the vote-winning role of being tough on immigration while pushing the Social Democrats and the Liberals into the probably vote-losing role of being soft on the same subject. Volker Rühe, the CDU Secretary General, has instructed party branches to utilise the immigration issue to gain votes."

Exactly the same tactics are being used in Britain by the Tory government with the opposition parties denouncing (quite rightly) the motives, the methods, etc.

Freedom readers will not expect us to join the official 'opposition' in what is after all a purely political game in which the 'economic' or 'political' asylum seekers are mere pawns in that game.

Thirty five years ago when Europe was still rebuilding its infrastructure following the most destructive war in human

history (1939-45) full employment was the order of the day — so much so that workers in this country and in the Europe of the Six (EC) and the Seven (EFTU) could pick and choose. In the circumstances who would take the dirty jobs and the low paid jobs? So the prosperous Europeans sent their scouts to the third world to recruit labour to do the dirty jobs and the badly paid jobs that the white Europeans wouldn't touch. It was a Tory government that launched this campaign and thanks to which London Transport and the nursing and even the medical side of hospitals were able to keep going. Apart from the Conservative MP Enoch Powell who warned the nation that we would be overwhelmed by black immigration which would lead to "rivers of blood" on the streets of Britain, the 'invasion', especially of the West Indians, added a positive new dimension to life in Britain apart from keeping going public services.

So what has soured everything? Surely we will not be accused of being 'simplistic' when we compare a 'full employment' Western Europe in 1955 with one having more than twenty million unemployed in 1991 and draw out conclusions from these facts?

But unemployment is not an Act of God. It is man-made, it is an essential

ingredient of capitalism (which the 'inefficient' former 'communist' countries of the Eastern bloc are rapidly learning to their cost) but which the capitalist countries will not admit to, in spite of the fact that Chancellor Norman Lamont considers that unemployment is a price worth paying for reducing inflation and knocking ½% off interest rates (which he is now thinking of adding to!).

And what is important to realise is that capitalist governments, short of controlling the economy can do nothing to cope with unemployment, so to distract attention from their impotence they seek scapegoats and know that when unemployment is high they will have the support of the 'native' unemployed against their immigrant 'competitors'.

The Asylum Bill is just this. After all, what are 50,000 economic asylum refugees compared with the problem of some three million unemployed, with the long-term unemployed officially admitted to be on the increase? By their Asylum Bill and the tough publicity generated by the sycophant media the government is encouraging the violent reactions which needless to say, as upholders of law and order, they deprecate in the strongest language.

As anarchists we can understand unemployed 'natives' of these islands, black or white, resenting new immigrants looking for jobs. But don't blame the powerless immigrants who are desperately looking for a living wage somewhere, anywhere, in the world.

In this capitalist world of ours where everybody is encouraged to improve their

standards of living as *the* goal in life, it's not just those desperate people in the third world who are on the move. Some years ago we were told that many of our top scientists, doctors, nurses, not to mention top industrial managers, were all emigrating to the United States or to the oil-rich Middle East countries because they could get more money. At the time this was called the 'brain drain' but fortunately for us we had all those coloured doctors and nurses and the small business entrepreneurs with the name Patel who took over the newsagents shops and cafés. A brain-and-brawn drain the other way.

For those who imagine the 'brain drain' is all one way, *The Guardian's* excellent EG supplement (19th November) provides sobering statistics. In 1989 United Kingdom emigration was 250,000, whereas immigration was 205,000. So 45,000 more people left this country than came to it. So what are Kenneth Baker and the racists belly-aching about?

But have no illusions, dear reader, so far as the Opposition is concerned. In 1962 the Tory government introduced the Commonwealth Immigrants Act which affected all but a handful of British subjects who had not been born in this country. As a result work permits closely tied to the skills needed here were to be required for entry. The Labour opposition at the time opposed the Act, just as they are now opposing the Asylum Bill. But once they were back in office (1964-70) they passed even more restrictive measures, such as the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (and thinking about the 'guillotines' over the present Community Tax, that Act in 1968 was *pushed through in three days!*) which deprived East African Asians of their previous right as British passport holders to enter Britain freely, in spite of the fact that they were being expelled from their home countries.

So expect nothing from governments, and the opposition hasn't the power anyway!

Be tough with the squatters and "clear away those sleeping rough" says Bernard Ingham

As well as being tough on 'economic asylum seekers' our grinning Home Secretary is also proposing to get tough with squatters. The evil of squatting, he told Parliament recently, is never defensible. There are said to be 50,000 squatters in this country, most of them in London. The concern of the Home Office is that occupation of

properties by squatters deprives the 'dispossessed owners' of their rights.

A large proportion of the occupied properties are in fact public housing unfit for letting. A South London housing solicitor, John MacNulty, has pointed out that "no one is being dispossessed when squatters move into properties no one wants to live in". For instance, in one derelict estate in Southwark there has been an 80% refusal rate by prospective tenants.

Surely 'getting tough' with the squatters will automatically add to the homeless and the number sleeping rough in the streets of London and other cities.

However, the attack is not to be limited to the squatters. A confidential report prepared for the Westminster City Council by no less a personage than Mrs Thatcher's former Press Secretary when she was Prime Minister, Sir Bernard Ingham (which naturally was leaked), advises the council that they have to address "the moral blackmail and increasing menace of beggars" and "to end the blot on the domestic and tourist landscape" of the homeless sleeping rough. Business is uppermost in Sir Bernard's twisted mind. No mention of what will be done to the beggars and those sleeping rough as they are swept off our city centres. Needless to say, he also has strong ideas about refugees: "Britain's accommodating laws and social security benefits invite abuse". Britain, he says, and without much evidence, "is the traditional home of the lost dogs of the world ... and cannot continue to allow itself to be exploited".

Exploited indeed! For a couple of centuries Britain bled dry half the world's people and now, when a few thousand of them seek asylum if only to raise their standards of living, these overfed privileged parasites lead the patriotic crusade against these 'invaders' and 'exploiters' of our renowned generosity. What hypocrisy!

Returning the land to the people

An elderly couple, Irving and Arlene Crandall in Westerley, Rhode Island, owned some 350 acres valued at \$1.37 million which their ancestors way back in 1659 had acquired from the Narragansett Indians "for a few beads and trinkets", according to the report in front of us. Be that as it may (it sounds too good to be true!), more than 300 years later the Crandalls have returned those 350 acres to the Narragansett Indians who have undertaken to pay the tax arrears of \$11,000 as well as drafting an agreement with the Crandalls whereby they and any heirs if they so wish may live on the homestead for life.

Apart from their problem with the arrears of taxes, the Crandalls feared that if the authorities were to have put the property up for sale the new owners might have wanted it for development. To quote Mrs Crandall: "The Indians are the only people we thought gave a damn about the land. And because they get federal protection nobody, not the town or the state, will be able to do anything now".

John Brown, a tribal council member, said that the state's 2,000 Narragansetts were overwhelmed by the Crandall's generosity. "The whole thing kind of renewed my faith in mankind. It has now come full circle. My people gave this land to the original Crandalls as a gesture of goodwill and now it has been returned to us in the same spirit." This is good news which more well-meaning people in this country with the means should take to heart, for we will never change society so long as private ownership of the land persists, and as is the case in this, is being concentrated in ever fewer hands.

Money talks in politics

The notorious Tesco-heiress and one-time leader of Westminster Council 'raised' to the Lords by Thatcher who was involved in selling off a number of cemeteries with adjoining land to developers for 5p, is back in the news and perhaps this time she will not get away with it.

Dame Shirley Porter "illegally channelled more than £100,000 through a charity to a political campaign to re-elect Westminster's ruling Conservative group" according to *The Observer's* home affairs correspondent (17th November).

The charity, described by him as bogus, had the engaging title of Foundation for Business Responsibilities. The director and founder in 1972 is one Michael Ivens, who is the head of another reactionary group Aims of Industry. The charity was first used in a political campaign against the Greater London Council and financial supporters included the multi-millionaire Gerald Ronson, recently released from prison in connection with the Guinness financial scandal, Lord Forte, Lord Taylor of the Civil Engineering Contractors, and Lord Haslam formerly chairman of Tate & Lyle and now head of British Coal. In return for their money they were promised a meeting with Thatcher at 10 Downing Street.

Another dubious transaction involving the Dame in connection with the 1990 local elections and which is being investigated by

the District Auditor is Westminster's 'designated sales' policy, whereby council homes falling vacant were sold in a bid to attract home-owning Tory voters in marginal wards.

In her campaign against the GLC in 1984, the Dame sent out appeals for funds for another organisation (another charity) set up by her with the title Efficiency in Local Government Ltd. It was launched with a begging letter to top businessmen promising them a meeting with Thatcher but at a price. "I hope you will forgive me for being blunt and saying that I very much hope you ... will support us with a sum of at least four figures", she added — and so that they would not have to make the donations from their own pockets, the organisation would not be 'party political' and so there would be no need for donors to declare contributions in their annual accounts!

Apparently *The Observer* obtained documents revealing who many of the Dame's donors were. Apart from those already mentioned earlier, the Duke of Westminster donated £5,000, Hovis, Brooke Bond, Dewhurst, Whitbread and Grand Metropolitan all stumped up with £1,000.

In the local elections of 1990 the high-powered campaign financed through these bogus charities produced startling results. The majority of four on the council rose dramatically to thirty.

Wandsworth Against the Poll Tax: more non-payers summonsed than voted Conservative

After over one year of continuing court cases, and nineteen months after the first poll tax payments became due in April 1990, more people have now been summonsed for non-payment in Wandsworth than voted for the Tories in the last local elections in May 1990. That was when Wandsworth Tories, with the help of central Government, set the lowest poll tax in the country, thereby bribing the voters to support them and their now transparently adventurous low poll tax. Yet despite that vote, more and more people have now understood how unfair the poll tax is, as shown by the almost one in three people (31%) of the Wandsworth poll tax register who have had to be summonsed for their arrears.

