

XOYOS

The Guardians of Law and Order will always defy every law and all order to defend Law and Order.

Christian 35 Natal road,
Anarchist Thornton Heath,
Bulletin CR4. 18QH October
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Monthly Minutes of meetings
Accounts of actions and arguments
News, notes and notices.

Remember the festival of the Blessed Guy, of illuminating and Immortal memory.

The Christian Anarchist group meets normally on the second Saturday of the month. It meets at St Paul's Vicarage, Leopold St., London E.3. The vicarage of St Paul's Bow Common, which church the vicarage adjoins, - at the rear. The church is in Burdett road, near Mile End Tube station.

Meetings are generally at 8.00 PM; before which there is Vespers in the Church, followed by meditations - silent meeting for worship - (note that the Vicarage is usually empty while the service is on, so early arrivals may find noone in.) meetings normally end at 10.00. The September meeting was on the 13, the October the 18th. The November meeting will be on: Nov. 15.
repeat: Nov. 15

Jean Sargeant is being asked to speak on anti-apartheid activity and cricket. That weekend PAX has a conference in London - details c/o Barbara Wall, 57 Ladbroke rd., W.11.

paper by Ian Annett based upon what he said to the meeting of the 18th October

The Tenants' rent struggle - particularly in Poplar-Bow

In November 1967, Horace Cutler, chairman 'extraordinaire' of the G.L.C. housing committee, announced a plan for a series of rent rises which would affect thousands of council flat tenants.

He immediately justified the move, after all, said Cutler, in these areas there is an average rent of £2/14/-, and an average wage of £20. Compared to private rents the rise would be mild. If the tenants could not genuinely afford this, they could get a rent reduction, by application. This he sold to the tenants. That they would buy it, Cutler thought, would be an easy thing, there would of course be minor hostility, but Cutler was no landlord ogre. He said: "There will be no evictions, tenants would however be taken to court for arrears, which they would then have to pay off."

These fictitious claims and pathetic tactics speak for themselves. Atrocities of this nature had never met with effective hostility from working class groups. But almost immediately a very small group of people, among whom were a number of local Labour Party councillors formed the Tenants' Action committee - centred in Hackney.

Using loud speaker announcements they were able to form local groups based on respective estates. A tenant from a block of flats would be its representative. He or she would collect a shilling per week from each tenant which would pay for literature and induce them to attend monthly meetings.

When thousands of tenants joined the local groups - they so did, simply on the basis that they were fighting, so as not to pay a 70% increase. There was no greater principle at hand to the tenants, - they could not afford this new rent. But soon a clear cut policy was given by the committee. When the first part of the increase came in - in October 1968, the tenants would pay their basic rents but would pay no increase. Thus by sheer force of numbers Cutler would have to back down. After all he could not take 40,000 tenants to court for arrears.

The result was amazing, the estimate of original increase "hold-backers" was 30,000 to 40,000.

The first meetings of groups on estates, - usually taking place in a school hall, - were hot and passionate. It was amazing to see how the tenants, with no history of rent struggles, so spontaneously saw through the attempts of Cutler. There were no illusions and the meetings were made lively by stories of how the rent men tried to trick some tenants by adding the rent of a tenant on to the past few weeks to meet arrears, thus using the rent to clear such intentional hold-backs. It seemed that rent men had been briefed on how to trick the rebels, by this, & similar methods.

The first demonstration was a really inspiring affair. It was a march to County Hall, one night in the Winter of 1967, a banquet was taking place in one of the rooms in the hall. The tenants were outside with their banners shouting slogans - a scene reminding one of many a grey picture of Moscow in 1917 in March. The magnificent flow of humorous abuse, poured on the unfortunate guests seemed to show a complete loss of ?inhibition? on the tenants' part.

A further demonstration in Downing St. and another at the home of Anthony Greenwood, were particularly militant. Things went on like this until last June.. One result of course was that the rents were not put up further this year. Tony Greenwood realized that the effects of one such would be disastrous.