With their bullish and blinkered behaviour Wandsworth Tories, led by Paul Beresford, helped to discredit Mrs Thatcher and her 'state of the art' poll tax legislation. What they have shown so conclusively in Wandsworth, with their attempts to force people to pay what they can't or won't pay, is that even the manipulated lowest poll tax is impossible to collect.

It is quite clear the issue of the poll tax is not dead: with over 57,000 people already

summonsed, and more in the pipeline, and nearly 30,000 liability orders issued, bailiffs' action emasculated and now over 160 people threatened with committal (to prison) warrants, it is clear that not even the lowest poll tax can be collected without immense costs and hardship to people already under enormous financial and emotional strain.

Ernest Rodker, WAPT (Wandsworth Against the Poll Tax) secretary said: "It's thanks to Tories like Paul Beresford, who have been so obdurate and unable to appreciate just how unfair and unmanageable the poll tax is, that have helped to achieve the destruction of just what they most cherished and wished to preserve". He added, "It's time the council stopped hounding and threatening the people who are least able to pay the tax for 1990-91, dropped their liability orders and accepted the poll tax is going".

WAPT is now waiting to see what the replacement council tax will be like, but with many of the flaws of the poll tax retained in this new tax it looks likely that, if it is ever implemented, the council tax is destined to get a very rough ride.

Ernest Rodker

Report on

The Independent Anti Poll Tax Conference

About ninety activists came to Manchester exactly a week after 2,000 marched in London to call for a poll tax amnesty. The aims of the conference were broader, providing activists with a chance to air their views on the future, and hopefully to foster communications between groups.

After initially experiencing some cognitive dissonance over meeting in a Victorian gothic banqueting hall, I observed the meeting settling down to its ponderous bureaucratic format of holding votes on who should chair the meeting and how long the lunch break ought to be.

Good speeches were made by Saroosh, the former poll tax prisoner, and Norman Laws, who described himself as "the delegate from Durham jail". Many people hoped that the anti poll tax movement would stand candidates in elections, Stormin' Norman among them, advocating this as a way of hitting back at Kinnock. But why define ourselves in reaction to another group? A better idea would be to build up ourselves, and to build our autonomy.

This issue was also felt in the talk about generalising the campaign to other issues of debt, particularly by Scottish delegates. This is logical in that the poll tax is a single issue, and will die with its repeal. Generalisation offers a route towards harnessing that solidarity and power which some people have found through the ongoing poll tax conflict.

Workshops were held on such things as prison support, legal matters, anti cuts, and bailiffs. The two I attended were well put together and informative, with plenty of input from the floor.

The strength of the poll tax movement is demonstrated by the ending of the poll tax and the demise of Thatcher. Its weakness is shown by the continued jailings and the paucity of groups attending this conference.

It seems that many groups have folded, and that the masses are no longer involved in the campaigns. This may be due to the perception that it is all over — but it isn't. According to government figures, non-payment continues to grow and yet, strangely enough, the campaign seems to be at a low ebb. Perhaps the campaign is no longer relevant, in the light of this widening revolt. As anarchists perhaps we should be pleased that authority is being by-passed like this, and made ineffective.

This being said, it seems a pity that large numbers of people no longer protest at the courts, and that the best that the independent movement could muster was 2,000 in Trafalgar Square on 19th October and less than 100 activists at a national conference. Whatever the problems with the public, part of the fault also lies with the plodding dullness of the anti poll tax movement itself.

We are entering a new phase in the conflict, and we need therefore to have a re-think, we need new ideas and a more effective use of our resources. In so far as we have been successful, we need to capitalise on that and move forward, but as far as I could see, this conference did not offer this, instead it seemed to be a rehash of what went before, which was a pity.

Stephen Booth

Ruling class steps up counter-offensive

In recent weeks we have been given notice of a number of projected Tory responses to working class initiatives in several areas. Firstly there has been talk of some kind of ban on squatting. Even left wing elements of the state (or state-in-waiting) find this plan over the top. Not only will it mean even more people sleeping on the streets, but without squatters to maintain empty houses these buildings will fall into disrepair (damage to properties by squatters can be dealt with under existing legislation, said a Labour spokesperson). Quite understandably, the Tories prefer rotting buildings and homelessness to people taking control of their lives outside the official channels. Secondly, the government simply could not tolerate the highly publicised 'fashion' for joy riding, ram raiding and other motoring offences committed by young people, which the popular press originally linked with rioting but now associate with the deaths of children. However, the Tories have had problems framing a law against these motoring offences. Finally, the Queen's speech warned us of the government's intentions to curb prison riots by introducing an offence of 'prison mutiny'.

Meanwhile, the effects of the more general backlash that began under Thatcher continue to be felt. The free market, anti-intellectual, anti-liberal ideology is enthusiastically maintained by Kenneth Clark, at the same

time as more places are being made available in higher education, so resources and students' standards of living decline. In the last year students have had all their housing benefit taken away, are no longer entitled to income support during the vacation, and are offered government loans which actually turn out to be more expensive than bank loans. The South East Areas National Union of Students called a demonstration for 6th November in Brighton to protest. Although students from the polytechnic (soon to be renamed 'Brighton University') had a strike and occupation to publicise the demo, the response from other local students was pretty pathetic for a town with such a huge student population. Of the 300 or so marchers, I saw hardly any from Sussex University; many more were from other counties.

And on the poll tax front, the ambitious attack on us that backfired, we are seeing the first income support arrestments of non-payers here in Brighton. Across the country, about 60,000 people have had money docked from their dole. Although no more than £3 can be taken a week, income support is only about £30 and is meant to be the bare minimum you need to live on. The way to sabotage this is quite simple, however: anyone who has had, or is about to have, money docked for poll tax non-payment should appeal to the DSS.

Johnny Yen

Famous headbangers of our time

After a five-year stint of political commentary, a task undertaken perhaps out of the goodness of his wallet, *Sunday Times* columnist Robert Harris complains "what a wretched and embarrassing institution the House of Commons has become" (*Sunday Times*, 3rd November). "We have reached the fag-end of one of the worst Parliaments in recent history", opines Robert, "the less that divides the two front benches in terms of policy, the more shrill and vituperative they have become, the more dirt they have started to fling".

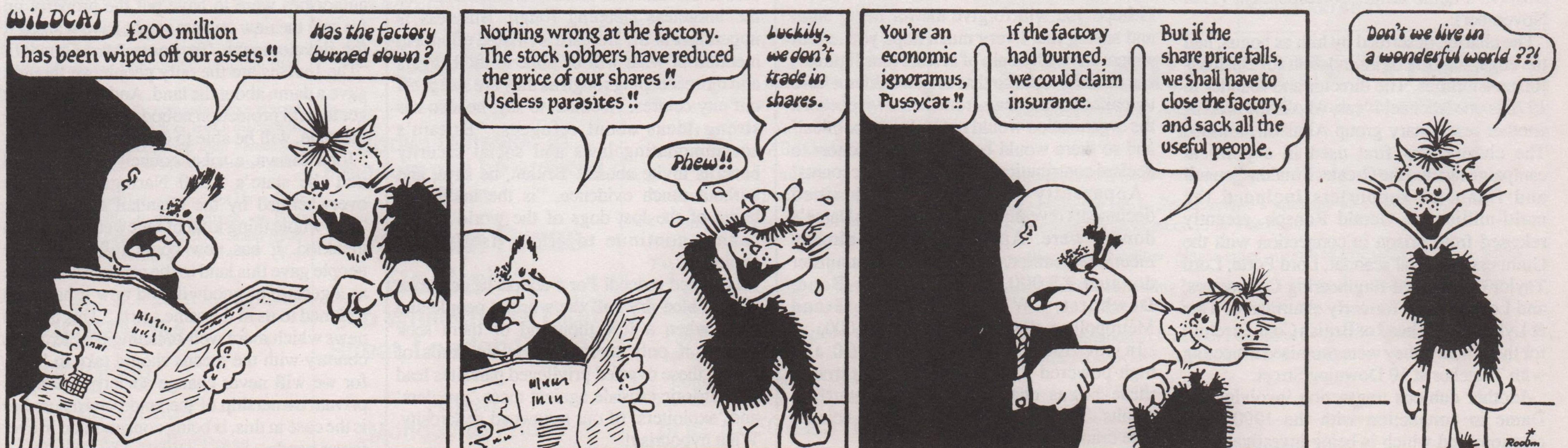
The remarkable thing in those utterances is that Harris implies that Parliament has seen better days, that it used to be, in some mysterious respect, a vehicle for genuine democratic discussion and legislation. However, the reality is that Parliament has always been a means by which the rich and powerful have successfully fooled the

majority into believing that it represents their views and aspirations.

The Labour leadership, for instance, pretends to represent the poor and disadvantaged, but the price demanded by our real rulers for Labour's chance of office is now very plain to see — the scrapping of the Socialist Clauses, rehabilitation of nuclear weapons, expulsions of Militant supporters, etc., and the recent declaration by Kinnock that when (if) he becomes Prime Minister, the obligations of government will mean that he and his Cabinet will assume *carte blanche* rights to take decisions irrespective of the wishes of MPs or anyone else. Hitler never had it better despite polling over twice as many votes as Thatcher ever did.

In a letter to *The Guardian*, Labour MPs Alice Mahon and Dawn Primarolo, in

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Seven year olds strike back at the system

curriculum test results for comparison and those fine refuges for mediocrity, standards for everything. Much of this is sold to us by cynics in the name of democracy and the freedom to know. Just what it has to do with learning is unclear but my, how the paper will fly.