What happened in June however, changed everything, lawyers employed by the TAC discovered a flaw in the administration of the increase. It seemed that the GLC ignored a clause in the national Prices' and Incomes' Board Report no. 62 (Apr. 68) which said that the rents could take a yearly rise of 7/6 a week, and that the formal notice to quit (to terminate existing contracts) need not go out, but that the tenants should be advised of their rights. This the GLC failed to do. It is really a small flaw, but it meant that the committee could challenge the increase on legal grounds. Of course even if this is won, Cutler would reintroduce the rise legally. But if they could win a High Court case the tenants would be shown an achievement which would appear to have resulted from their solidarity and strength and this would boost morale in round 2.

Some people think this readjustment of policy was a mistake, that they should have waited until a case of arrears came up in court and then sprung the discovery. Because once the discovery had been announced by the excited TAC, Mr Cutler completely reversed his policy. Realizing his mistake he went all out. He

sent out eviction summonses, the first case of which will take place at Bow County Court on November 3rd.

The new policy of scaring the tenants worked overall. The 40,000 figure which had started to dwindle during the period the TAC had nothing to be terribly active about, after this operation was reduced to 3 to 4 thousand. But this group are, however, extremely positive and militant. To meet the reduction in solidarity the remaining rebels took drastic action. They persuaded unions - including the PO and Dock workers, print unions, vegetable and most market sections of the T&GWU to adopt the policy of coming out when an eviction takes place. Horace Cutler said he would resign if this materialized.

Another action which caused dismay((presumably in GLC quarters L.O.)) was the formation of local flying squads which would be on emergency call to any flat to which court bailiffs came. In my local association, over 100 men turned up to a meeting of the flying squad.

Doug Watts, chairman of the Lansbury Tenants' Association, thinks the scene will be quite simple. Two or three court bailiffs, generally middle-aged, sad characters will turn up to a flat; the woman or man there, will call the neighbours to keep them out - to stall until the flying squad turn up. This will tell the bailiffs to go home and that no evictions will take place.

But local flying squads have faced some tough action - the first involved a private tenant in Hackney, who was evicted, - the flying squad offered their services, and were wholly successful in reinstating her in her flat. The other case was in Beacontree, involving a council tenant. The action was immediate and would have probably been successful, but the whole thing turned out to be a false alarm.

This whole business has had overtones of bureaucracy within it, and involves a distressing prospect of violence; but the defiance displayed, the lack of apathy - even that of those who oppose the struggle - has been both surprising and inspiring.

((The minutes of the discussion of this are given separately.))

Minutes October 18 talk by Ian Annett on rent resistance. The talk was not previously circulated, but in the light of the discussion Ian has asked to be allowed to rewrite it in order to insert in it statistics that he had not readily to hand. So this revised talk with statistics will be given separately - away from the minutes, as if it had been a previously circulated paper.

present: Gresham, Andrew (Frs. Kirkby and King) Frank (Marmoy), Ian and myself (Laurens Otter). An apology from David Poolman, who was at a CNA service in Manchester. Dave has incidentally been circulating petitions - aimed more at creating thought and debate, than of winning signatories - asking the hierarchies of the various church establishments to create more and less bureaucratic clergy. He hopes for debate stemming from this.

Business.

It was decided to give the collection - 12/6 to National Council for Civil Liberties.

Andrew drew the meetings attention to a Church Union article that needed anarchist answer, and Gresham volunteered to write, Andrew will have a second copy later, and will also so do. Also to Peace News wherein Allen Skinner has spoken with disdain about the fact that no Christian has answered his accusations in earlier peace news articles of intellectual dishonesty in the columns of PN. (Perhaps because PN didn't replies, I for one sent one.) And Janette's piece on the St Paul's demo, Andrew felt meritted some answer. Gresham also to answer these. PN also had a very good report by John Ball of the Powell/Huddleston debate, in which Powell had said that you cannot possibly have morals in politics because government is in itself immoral, and stated the christian anarchist case as the reductio ad absurdum of pleas for political morality. Those who had seen the programme confirmed the accuracy of this.