These 'advances' in education make good sense in a society which equates democracy with the occasional act of putting crosses in boxes; learning with putting ticks in the right boxes and wealth creation with pushing buttons and putting marks in any box. In the bad old days people who couldn't read or write signed their names with ticks and crosses. These days, provided you can put your mark in the right box, this skill can represent a pinnacle in personal achievement. Some progress!

There are a few points about literacy and numeracy which make their elevated place in our public consideration open to question.

Our educational system is founded on the God of Abstraction. The triumph of reason, which gives to us the cult of the free standing fact, is based on three assumptions. Every serious question has but one answer. This answer is obtained by rational processes. It holds in all places and at all times. Assumptions are neither right nor wrong. They either work for us or they don't. This outlook is fine for the programmed machine and those who live off it. It also denies the relational and is incompatible with a holistic, ecological view of life. Industrial society and the state may be stuck with these assumptions, people need not be, a sustainable social order cannot be.

Numeracy and literacy are central to the maintenance and extension of the powers of the corporate state and all central authorities. Those who wish to see power devolved to the regions and to people themselves, which according to box-ticking surveys is what most

people want, must recognise that an education which equates learning with verbal and numerical fluency does not help this cause.

Those who seek to merge education and employment totally do not acknowledge the inability of employment to provide jobs, any kind of jobs, for those who want them. Nor do they acknowledge the tenuous link between new employment based on numeracy and literacy and the creation of wealth. However, those engaged in such employment have a good idea of what it is like to be a caged gerbil on a treadmill. Maybe that's where some seven year olds get their ideas too.

The employment and education wished upon every able citizen by agents of the State are incompatible with democratic ideals like independence, equality and freedom of speech and movement. The primary status of the person in education and employment is that of prisoner, servant or wage slave, not master or master in the making, as every kid and mortgage owner knows.

Sure we may need more skills in appreciating and making literature and mathematics, but my guess is wise kids not dumb kids are resisting the excesses of numeracy and literacy.

Denis Pym

The result of a recent survey conducted by the government among seven year olds shows in seven unable to read and one in three unable to count. This 'disaster' deserves more thought than the quick and easy condemnation of kids, teachers, teaching methods and schools by experts, press and members of the government.

How serious is it really that a person is unable to read and write at seven? Might it not be something to welcome, a sign of lingering innocence or even that kids are not as easily brainwashed as we think. Schools today are inundated with 'educational aids' processing and presenting words and numbers. The teacher as bureaucrat has at his or her disposal an arsenal of tools to eradicate any risk of spontaneous learning. The failure of a sizeable fraction of children to embrace the abstraction of everything and the bureaucratisation of life as wholeheartedly as those in power wish, ought to be viewed as a small victory for humanity as well as a thorn in the side of control.

Anybody who bothers to go to school or read the daily papers will know the purpose of education is assessment. The task, if we play the game, is to get the right assessment not the wrong one. We are now faced in our schooling with the wonderful possibilities of continuous assessment of pupils' work by teachers, heads and kids, exam passes as a measure of school success, truancy rates as a measure of a school's failure, frequent written reports for parents about their offspring, national

Headbangers

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commenting unfavourably on John Major's newly-found feminist ideas, declare that while appearing to be nice he is "a two-faced, double dealing selfish cynical man" whose "fine words are just empty rhetoric" (we can only wonder what their opinion of Neil Kinnock might be). Now, it may be recalled that those two ladies were among the six female Labour MPs to oppose unconditionally the Desert Storm obsequy, but were rendered impotent by procedures in Parliament and Labour Party headquarters designed to stifle debate on the issue.

So we have a dissatisfied political commentator and two disgruntled MPs who, no doubt, will continue to go on banging their heads against a brick wall. If they did it without getting paid for it, they would end up in a different institution along with other headbangers. Presumably the two ladies read *The Guardian*, since they write letters to it, and must have seen the articles by Richard Norton, one of which, commenting on the Gulf war back in February, gave an insight into the way a "small group of senior officials and top brass" would have briefed Tom King and Sir David Craig, chief of defence staff, who would have briefed the War Cabinet, who would pass selective information to Neil Kinnock and Paddy Ashdown on what are called 'Privy Council terms', who then tell their Party members only what Whitehall wish them to know. And Richard, Alice and Dawn are left substantially uninformed and effectively sidelined.

It might seem churlish to suggest that these three headbangers cling to their faith in the constitutional process because it is financially rewarding, but if we are not to question their intelligence, so what else are we to think? Are the alternatives, whether they feel they have to cling to the devil they know?

If I were a clairvoyant, I would make it my first concern to get in touch with erstwhile headbangers like Fenner Brockway and Eric Heffer and get their final conclusions on the matter.

EFC

The Economy

Through the summer, *Freedom* said sufficiently often that it felt it necessary to apologise for repetition that the economy would continue to get worse; that therefore the Tories would not risk an election this autumn/winter. It published my (moderately) dissenting view that the economy's decline would accelerate in November and that therefore — if the Tories were as intelligent as they're crooked — they would hold an election in the early autumn, which would put labour in in time to take the blame for the real slump.

In this *Freedom* (which does not make the far-reaching claims to economic sagacity usual either from some of its rivals on the left, or from the 'City experts' of the National Press) would appear to have been uniquely prescient. Why? The question is not why did *Freedom* writers understand that the slump would continue, and get worse — that required at most a nodding acquaintance with Keynesian economic theory — but why did other writers (both those who were committed to economic determinism and those who write for people who think the amassing of large quantities of money admirable) fail to predict this?

Keynesianism could easily explain why a slump was impending; why, for instance, the end of the Cold War and thus the end of the ever-increasing spiral of expenditure on arms (the only form of Keynesian subsidy of which Thatcherites approve) would inevitably lead to economic difficulties; why at a time of high unemployment and numerous bankruptcies the idea of a 'consumer-led' boom leading out of recession, so beloved of the Tory spokesmen, was an absurdity. But nothing in Keynes explains the deliberate blindness of economic writers.

Keynesian economics were, after the war, regarded as unassailable truth — so much so that when, in 1952 at college, I bought a copy of a book of Hayek's (on the old fashioned belief that one should know what people are saying before announcing that they are talking nonsense) this was taken as proof of the old Liberal myth that the political left-right division was circular and that the far left and the far right were identical. Thirty years later Keynesian ideas were regarded as economic illiteracy and Hayek's disciples ruled the roost in economic academia. The Marxists were busy clamouring that Marx too was a monetarist.

Anarchists share marxist Marxist in the impact of wealth on power to make it obvious that those who stand to 'get rich quick' from the take over and assets stripping economy will have an interest in arguing that the market solves all ills. It is easy to see that as power is generally in the hands of the wealthy, and as the wealthy-powerful are in a position to determine which academics (particularly but by no means exclusively economists) rise to positions of eminence; it is hardly surprising that economic (as also psychological, anthropological, sociological ...) theories that justify the behaviour of these wealthy tend to dominate.

But there was an exception after the war. The

impact of the '30s slump and the horrors of the war so weakened traditional capitalism that it was glad to find a collective form. It took and transformed the proposals of the reformist opponents to capitalism. It had been told by its generals that the cannon-fodder in the war was of insufficient quality, unhealthy and often illiterate, and here were reformers saying we needed a universal health and educational service. It had found certain long established industries, transport and communications, fuel and power, could not work profitably, but they were essential to the profitability of other industries. It was possible under the guise of nationalism to subsidise this economic infrastructure and so allow other industries to prosper. So the dominant forces within

Crash!

capitalism took on a Keynesian-reformist flavour, relegating the remaining traditional *laissez faire*-ists to a secondary role.

However, the mass injection of money ('compensation' for nationalised industries paid at inflated rates and, though often industries that had not for decades paid any dividends, were bought at high valuations, the recipients of this were not content with the 3% they would get from the government bonds they were given as compensation) led to a flurry of speculation on the Stock Exchange. So while in the '40s and '50s Keynesian economics prevailed as the academic orthodoxy that underlay normal business a new 'elite' of financiers arose. Though they bought and sold businesses wholesale, at first this had very little impact on the actual economy — workers still produced, managers still pretended to run the factories, government anyway regulated by fiscal control what was produced, salesmen still sold the goods — most people didn't know who owned the firms in which they worked and most financiers couldn't have told you with any clear idea what

exactly their firms produced, where or how.

There were a lot of perks. Firms like to have money in hand for emergencies, most had undeclared assets, and it was easy to make quick gains. So this 'elite' which in its origins, though stemming from traditional capitalist roots, was not directly part of capitalism (as Marx or Bakunin would have understood it) since the financiers did not exist to find capital for new industrial enterprises, or for any other similar purpose (its role was no different from that of the Mafia, demanding protection money from shopkeepers and others, i.e. it was in Marxist terms not an exploiting class so much as a parasitism on the ruling class) was able to re-invigorate the remnant of traditional *laissez faire*-ist capitalism, and this was able in the result to regain the dominant position.

This restoration of an older economic power is not a new phenomenon. In the years after the Great Reform Bill it was assumed that the land-owning and mercantilist classes had permanently lost their power and that domination had been assumed by the new factory owners. But the railway boom and the growth of foreign trade that followed led to a resurgence of the old elite, and in the 1850s the Tories were generally in power, there was a return to older academic orthodoxies, and it must have seemed that the capitalist power of the '40s had been exceptional, that industry was once again just the hand-maid of mercantilism.