Gresham has had a 'phone call from a new inquirer, and in this connection I mentioned that we had heard from a group in Dublin, who had been impressed by an article on Christian anarchism in Grille.

I have been given a very small hand printing machine - Adana middle sized hand press.

so as we had intended to print the Joannine statement, I have asked Hugh Brock for a "quotation" as to cost of type setting. I would still need to pay ink and paper costs, but having the type set up, would mean that we could afford to print the copies as we needed them, rather than having to try to estimate how many we need. (Short runs cost more.) Moreover this would allow us - if we decide to run to an hard cover (cartridge paper for instance) for LOGOS to have the statement printed thereon. Possibly even if not. The quote came to about £2/15/-, and I was asked to go ahead and the group would try and raise the cash later.

In this context I was ~~xxx~~ asked to give in this LOGOS a rough estimate of costs. The last issue which was a big one - ~~xxxx~~ 26 pp. used up just over a quire of stencils - about 15/-, it is sent out to between 75 and 80 people, and it is useful to have the odd copy in hand for enquiries, and anyway one always has to duplicate extra to allow for faulty take-ups, so say about 100 copies of each page (with extra of the Joannine statement) say rather more than two and an half reams, about 9/- a ream. Throw in ink, 16/- or so a tube about three quarters perhaps less used. Then count in envelopes, staples, meths for the address. Say 26/- for stamps. Its a little short of £4 a time, will be more if we run to a cartridge paper cover, and the woodcut ink when used is rather expensive - though with the cartridge paper should be easier to do well and we might think of selling a few. I get I suppose on average a little over or under a quarter of the costs in subscriptions. If I do a hard cover I will need to get a more efficient stapler than my pocket one, and I will anyway need for the Joannine statement a couple of Adana "Forms" to hold the type - a little less than £2 each; but these will all be my own gains so I shall not charge these, but they will limit the amount I can afford to chip in for the rest.

is not relevant at this point. But I fear I forgot to raise it at the meeting, we need - if we are to print the Joannine statement - a snappy title, or at least something better than Anarchist Christian/Christian Anarchist, - I would like one explaining LOGOS's relevance: - in the beginning was the word given something interpreting LOGOS more nearly in the theory/comprehension/reason/argument sense.

The date of the next meeting was fixed as being November the fifteenth.

The name of the Church Union paper Andrew mentioned is Headway. It was argued there

th t Christians fall into two errors vis a vis politics, either equating one policy with the Kingdom of God, and labelling all oponents of the party as the enemies of the Kingdom, (which was overly to equate parties with policies and aims) or to hold all politics to be evil and have nothing to do with them (which was to equate all politics with power politics since mention had already been made of charities and causes.) It also contained the extraordinary statement that ^{men} we are only equal in the sight of God. Obviously not a very important criterion!

While mentioning cases to be answered today's Observer (19 Oct.) contains a letter attacking radical christians on the basis of the hoary old misconstructions of "Render unto.." "Think not that I came to destroy the law..."

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Ian introduced his talk - given in revised version elsewhere

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discussion:

discussion centred round; how much were the Labour councillors who had launched the resistance staying to face the music now that the struggle was hotting up; how badly support had fallen off and why since Cutler's explanations;

what explanations have been offered;

the militancy of the meetings as Ian saw them, and as Andrew had seen them on the Isle of Dogs;

the position of the Churches - Trevor Huddleston is president of both the Tenants' Association and the British Council of Churches meeting in Gresham's Deanery, but the BCC did not want to be involved in the struggle, - on the Isle of Dogs on the otherhand the clergy were thoroughly involved;

the £900 collected towards legal battles; the law on the police being used as balliffs, and the fact that people are more likely to bow under police pressure;

trickery used by rent collectors, to gain arrears, putting money given them for other purposes towards the increases and then demanding the

money for the other matters again.