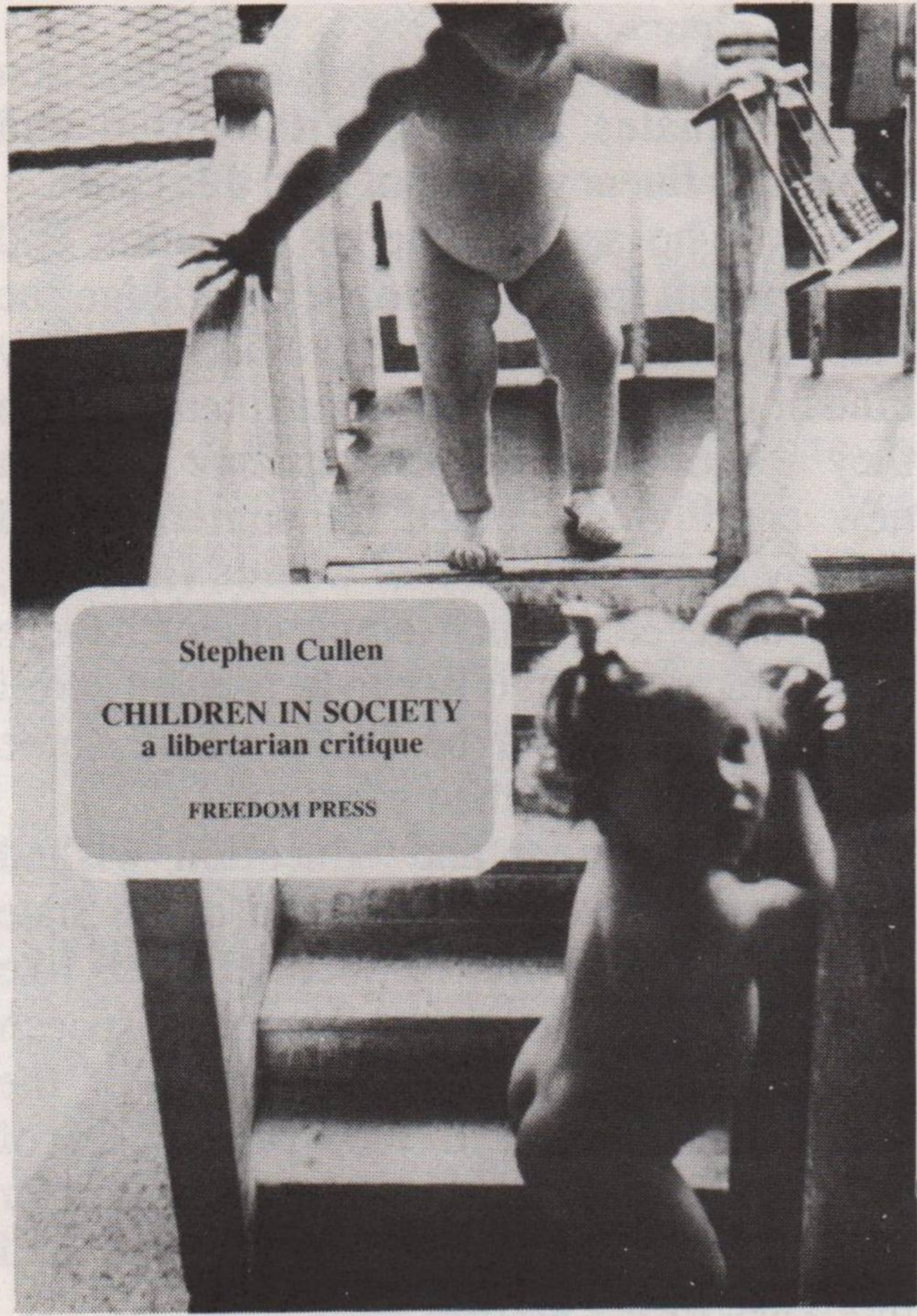
So one can see why the 'economic experts' did not see why the present slump was inevitable. It may be harder to explain why the Marxist groups, often groups which have predicted slumps in every decade since the '40s, have played down the significance of the current recession. They have seen Keynesianism as an alternative radical theory to Marxism (rather than as an attempt to bolster up the ruling system) which ought to be analysed with the same care as every other such attempt, and have therefore refused to acknowledge that there are worthwhile insights within Keynes, provided that they are seen for what they are, and their limitations are acknowledged.

Laurens Otter

The manipulators of technology are the new Pizarros; the directors of the multi-nationals are the new rulers of the world — nice men with gentle manners, some of them, connoisseurs of wine, modern art, beautiful women, the latest jet set hideaway. They are the honoured men, sharing the admiration of the world with the politicians whom they have bought off and who serve them. They live straight, hard-working, fanatically focused lives and for the most part operate squarely within the morality that we have constructed to control them. There is no law that says it is immoral to overwhelm an agrarian culture with a technological one; to trade with Brazilian Indians, cut roads

through the jungles, teach them about sin and guilt. The cutting down of the Amazon forest will be conducted in a most legal manner (the bastards will change the laws if necessary to make it legal) and the people who do it will be honest, dedicated to progress, in love with the idea of a modern world. These guys may own the world, but they don't control it: they are puppets caught up and driven ahead by the cresting wave of an incredible science that is way past their power to control: they are puppets blind to the consequences of their actions, alive only to the big chance. They are bastards, these sober-suited Pizarros, who are going to kill us all.

Moritz Thomsen, *The Saddest Pleasure*



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

"The child is the father or the mother of man." Everyone is familiar with this old adage — yet in a lucid and concise booklet, Stephen Cullen had sadly revealed that it is not so. Once the Emperor's nakedness was the discovery made by a child; today the adults will conspire to prevent him from proclaiming this truth. Thus, they do children the greatest violence of all:

Children in Society

denying them the right to doubt and question.

In each of the four chapters, opposing children to school, parents, health and markets, he explains how, through coercion and conformity, we have reversed the natural order to create an artificial, manipulative world. Everywhere the adult systems rule over children who are safely muzzled and locked up. This sad state of affairs is our own creation. Through the stress and tensions of life, we forget our own childhood, reinforcing the hierarchy of authority and oppressions inherited from our parents, perpetrating the vicious circle of dependency — Who will dare? Who will break the circle?

Not the parents who are themselves enslaved by the priorities and demands of the industrial world and therefore claim every right to deny their offspring the essential needs of a carefree childhood and unconditional love. It is far more sensible and reassuring to practice potty training or any other form of control which will be picked up and exploited later on the smooth conveyor belt of the educational factory. Here the tale thickens: enter the child at the gates of school; "is there room for me?" — yes, but regretfully, says the Godmaster, not for you as an individual — you see, the educator's spiritual parent is the method and in our case, the National Curriculum, which will train the minds of tomorrow's passive

employees, turning people into mechanical, interchangeable units.

To relieve the oppression, Cullen draws our attention to health — yet, as in parenting and schooling, the theme of the child's powerlessness is still present in a more complex and insidious manner. The set-up of the food industry aided and abetted by the government contributes to the slow poisoning of their health. It is fitting that the book should end up on the magic of marketing, that bastard

child of the medieval conjurer which tricks all of us, children of greed and self interest, into unquestioning consumers.

We have gone the full circle; children are now adults, savouring the bitter truth that we live in one great market, where the freedom to be yourself and receive unconditional love are in very short supply and most will starve for them. Unless we give our children back this freedom and love, we will never learn from them and never break the vicious circle of deception.

Every reader of *Freedom* who knows a non-reader with children should send him or her Cullen's booklet for Christmas.

Paule Pym

Class War, a decade of disorder

Class War, a decade of disorder
Verso, £7.99*

In 1985 I met a Barclay's Bank cashier who told me her branch staff had cancelled a subscription to *Private Eye* to spend the money on *Class War* instead (Barclay's pays a fixed amount for the purchase of magazines for staff lounges). There was nothing especially anarchistic about the staff of that particular Barclay's branch, but like most people they enjoyed laughing at rudeness about the bosses, provided it was not too shocking. *Class War* filled the bill.

A recent survey of public attitudes, made for

the BBC, found that although 'fuck' is considered improper, it does not actually offend people born since 1945. The word which offends them is 'cunt'. The early *Class War* used 'fuck' a lot, but never 'cunt'. It celebrates hospitalised coppers, and calls on readers to string up the Royal Family and shit on the rich, but is careful not to offend religious susceptibilities.

Mrs Grundy and her kind would be terribly shocked. *Class War's* intended audience, the disaffected young, can enjoy the thought of Mrs Grundy's shock without being in the least offended themselves.

So can youngish bank staffs. *Class War* has something of the appeal of the rude comic *Viz* and its circulation, while nowhere near as high as *Viz*, is some ten times as high as any other anarchist paper. High enough for a commercial publisher to bring out a *Class War* book for Christmas.

This is a book of extracts from the paper, not 'cleaned up' in any way. There are some added cartoons from *Breaking Free*** but the only alteration to the original text is that the

(continued on page 6)

Food for Thought ... and Action

Recent additions to the Freedom Press Bookshop stock.

Statism and Anarchy by Michael Bakunin, translated and edited by Marshall Shatz, Cambridge University Press. The first English translation of Bakunin's last work, wherein he assails the Marxist alternative to the European state system of 1873, predicting that a "dictatorship of the proletariat" will in fact be a dictatorship over the proletariat and will produce a new class of socialist rulers. Bakunin outlines his alternative vision of an anarchist society and identifies the social forces he believes will achieve an anarchist revolution. Reviewed in the last issue of *Freedom*. 243 pages, £9.95.

Above the Law and Behind Closed Gates: the nomination of Robert Gates to Director of the CIA by Murray Waas, Open Magazine Pamphlet Series, number 11. A timely exposé of the activities of Gates, the CIA and the National Security Agency, and the implications of Gates' association with them for civil rights in the USA. A5 pamphlet, 17 pages, £2.50.

Solidarity: a journal of libertarian socialism* number 28/29 double issue, autumn. In this issue 'Breathing Light into the Middle East' by Noam Chomsky, 'New World Chaos' by Milan Rai, and 'Ruthless Cuckoos in the Dovecot' by Henry Worthington on the politics of the anti Gulf war movement. Also a review of the Randle and Pottle book *The Blake Escape*. 24 pages, £1.95.

Class War: 50th issue special by Class War Federation. Designed like *The Sun* but funnier and with photographs of riot-damaged cops instead of tits on page three. 24 pages, 50p.

Russian Literature: ideals and realities* by Peter Kropotkin with introduction by George Woodcock, Black Rose Books. First published in 1905, this book covers the explosion of original writing in Russia in the nineteenth century which led to critics trying to relate the creativity of the great novelists to current political and social trends. Kropotkin mentions over 100 writers and holds that Russian literature occupies a unique position because it is the only way of reflecting the real currents of intellectual development and of underground political opinion. An interesting time to re-issue this book. 385 pages, £11.50.

TASM: Britain's new air-launched nuclear missile by Chris Cole and Milan Rai, British Aerospace Campaign. Isn't it nice to know that the USA is keen to help the ex-USSR with its problems of feeding its people by supplying it with more grain than ever before? And that the UK is desperate to supply commercial know-how and food distribution and storage systems? Aren't you relieved to think that peace and harmony reigns at last between East and West? Think again. This informative, well-produced pamphlet shows in great detail how the 'disarmament' of the INF agreement is really re-armament in disguise, how escalation of the (supposedly dead) arms race is masquerading under the nice neutral term 'modernisation'. "Two types of new nuclear air-launched missiles are coming to Britain in the nineties. The US is determined to replace the Cruise and Pershing II missiles lost under the INF Treaty. The British government is also acquiring its own nuclear Tactical Air-To-Surface Missile (TASM). This pamphlet examines the history and implications of this new escalation in the nuclear arms race." A5 pamphlet, 25 pages, £1.50.

The New World Order by Noam Chomsky, Open Magazine Series number 6. "Ten or fifteen years ago the US and England [sic] could not have sent large conventional forces to the Middle East. It was just too dangerous. A conflict might develop into a confrontation with the Russians, and then you're out of luck. You want to attack people who can't fight back, not people who might fight back. That's a law of statecraft. That deterrent is gone and now the US is completely free to use force arbitrarily anywhere it likes." Quickly demolishing the widely-held fiction that during the Cold War it was Soviet, rather than US, obstructionism that blocked all attempts at solving international disputes, Chomsky goes on to show that the United States' consistent and profound antagonism towards international law and the United Nations leads it to veto all UN resolutions which it sees as against its interests, e.g. all those condemning aggression against Panama, Nicaragua, East Timor, the Lebanon, Palestine, Namibia and many others — all committed by the US or its client states. *Don't concern yourself with American platitudes about not rewarding aggression, says Chomsky. Aggression is the name of the game as long as*

it's in US interests, of course. The New World Order is the same mixture as before, only now that even token resistance from the Soviets has collapsed it's likely to get much worse. An excellent pamphlet. A4 landscape, 21 pages, £2.50.

SCUM Manifesto by Valerie Solanas, Phoenix Press. Now reprinted in a better cover. Approx A5 pamphlet, 31 pages, £1.50.

Community, Anarchy and Liberty by Michael Taylor, Cambridge University Press. Price now £9.95.

The Spanish Labyrinth by Gerald Brenan, Canto (CUP). New edition, now down in price from £13.95 to £6.95.

Defending the Earth: a debate between Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman* Black Rose Books. An important and stimulating public encounter between the well-known social ecologist and anarchist, and a co-founder of the *Earth First!* movement. Over the last few years the ecology movement has been torn by bitter divisions. One of the most serious, and certainly the one which has received the most play in the media, has been between the social ecologists and the deep ecologists. In this work two representatives reach a surprising amount of agreement, even though important differences still exist. They must be explored further and resolved. This book points the way forward. Besides being packed with provocative ideas and insights, it is a model of how best to raise difficult political differences within a movement. Excellent stuff. 147 pages, £7.95.

THE BOOKSHOP CHRISTMAS PARTY this year will be on Saturday 21st December from 12 noon until 5pm. Everybody welcome to come and have a drink and a chat with the Freedom Press crew. The shop will be open as usual for your literary needs. Bring a bottle if you can afford one — if not just bring yourself.

KM

Titles distributed by Freedom Press Distributors (marked*) are post-free inland (add 15% towards postage and packing overseas). For other titles please add 10% towards postage and packing inland, 20% overseas. Cheques payable to FREEDOM PRESS please.

'I love you Baby Basil!'

'I love you Baby Basil!'
by Leo Baxendale
Reaper Books, £9.95

As the creator of the Bash Street Kids, Leo Baxendale had an enormous influence on anarchist art. He was also the creator of Little Plum and Minnie the Minx, and is honoured for his prolific invention by comics professionals and collectors. *Beano* annuals, drawn by him in the 1950s, have been sold for hundreds of pounds.

These days, Baxendale draws 'I love you Baby Basil', an unusual strip in the Saturday *Guardian* characterised by repetitive drawing, verbose speech balloons, and surrealist humour. The first year's output (3rd March 1990 to 9th March 1991) is now published in book form, with a ten-thousand word introduction, by Baxendale's own imprint Reaper Books.

The book is intended for collectors, 64 pages of expensive cartridge paper, trimmed to the non-standard size of 170mm along the spine by 276mm, and bound as a hand-sewn hardback. Well worth the price to a collector.

Indeed, the price is too low. If the publisher allowed the usual distributor's discount he would literally make a loss on every book sold, so it is not possible for Freedom Press Bookshop to offer it post free. If you order it by post, please add £1 to the price inland, or £1.50 if ordering from other countries.

DR

Note: Other books by Leo Baxendale, earlier reviewed in *Freedom*, are still available post free. *On Comedy: the Beano and ideology* costs £5.00, *The Encroachment* £5.00, and the 56-page comic book *Thrrp!* (published price £4.95) for only £1.10.

Class War

(continued from page 5)

names of three hospitalised police have been replaced by fictitious names on the advice of the publisher's lawyers.

The capitalist press refers to *Class War's* editors as anarchists, and they do not deny the description, but they no longer mention anarchism in the paper itself. They have whited out the circles which initially surrounded the 'A's in their banner headline. They avoid the word 'anarchism' for the same reason that they avoid the 'c' word — because it might offend the intended audience. Disaffected young people are especially disaffected from school, and 'anarchism' would strike them as a word of offensive, teacherish jargon.

The aim of *Class War* is now stated in its own columns to be "workers' power", the meaning of which term is not discussed. It might be taken to mean the Marxist ideal of 'working class government', or 'dictatorship of the proletariat', and is so taken in some places. In Doncaster, for instance, *Class War* is sold as a supplement to *Socialist Worker*.

The question might be asked whether *Class War*, for all its big circulation, makes a useful contribution to the anarchist struggle. And the answer to that question must be a resounding 'YES'.

Until this year, young people could only learn about anarchism outside of school. Now, anarchism is included in the syllabus for 'A' Level Politics by the London Examinations Board. We learn this from students who have been coming into the Freedom Press Bookshop seeking information. Establishment educationalists would not be taking an interest in anarchism if it were not a topic of public interest, and interest has been generated by the antics of *Class War*. They have attracted an audience for orthodox anarchists like Freedom Press and most others, who make propaganda by explanation.

The young people at whom *Class War* is aimed are averse to stuff like 'A' Levels and explanations. They may find in *Class War* a lesson which is valuable, both to themselves as individuals and to the health of society: that nobody is good enough to push them around. Contempt for bosses and would-be bosses is an essential preliminary for social change in the healthy direction.

DR

*When ordering by post from Freedom Press Bookshop, please add £1.20 inland, £1.60 other countries.

***Breaking Free*, a graphic novel by J. Daniels, £2.00 post free inland, add 20p other countries.

We are of that period of time's history, in relation to mankind's inept control of our environment, when over-production of everything is the norm, but its uses in relation to mankind's well-being is beyond the wit of man except on the printed pages.

Be it fuel, be it food, be it weapons of war, be it our own reproduction, be it words, man produces and weeps to see it rot for in that world of riches that we produce, millions starve, millions go hungry, millions fear to lose the mill-stone of enforced labour and millions fear old age because of our own self-denial.

But of all this only death rides the rails for, with the help of the media for the masses, mass slaughter has become a thing of universal entertainment. Our individual murders are things of realistic soap opera while who dare deny that mass slaughter in a small country viewed nightly on a small television screen makes a fun-packed programme for the six o'clock news. Without those wars in a small country what would one march in protest about or write all those bleeding heart letters to *The Guardian* about, now that the poll tax is no longer deemed protest-worthy. Do I joke, when every public figure will seek the spotlight to weep for me?

The Victorians loved the pageantry of death, be it Little Nell or beloved dying of the squirts with the weeping family dampening the white sheets around the four-poster bed, and all that gorgeous black, and the beards, and the top hats. It is not for nothing that the Royal College of Psychiatrists have called upon the nation to return, in 1991, to the wearing of Victorian black when planting the late departed for, writes Dr Philip Timms a psychiatrist at Guy's Hospital, those of us who are hanging on by grim death to life, a period of black coats, ties or arm bands will help one come to terms with the unfortunate who is being lowered into the hole, and do not forget to tip the grave-diggers.