flying squads - and the return visits to the homes of bailliffs, - the success of the first action in Hackney, - and of relevance of non-violence, the possibilities of non-violence in these circumstances were thought by most of us to be slight, and all were agreed that whatever the matter & no one wants inefficient violence and that therefore appeals to moderate violence (which would merely lessen the effective violence) would be a mistake unless there was a positive non-violent alternative offered, - nevertheless Andrew felt that there ought to be an immediate role for a non-violent squad to resist evictions, while the rest of us to a greater or lesser degree tended to be sceptical. (I may have misread the balance here, and Andrew may not have been alone in this.)

This is of course in contrast to Squatter possibilities, and brought up the contrast between the two actions and the similarities.

Ian spoke of trends to bureaucracy in the Tenants' Associations, of which others had heard to some extent.

He also spoke of the support the tenants were getting among dockers and the amount of union backing that was already committed.

Wall newspapers & satirical cards to be sent to Cutler, have played significant parts in the struggle.

Andrew wondered whether police are ever council house or flat tenants, and whether there is any hope of their loyalties being divided on such a clear class issue.

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It was agreed that Jean Sargeant should be asked to come and speak to the next meeting.

November 15 - which weekend also sees PAX's Conference.

During the evening, Frank Marmoy came out with the rather nice aphorism:

The Guardians of Law and Order will always defy
every law and all order, in defence of Law and Order.

The 18th was the centenary of St Luke's Church, the other half of Gresham's parish, so before the meeting there had been a mass and celebration of this, which I am ashamed to say I forgot to mention in the last minutes.

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Notes

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Cambridge University Christian Anarchists have just produced a pamphlet of reprints of Christian anarchist articles. Good stuff. Dave Mumford spoke there recently to a meeting of fifty people, Dave Poolman tells me that they take 40 or so Roadrunners.

Dublin now has a group.

The Roadrunner carried an article by G.W. Target about whose "We the crucifiers" I have raved before.

John Morris has recently in his book spoken in adulation of Castro, Ho and Guevara and contemptuously of the respectable radicalism of Ghandi. I seem to remember seeing a similar comment by a prominent member of the "Underground Church" in the USA.

It would seem to be a point about which we ought to have some discussion. I being in the position of typing this am greedily going to have first bash.

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Whatever may be Ghandi's faults - and he was undoubtedly both authoritarian and a kill-joy puritan; he did insist always on mass action. Now of course such insistence can be an excuse for doing nothing. But a case which Libertarian pacifists have argued in advocacy of NVDA is that non-violence cannot be used to coerce a majority.

When therefore civil disobedience starts with an heirarchical movement it must still start with the aim of winning majority support. Contrast this with the advocates of guerrilla warfare. It is clear from any reading of Debray that it is not thought necessary to have mass support before starting a liberation guerilla movement. Nor though the guerilla is held to be a propaganda agency in its own right -(Castro conceives of the guerilla movement as being both an instrument of struggle and also performing the propagandist purpose of the Leninist party)- is it thought necessary to engage in political instruction -

ne cannot hold meetings for fear of reprisals against those who attend, and Debray insists that Castro held no political meetings during his campaign for power.

To give an excuse to the peasants all provisions are to be taken at gun point so everyone can say they didn't give they had it seized. Which is a very good excuse. There is not thought to be any necessity for political discussion among the peasantry - indeed elsewhere Debray attacks Maoists and others in Bolivia who insisted on political education for their guerillas. Great stress is put on the individual - in almost Neitzschean terms - free and unsullied; and contempt for urbanization which destroys even the worker making him bourgeoisified; all of which with the admiration for guerillas - which Marx attacked shows that these Marxists have never read Marx.