Abut Bond Street and that art hell-hole that white-faced men call Cork Street, is the Museum of Mankind. It forms the shy making *derrière* of the Royal Academy of Arts strutting its painted tarnished glamour unto Piccadilly, and I have a great affection for the Museum of Mankind for it was the only press viewing that once handed out Canadian char and whiskey to the freeloading Fourth Estate. Its exhibitions are magnificent, but it appears to live in a world of its own in that while every wine-waster can swill the red and the white and name every art gallery in Cork Street, so very few know of the huge Museum of Mankind. For the next eighteen months it is

Death can be fun

holding the Mexican Day of the Dead using the title 'The Skeleton at the Feast' and, in an exhibition echoing to the thundering feet of laughing visiting schoolchildren, one is in rooms whose flat colours out pop the Royal Academy Pop Art exhibition and whose use of brightly coloured supermarket cans and packets give a mystical meaning to Pop Art.

For the first two days of November the souls of the Mexican dead return for a few brief hours to a house that is decorated with the photographs of the dead, flowers, fruit, food and whatever can be afforded by the family, but sensibly among the yellowing blooming *campasuchill* and the smouldering copal incense, the family eat the food. It is claimed that this Day of the Dead goes back beyond pre-Hispanic times, but for myself I have little use for this obsession with the dead. It comes to all living things and there is nothing honourable or noble about that dark and meaningless dark night and neither prayer nor pretence, Holy Father or Karl Marx, will alter the obvious. In that world of bright colours with the little Mexican explaining, through an interpreter, the meanings of the crude photographs of the dead, the Coca Cola cans, the sugar skulls and the garish paper masks, the packets of supermarket foods and the

drapes of white cloth, one knows that as an exhibition it is truly magnificent within its own terms, but as one passed and re-passed the schoolchildren hurrying up and down the stone steps within the Museum one knows that one is in the land of the living and when we join, as we must, the great wasted into that dark night of the eternity of the soul it can only be that everlasting silence and that any social obsession with the dead or death is sad and futile even if, to their credit, it is funded by the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Banco Nacional de Mexico and is offered as an educational programme by Save and Prosper and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Yet it was a sober poppy-wearing Town and his black-veiled frau who I followed to the National Portrait Gallery. It was a slow journey, for nothing makes the love of living more than a happy hour among the memories of the dead, and the Town looked to the left and to the right as we crossed Piccadilly there for the red and the white wine and the innocent faces at the press table. As a survey on portrait in British art from Elizabeth I to the early twentieth century, it was too, too short on the twentieth century, but our King's Road Augustus John got under the ropes knocked off by Orpen, but the seventeenth century daub by John Souch that had me weeping into my wine was that of Sir Thomas at the deathbed of his wife. Here was Thomas in all his social glory with his late wife lying dead in bed and, as a child, at her own feet, and one assumed that the skull upon which Sir Thomas's hand rests is also of his late wife. A trinity of death over which Sir Thomas poses.

Of the exhibition, which is important, it is of little importance that the paintings are no more than the commercial daubs of the period, but indeed it was a day for death, as I said to Mollie who was too shy to ask for a second glass of wine, while the Town's frau stood four square brooding at the three-in-one dead bodies of Sir Thomas's ex-wife.

And while we muse upon death, let me quote Arie J. Kochavi of the University of Haifa in Israel writing on "... major war criminals in the Second World War"

"The question of war crimes policy was not discussed at Teheran. One evening at dinner, however, Stalin said that the German general staff had to be liquidated, and to that end some 50,000 officers should be executed. Churchill responded sharply to these words, saying that parliament and



Death and the Romantic

(continued on page 7)

Anarchism is the belief that government is harmful. This is true, not just of one particular government, a type of government, or a group of governments, but of all government. This is because the relationship of governor and governed is fundamentally flawed.

The relationship between an individual and a political authority is that of slavery. This situation can only happen because people believe in two myths: the one on the part of the individual to justify subordination to a particular system — the *Myth of Democracy* — the lie that the individual has some say over decisions made; and the second myth which declares that the system of command is to be obeyed, that its orders have some sort of compelling force over the will of the individual because of their innate rectitude — the *Myth of the Infallibility of Authority*.

Both of these myths are false. The individual has no say, and authority is frequently wrong in its decisions and therefore not infallible.

Politics is a tool for the control of the many by the few, a disguised method of control by the engineering of, or the manipulation of, the appearance of consent.

We might also consider a third myth — the fact that servants of the state occupy an office and play roles (often wearing archaic costumes) — administrators, policemen, judges. These seek to distance the officer from responsibility for their actions. This is the Myth of Office — a conceptual exercise of abstraction which attempts to remove the state from the particular present choices and deeds made by those in power, and to give them some sort of eternal and distant dimension. The Myth of Office contains elements of the other two, elements of corporate responsibility (democracy) and the

Why I am an Anarchist

supremacy of the state over the individual (infallibility). We might also consider the idea that an officer, a person in power, acts on behalf of the rest. This is the Myth of Representation.

Democracy pre-supposes an identity of interest between the individual and the collective. This is not necessarily the case. Even were an ideal political system to embody democracy and infallibility perfectly, suppose a society allowed all individuals to have an equal part in the decision making process, and for that same society to always make decisions in the interests of that majority, it does not necessarily follow that those decisions will be in the individual's interests.

The two myths, democracy and infallibility, are used to support the subordination of the individual to the political system. Even in the ideal political system where they are perfectly embodied, any decision which we might make to conform in our actions with that political system would not be based upon the infallibility of that political process, nor the equitable distribution of its political power, but would stem from the facts of the issue and the factual matter of the coincidence of our interest with that of the herd.

A political process can never justify its decisions by appeal to itself but only by appeal to matters of fact. But in actual practice, political processes only ever appeal to themselves — the fact of elections taking place, the myth of representation, the infallibility of those wearing robes and

aprons. Even in the ideal democratic process outlined in the previous paragraph, the appeal is primarily to the will of the majority, secondly its infallibility. The facts of the case are only incidental. Those espousing democracy could never indicate where this perfect democratic state exists, and this is because of the inevitable corruption of human relationships involving power.

In real states, questions of justification are settled by the use of force — police, courts, prison, torture, murder. Political power never has to justify itself because it is, according to the Myth of Infallibility, always right. Even Plato, with the passion of his struggle for the truth, sanctions the 'noble lie' as the foundation for his Republic, and the principle that the end justifies the means runs through all political thinking. Might is always right, we are not invited to join a political system out of reasoned arguments, but only at the point of a gun.

Perhaps in this 'reasonable' liberal-democracy we might find ourselves being invited out of our own free will, and arguments might be offered in the attempt to persuade. These arguments centre around the nature of democracy itself. Leaving aside any challenge we might mount to the facticity of the claim to be a democracy (e.g. the manipulation of the mood of the mob by the media) the view that the crowd cannot be wrong is somewhat questionable. The fact that the crowd

(continued on page 7)

THE FACTORY AND BEYOND

Long Dong Discrimination

Dare I describe as female fascists the feminist faithful who, last month, went on a witch-hunt against black judge Clarence Thomas in his application to become an Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court? Or would I be giving fascism a bad name?

Perhaps not! Hitler did claim that his most faithful supporters were women.

At the Senate committee hearing into the Thomas nomination, it was claimed by an ex-workmate (or was it playmate), Anita Hill, that black Judge Thomas had, a decade ago, compared himself favourably with the black porn star Long Dong Silver. Was this a 'joking relationship' or was it 'sexual harassment'? No one can ever be sure!

Yet what happened was that the Senate committee hearings became the focus of a contest between the Afro-American ethnic lobby (polls showed three out of four US blacks supported Thomas) and what Schopenhauer called the 'short-legged race'

— most of the women of America seemed to believe the sexual harassment charges against Thomas.

All this gesticulating by the gender politicians, and promotion of the 'sex war', makes a change from those class war warriors of yesteryear. For anarchists it is interesting to watch how movements, which began as civil rights campaigns and women's liberation struggles in the 1960s, have lost their fragrance as their causes have been taken over by institutions and their members have joined the establishment.

Sham work

It is claimed that Judge Thomas is a man of mediocre talents and that President Bush only nominated him for office because he was a black conservative, and this would embarrass the 'politically correct movement'. Yet notions like affirmative action, quotas and positive discrimination, to use the jargon of the feminists and the 'politically correct', will always tend to promote the mediocre. Better a mediocre judge than a hanging judge!

What sustains the gender politicians and the ethnic power brokers is that there is so much sham labour about in modern society. In the courts, the banks, ministries, universities and offices, there is so much pretended labour that high-flying women and blue-eyed members of ethnic minorities have decided they want a piece of it.

Orwell said that, with a bit of training, he could learn to sweep the streets. But, he said, there was no way he could cope with working down the pit day in and day out. Today's feminists don't demand work in the mines or ploughing the fields. Today's feminist is after the kind of sham labour anybody can do.

It doesn't much matter if you are mediocre

when you are doing sham work like that of a judge or politician. John Major is a failed bus conductor, and Teddy Kennedy, we are told, is a not so bright drunk and public lecher.

No wonder the syndicalists sneer! This country is crying out for craftsmen (to use a sexist term) and in a bit we'll have to go somewhere like India to find someone to build a decent garden wall.

Mind police

The pursuit of boredom, blandness and the castration of language gained force last month

when, at the annual conference of the National Association of Probation Officers, speeches were monitored.

The speech monitors were there to spot the use of racist, sexist, disabilist, heterosexist, ageist and sizeist words and terms used by delegates. Alas, 'bossism' and 'authoritarianism' in talk is not a topic for the suitable study of these experts.

It strikes me that from these speech monitors to Orwell's 'thought police' is but one small step.

Mack the Knife

Government supports pushers

In 1983 the Spanish government (socialist) decriminalised the possession of drugs for personal use while retaining the penalties for dealing — this has gained the trade valuable publicity. An article in *The Sunday Times* (13th October) reports the authorities admitting the presence of over 100,000 addicted to hard drugs in Madrid, a demonstration of 20,000 "from five poor suburbs" demanding stronger action against the pushers, and a teenage gang in Barcelona using chains, iron bars and sticks to beat up addicts (dealers are let alone since they carry guns). The article speaks of drug abuse having moved to the top of the political agenda, and of "a dramatic surge of popular protest against uncontrolled drug trafficking in Spain, where frustration with liberal drug laws has boiled over into violence and angry protests".

Reports of damage caused by drugs need to be read against the historical background. Until early this century opium, cocaine and heroin were on uncontrolled sale (heroin being especially useful in cough mixtures) and although harm undoubtedly resulted, Freud (among others) becoming addicted to cocaine and opium being used to quieten crying babies, nothing occurred to cause widespread public protest.

Drug abuse has become a serious social problem as attempts to end it have

strengthened. These attempts — producing the use of dirty needles, spreading herpes and AIDS — bear responsibility for much of the damage. Prohibition raises the price, making dealing immensely profitable, and this effect grows stronger with every seizure of supplies since greater scarcity brings higher prices.

The Spanish authorities seem to have chosen the worst of all possible worlds, relieving the customers of penalties while maintaining the restrictions on dealing that keep the prices up, stimulating the pushers. Full legalisation would bring the profit margin down towards that now obtained by shopkeepers, leaving the dealers with no more incentive to push heroin than greengrocers have to push cabbage. This would not stop harmful indulgence in drugs, but it would remove one powerful incentive, and in any case the right to go to hell in your own way really is inalienable. The addicts, in the face of all attempts at suppression, are now busily proving this.

Given sufficiently widespread support for the removal of prohibition, government can be expected to comply; it consistently gives way before the big numbers. Unfortunately that support seems unlikely to be forthcoming — the Spanish popular movement, as reported, is demanding more restriction.

George Walford

Death can be fun

(continued from page 6)

the British public would never countenance mass killings like that. Roosevelt broke into the conversation and facetiously suggested a compromise: 49,000. At this point the President's son Elliot expressed enthusiastic support of Stalin's plan and conjectured that the United States Army would support the plan. Furious, Churchill left the room. Stalin, accompanied by Molotov, ran after the British Prime Minister to calm him down, explaining that they had only been joking. Churchill was later to write in his memoirs: 'Although I was not then, and am not now, fully convinced that all was chaff and there was no serious intent lurking behind, I consented to return and the rest of the evening passed pleasantly.'

Arthur Moysse

Why I am an Anarchist

(continued from page 6)

is the crowd tells us nothing about the fitness of the crowd to govern the life of the individual.

One thing I do know, and that is that if nobody else is fit to govern my life, I myself am at least responsible. If I make a mistake then that at least is my fault. If I subordinate my judgement to that of the mob, then that too is my error of judgement. Here we find the disproof of the Myth of Office — funny clothes and the fiction of office cannot absolve the individual from the responsibility for his/her own errors. We cannot submit to the mob and deny our responsibility for our own actions for we have no evidence to enable us to trust the collective judgements of the hundred million *Sun* readers.

The arguments of the liberal-democracies are essentially a belief in the wisdom of the mob, a touching faith in the judgement of the crowd. This in its own way is a type of bullying, shielded in the glow of an emotional and speculative faith in the mass. The majority has decided, so it *must* be all right. It *has* to be right. This is the Myth of Infallibility. This is a dangerous illusion. The mob does not possess a mind. Intelligence can only be present in individuals.

Anarchists refuse to believe in authority. This implies a rejection of democracy and a rejection of obedience. This does not imply that all the decisions made by political processes are automatically wrong, nor that laws which are made and which respect individuals are to be rejected out of hand. Anarchists have to live with others, and co-operate with others regardless of the political methods and motives which may or may not drive other's behaviour.

Some anarchists really reject authority out of selfish egotism. This wilfully ignores the fact that we have to work together to provide ourselves with the necessities of life — food, water, shelter, clothing. This provision has everything to do with human co-operation and little to do with political power. Co-operation and power are mutually exclusive. If we are able to provide ourselves with comforts it is despite, rather than because, of the existence of government, as victims of the collapsing economy are presently discovering to their cost.

Anarchy is optimistic, for it assumes that humanity is

essentially co-operative in its nature. Where this co-operation does not take place it is almost certainly because that humanity has been warped by government.

We have to make a distinction between humanity and political institutions. Humanity aims at the building up of all the human race, without exclusion, and is expressed in science, engineering, architecture, medicine, the arts, literature, music and philosophy (this is by no means an exhaustive list). All of these are of benefit and increase the quality of life.

Political institutions are harmful, anti-human, divisive, parasitic and ultimately aim at the abolition of the human race. The fact of the existence of a nuclear arsenal capable of destroying the human race many times over demonstrates this. Nuclear weapons as symbols of power show the suicide which is inherent in all systems of authority. The existence of the capitalist system and its all-consuming greed is also a threat to all of us, but this is of no concern to the power-hungry nominally in charge of it. A system which starts with the swallowing up of the self is set to end with the abolition of mankind.

The difference between the human and the political is a question of self-realisation. We can find fulfilment in the human methods of expression, whereas in politics there is only the negation of fulfilment, contained within the very principle of subordination itself. With human areas of endeavour we are *invited* to contribute or to draw out, out of friendship and smilingly. Whether we are successful or not depends on us — our ability, or on our application. We can take the human, or leave them as we choose, but with the icy anti-human domain of subjugation which is politics, we are compelled to participate, and the system demands our belief in the network of myths and delusions, and calls for us to join ourselves to particular party lines and submit ourselves to them.

Politics is anti-human because it compels our adherence to certain systems of belief and ideologies. We need only regard the anti-Communist hysteria of America in the 1950s, Stalin's purges, the collectivisation of the Kulaks, the Nazi

genocide of the Jews, or the Thatcher years to see the true nature of political systems. These are not aberrant political systems, but the norm. With increased technology the purges and massacres get worse.

The nature of command and obedience, this non-relationship of power is anti-human in that it demands that we follow its orders without question or appeal. *This* government, right or wrong, without regard to our agreement with its decisions, without regard to the benefit or harm entailed by our compliance. There is no appeal to its dogmatic assertion of its own infallibility, or the right of the 'majority' to oppress the minority.

The difference between the constructive, collective human endeavour of the sciences and the arts, and the destructive, mindless, robotic State is one of friendship and mutual respect versus hatred, harm and mutual negation. We can work together on the basis of freedom, friendship and equality, and this in fact is the way in which most people *do* interact. A family, for example, can only function well on the basis of freedom, equality and friendship. People have this propensity to co-operate, but when compulsion is introduced things start to run unevenly and eventually stop. Freedom and individuality are squashed down, and non-relationships in terms of power breed only conflict.

In so far as the political world has invaded the humanities, they have been damaged. In so far as humanity has invaded the political, it has been undermined. The balance of advantage is always against the human.

Power will ultimately destroy humanity, unless humanity destroys politics first. So anarchists will have none of it. Let us eschew relationships of power and domination. Realise you can never have love by compulsion. Friendship never comes by force, harmony grows not from imbalance. Politics speaks of rights and duties. Rights are the imaginary gifts by the State to signatories of its Social Contract. Duties are the all-consuming acts of extortion which the State commits against its slaves. Anarchists can never be bought, bribed or bullied into believing in these.

Anarchists tend not to speak of rights, instead let us consider *facts*. The *fact* of my autonomy, the *fact* of our abilities to defend ourselves, the *fact* of my power of choice over my own life, the *fact* of the power of the word 'NO'...

Stephen Booth

Griffin on Technology

I

Dear Editors,
Most of the anarchists I know either take their anarchism for granted as though it were part of them or they don't even know they are anarchists. John Griffin, I suspect, is someone who has discovered the views by some logical process. I wouldn't dispute his concern for identifying and using tools and techniques appropriate for a sustainable social order based on libertarian values. The trouble for me is that his thinking fits too comfortably into the very framework he wants us to reject. In the words of John Milton, the risk is that his 'new presbyterianism is but old popery writ large'.

His views on automation and electronics are very much influenced by the ways these are deployed by the state and its institutions. Being a good structuralist he seems to be looking for a blueprint for action, to make choices about tool and technique in advance of circumstance and need. But the idea of appropriate technology is for the use of artefacts to be based on human judgement. He thinks computerisation has liberated people from drudgery because armies of clerks are disappearing when experience ought to tell him this clerical drudgery has just been displaced on to everybody else from

teacher to householder. He writes about "re-absorbing the unemployment into the workforce, increasing leisure, shorter working weeks, the return to a 'modified' traditional factory and multi-skilled autonomous work groups at Volvo". This is the language of what Colin Johnson calls grey thinking, the sort of 'solutions' with which any well meaning businessman looking for profits would agree.

Griffin refers to the apathetic and indifferent employees and unemployed showing no signs of adopting radical measures. But these are the victims of over-schooling and the God of Employment. Why doesn't he look to the system and its victims for answers? Is it because he doesn't have a very high regard for his fellows exercising their own discretion?

A large whack of our wealth, yes even in Western industrialised societies, is created by people outside employment and often in spite of employment. Even around where Griffin lives he will find, if he cares to look, housewives, householders, self-employed and even 'unemployed' people whose informal, co-operative activities and approaches to task offers him insights into what the appropriate use of tool and technique looks like. The search might even humanise his structured anarchism a bit?

Denis Pym

II

Dear Freedom,
I find John Griffin's piece on 'Technology' (16th November 1991) curiously unimaginative of the situation which is likely to develop if/when we ever achieve a libertarian/anarchist society, without first totally destroying our technological potential.