So the guerilla is not politically committed necessarily having to be only a good fighter. Has a contempt per se for all mass movements and all worker-masses, believing in the free and unfettered individual in the mountains or forrests.

Contrast this with NVDA. The activists have to work to build a mass movement, but all the time their form of action which does not consist in shooting from behind a rock and then making one's self scarce but from openly opposing the opponent, means a perpetual consideration of tactics, strategy and motives.

Moreover when a non-violent resister, however large the movement to which he belongs, is being battered, kicked in cells, having matches put under his finger nails, sees his wife or girl friend beaten before him, or his child swing against a wall; then brother he is alone and his commitment has to be deep. So NVDA constantly provides new challenges, new demands for deeper and yet deeper commitment.

Why is it that so many middle class Radicals find the guerrillas so fascinating, is it as Marx suggested so long ago, because fundamentally they despise the masses and here are hero forms of action, so like their heroes in the days before they became radical? Does this explain why so many people come into the left, and immediately embrace such an elitist position. Just as the Fabians in their contempt for the workers insisted that the middle class had to lead the benighted millions to the new dawn; do the Hoists, the Castrati so think?

Do churchmen still hanker after the days when they were the "saved" elite apart from the damned and so wish to restrict their revolutionary saints in number?

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More Notes & arguments.

I have heard from two people active in and round the Tenants' Association who were not at the meeting - since the 18th (Only one of them is on our mailing list, and both repeated rumours, which they can't substantiate, and so do not wish to be named.

1. As in Ian's paper the continued strength of the resistance is now down well below 10% .
2. So most of the opportunists are (or have) busily pulling out - as also revolutionary marxist groups - and hard core lefts.
3. That the TAC has largely delegated control to the flying squads & these are controlled by the industrial activist wing of the C.P.,
4. That prominent leaders have privately said they intend to fight on until they win the court case and moral victory, and then when Cutler reenacts the law counsel acceptance and then pull out.

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Comment has been made about the fact that the pledges of industrial action support come from precisely those areas where Powell gets his support; (a) proof that Powell's support is temporary in character and will fade away when it comes to the push unless someone other than Powell - without laissez faire ideas leads it; (b) and that the tenants are far from being all leftists.

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The speech from the Throne embodies what goes on the social democrat Labour Left for a radical policy. Obviously designed to reinspire disillusioned Labour activists for the election, necessary to get out the working class vote. Also since the Tories may be forced into the mistake of fighting the election on the issues, making it look like a class election with the Tories taking a doctrinaire position, for who could possibly say that Labour has been unreasonably socialist?

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You may remember the appeal sent on behalf of Eduardo Cruzeiro, the Portuguese army deserter - now in a Spanish gaol. (Deserter on conscientious grounds.)
There is to be a demo for him on November the 30th starting at 2.30 marching to embassies.

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A recent leaflet - called 'Action for People's Justice' - reproduced in Freedom, which had much good was marred by saying "We are faced with the FACT not the Theory of repression." And arguing that therefore one should devote all one's activities to their cause which amounted to pushing solidarity and civil rights actions for leftists and other dissidents from society.

One can leave aside the point, as to whether this fact was as recent a reality as the authors seemed to think. Whether repression was in earlier years quite such an airy fairy myth as this would suggest; - when a "Race Relations" Bill has been used to prosecute OCRI (integrationist) members in Oxford, coloured people's leaders, in Slough, London, Birmingham and Manchester and Nuclear Disarmers in Brighton, but not to prosecute known racist leaders even though youths shouting the slogan Enoch have in that name committed a race murder. Leave aside what use an untenable theory with no basis of fact would have been to anyone.

What is important is that any serious theory is concerned with understanding the nature of the establishment and posing its radical alternative in terms which make sense. Knowledge of the establishment brings awareness where are its weak points, where it would be foolish to attack it. Consideration of the alternative makes one know how best to argue to win allies, whom one may approach, with a reasonable hope of winning them, and how best to put the case to them.

Moreover to engage in immediate activity without first considering if the actions are the best way of achieving the ends, and then to attack people giving it that consideration seems to be self-defeating if not worse. Which is why the Christian anarchists have in the past criticized the "Let's stop thinking - and start acting aimlessly brand of Christian radicals."

Nevertheless I am indebted to the authors for one thing, besides the good points in their leaflet, for the bad points show me (however, for the wrong reasons,) that those of us who were less enthusiastic about the Piccadilly Squat than we might have been and contrasted it with the Ilford ones, were not altogether wrong. This though I apologize for the dangerous reformism, in the argument I used last month, that the hippies were selfish as distinct from the altruism of the squatters; after all the aim of the squatter-groups is to get homeless people to squat for themselves without relying on middle class do-gooding outside helpers, and such self-activity is the essence of anarchism. Nor I fancy would Jim Radford defend

his argument on the wireless that the squatters - unlike the hippies - were dealing with families; as he as much as the hippies considers the family can be a coercive institution.

But though there is a truth, in the Stirner-Situationist or in the non-Humanist variants of Marxist argument that charity is disguised authoritarianism; it is not an whole truth and overstressed it negates all class solidarity, all feeling for the underdog, whether coloured, homeless or unemployed.

For if the Situationist argument is to be applied, then the drop-outs must apply it to themselves as also to the families whose claims they urge are no more important than their own. In which case since the drop-outs are in many instances people who not merely dropped out from society but also from the CND)-Committee of 100 - or even anarchist movements, they dropped out by their own tokens from any full claim to solidarity. Who cannot remember hearing in anarchist meetings, over the last few years, the argument: "the one thing that the state really fears is that people enjoy themselves; it has nothing to fear from all this political activity - direct-actionist or otherwise - the only really subversive action is to 'go and enjoy yourself'";"?

I suggest that those who forsook the left, on this basis, those who deliberately - knowing the nature of the class society, knowing the existence of oppression, and of the military machine, - turned their backs on the working class, and the needs of abolishing class oppression, on their comrades in the movement and on the struggle for peace; can only appeal for sympathy on a basis of compassion; and are in no position to deride other struggles as mere altruism; and in terms of compassion they have less case than those who are too weak to struggle for themselves, or who do not have the same understanding of society and of the mechanics of direct action struggle.

Those who deliberately chose not to continue spreading anarchism, the need for social revolution, are in part responsible for the fact that we have not made greater advances and that we are not yet strong enough to fight as many battles as we should. That these should demand that we neglect other struggles, neglect study of what is to be done generally to come to their immediate - and not overly efficient defence - is frankly too much.

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final notes

Remember next meeting November the fifteenth.

On that day also there is a PAX Conference in Notting Hill
for details contact Barbara Wall - PARK 8326

a W.I.L.P.F. Conference on chemical
and biological warfare, at the N.U.F.T.O. Hall ~~Kx~~ Theobalds'
road, which is to follow the next week end is being advert-
ized by a Chemical and Biological Warfare Action Group
demo startin from Manette St., at 12.00

the C.P. has a national conference
which will probably be important as it may well be the time
of a split between the = "Surrey Liners" supporters of the
Russian invasion of Prague and others.

If the =Surrey Liners win or if they
sufficiently aggravate the rest it could well mean an
influx of new recruits to the left, or the expulsion of the
Stalinists and a new policy on the part of the C.P.

This therefore is the most hopeful
C.P. Conference since the split after Hungary in 56, and
leftist visits to the Conference might well be well rewarded.

The London Street Commune following the agreement with anarchists that
produced Action for People's Justice then occupied Freedom
and stood by when their Hell's Angels friends smashed the
type and robbed the place in other ways.

Which shows their interest in Solid-
arity.

best

Laurens