He seems unable to free himself from the indoctrination in the work ethic which is fostered by the vested interests in this 'economy', or to conceive of a situation where individuals and groups could make free choices as to the extent of the use they make of technology to satisfy their needs; or of the very real advantages, for certain tasks, of computer control of machine tools. No skilled lathe-operator can compare with computers for high precision and consistent quality.

Of course, such high precision is not needed for all applications, and I foresee a complex mix of methods of production, to meet both people's needs for the products and the 'job satisfaction' of the producers.

There is a crucial and growing need to conserve resources and minimise pollution, and this must involve community influence on the producers; but advanced technology has great potential for increasing efficiency and reducing waste and pollution in meeting the needs of society, if it is applied to this end.

Float glass is of comparable quality to plate glass, but enormously cheaper (more economical) to produce, and in thinner sheets, but it is essentially a continuous, large-scale process.

I remember reading an article in *Design* magazine in the early '60s in which the author speculated on the potential of automated production lines to 'personalise' complex products such as cars (his example), combining a range of compatible component options to meet different specifications for each order. That this has not happened is not due to any technical problems, but because standardised production combined with massive advertising to persuade enough buyers to choose the end result is (reckoned to be) more profitable; but this approach has obvious advantages in the efficient meeting of social needs.

John also seems to want to prescribe the way work and 'leisure' should be

arranged. I see no need at all for this. The neuroses arising from 'unemployment' are purely a symptom of this sick 'economy' and its work ethic, and would not exist in a co-operative, libertarian society. Indeed, the distinction between 'work' and 'leisure' (though not between work and rest) would become almost non-existent.

John wants "a shorter working week for all". This is nonsense, in the society we are envisaging. The whole concept of 'the working week' would surely disappear for most people — they would work or not according to the needs for their skills, and their inclinations, in negotiation with their co-workers and for varying periods according to their state of health, age, etc. Some of these periods might be far longer than a 'forty-hour week', though on average they would certainly be far shorter.

Brian Leslie

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Dear Friends,
I read with interest the letter written by Donald Room on my views regarding the abolition of money (see *Freedom*, 16th November). However, I feel that I need to reply to the objections that have been raised.

The first point I would like to deal with is that if you have anarchist money you need an anarchist central bank. The idea of anarchists having some sort of banking system is not that unusual and has been suggested before. Both Proudhon and Guillaume looked at this question (for Guillaume's views see *On Building the New Social Order* by James Guillaume included in *Bakunin on Anarchism* edited by Sam Dolgoff, published by Black Rose Books, particularly pages 366-368). A twentieth century example, of course, is the experience of the Spanish anarchists in the Spanish Revolution of 1936-39. Here the anarchists found themselves in a complex mixed political situation and this seems to be what is produced initially in revolutionary situations. The bulk of evidence produced seems to indicate that it was found to be impractical to abolish all money even in areas where anarchists were prevalent. Local and regional currencies were issued and obviously had to be related to some standard of value. In *The Anarchist Collectives* edited by Sam Dolgoff, published by Black Rose Books, there is a section titled 'Economic Structure and Co-ordination' in which the author, Augustin Souchy, talks about the need for banks to help co-ordinate the activities of collectivised enterprises. There was a central bank — 'The Central Labor Bank' — which charged a minimum interest to deal with expenses. Purists who are throwing their hands up in horror at reading this might well need to consider the problems inherent in obtaining raw materials/products and dealing with other countries not

More on Money

undergoing a libertarian revolution at the same time. Like many problems in anarchist theory, they will not go away by ignoring them!

We now come to the question of an 'anarchist police force'. Much anarchist thought on the subject seems to depend on two main points:

1. In the new society the causes of crime/anti-social actions will have nearly all disappeared.
2. Such anti-social activity as does occur the community will be able to deal with so there is no need for a police force.

What then happens is that many anarchists contradict themselves and say there is a need for a citizens/revolutionary militia to protect the population. This militia, of course, acts in a similar manner to a police force and can be a lot more arbitrary in dealing out 'justice'. The problem is the vast majority of people in a mass society feel there is a need for a specialised group of people to deal with the problem of anti-social acts. My own feeling is that even in a revolution with a very high libertarian content, society would create groups that would act like a new police force. The question would be how accountable to the community would they be? Again a study of past revolutions indicates that the old police force is, when abolished, replaced by something that behaves in a similar manner and sometimes in a worse manner. This seems to show that people (even if they call themselves anarchists) usually feel the need, when in a difficult and dangerous situation, to create some sort of organisation with the intention of protecting members of the community.

Donald Room seems to object to attempts to map out the transition process in advance and mentions tyrannies in the

Soviet Union and China being produced by social idealists. I do not find this very convincing as an argument. It seems to doom anarchists to having very little to say about the present day-to-day situation. If we consider the case of the tyranny produced in the Soviet Union, the anarchist/libertarian movement was weak and disorganised, with the exception of a few well known (to us!) groups and individuals (such as Maximoff, Golos Truda, Nabat, Makhno, etc.) with very little to say except generalities about the state and capitalism. This general confusion made them and others victims of leninist groups. I don't know very much about the Chinese anarchist movement, but I suspect it was the same sad story. What is needed is practical constructive ideas in the day-to-day situation as well as just trying to change people's minds. This sets a problem for us — after all, it is comfortable and secure to just repeat dogma.

With regard to the example of Tom Paine that Donald Room quoted, certainly desirable change has occurred but I noticed that the abolition of money was not sought after!

On a more serious note, there is in the late twentieth century a need for anarchists to debate and reconsider their dogmas — abolition of money being one example.

D. Dane

Capitalism — the image of the truth

For the vast majority of people, who are neither powerful men in the state nor shareholders, the question is how should industry be organised so as to serve their interests, as workers and consumers, best. To this we can only answer, not by presenting a blueprint, or a model set of laws designed to hold the right balance between monopoly and 'free enterprise', but by pointing out that all these forms of social institution in which the workers and consumers have no power are bound to be operated to their disadvantage. It seems to be so straightforward to be hardly necessary to repeat, that the only way of getting industry organised so that the wealth is enjoyed by its producers, and that they are not just used as ends to producing someone else's profits, is that the people should take power into their own hands and away from both state and private bosses. This, surely, would be the only worthwhile anti-monopoly action that can be envisaged and one which would need and cause a revolution throughout our society.

PH

(from *Freedom*, 25th February 1961)

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A Structured Anarchism

Dear Editors,
Donald Room (*Freedom* letters, 16th November) is concerned about problems of order in a libertarian society which continues to use money.

At the core of this concern lies confusion about the nature of money. In answer to the question posed by D. Dane, "what can anarchists do about those who want to keep some sort of money?", he replies: "The same as we do about those who want to keep any other oppressive institution: try to change their minds". The flaw here is that money is not an institution. A pile of notes has no subjectivity whatever. Money is a means towards accurate accounting. It is a tool, and like any other tool is open to abuse by would-be abusers. However anarchists propose that the powers of the capitalist abusers be removed, and an egalitarian society created. Remove exploitation/deprivation, and the urge to steal or counterfeit will also be removed, together with the need for the 'anarchist police force', which Donald feels is necessary for a monied anarchist society. There would be a need for a central bank, but some central planning is inevitable: for example, an integrated rail transport network is impossible without it. Readers of *A Structured Anarchism* will find a good deal of discussion about problems of this kind.

Setting aside the fact that the state and the capitalists use their powers to manipulate the market for their own squalid ends, the fact remains that for all its drawbacks, the market system does integrate complex economic activity on a global scale: it does work. If communists are insistent that money must be abolished, then it is for them to demonstrate that moneyless economies can satisfy the needs of a modern society/Mark Shipway, in earlier correspondence, attempted unconvincingly to do just that, but generally the silence here is deafening. Alternatively, communists

might be more open, in clearly advocating a return to a pre-industrial society, as a logical accompaniment to moneyless conditions. History shows that this at least is viable, but it is hardly an attractive proposition.

Donald accepts the need for a transition period en-route to communist-anarchism, but coyly backs away from suggesting what form this might take. I see no reason to resist airing these knotty but important problems and applying serious thought to all libertarian objectives. Call this 'working to a plan' if you must, Donald, but it is unfair to link the debating of these issues with the behaviour of the planners of the socialist tyrannies. In any event, at the end of the day it is the people who will make the real decisions on the ground, when/if the time comes, rather than a small number of committed anarchists worrying about theoretical niceties.

Confusion and evasiveness about what we anarchists actually want inevitably lessens the effectiveness of our propaganda and casts doubt upon our claim to be responsible revolutionaries seeking a just society. It is not enough to parrot ritual attacks on the evils of capitalism, coupled with vague talk of mutual aid, federations, etc. We must be much more positive, more coherent and, dare I say, more honest in our writing and debate before we can hope to extend our influence beyond its present pitiful level. Surely the time to make this effort is now. The collapse of the socialist regimes and the exposure of their cruelties and incompetence has left a lot of disillusioned socialists for us to win over. Anarchism, as the sole bearer of a useful critique of all authoritarian and exploitative systems, is well placed to make progress. That progress will be the more extensive if we can bring anarchism up to date and put more flesh on its uniquely strong bones.

John Griffin

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13th December - General discussion
10th January - 'Radical Islam' (speaker Peter Lumsden)

17th January - General discussion
24th January - 'Anarchism: Ancestor Worship or Blueprint' (speaker Peter Neville)

We are still booking speakers or topics for 1992. The dates free are from 31st January to 20th March and 17th April to 10th July 1992.

If anyone, especially comrades from abroad, would like to give a talk or lead a discussion, please make contact giving their names and proposed subjects and a few alternative dates.

Anyone interested should contact Dave Dane or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (Tel: 081-847 0203).

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