

SCOTTISH SCANDAL

This is reprinted from a Clydeside anarchist paper to show Freedom readers the practical damage done by NUM/CP bureaucrats.

During the titanic fight of the Miners against all the forces of capitalism and its State, when every effort should be bent towards helping them, the so-called 'Communist' Party chooses to push its own selfish interests at the expense of working-class solidarity.

The story begins about six weeks ago when the Clydeside Anarchists started street collections for striking miners of Kirkconnel and Sanquhar. We discussed the idea of mutual aid with them and they sent up a team of miners to help with the collection. The very next day (18.7.84) a posse of people purporting to represent Glasgow Trades Council accosted our comrades making a collection in Argyle Street precinct. They ordered them to stop collecting. As will be readily understood, anarchists do not take kindly to being ordered to do anything, so our militants told them to get on their bikes. Before leaving, these self-appointed vigilantes said they

would stop us 'one way or another'.

Stop the Anarchists

That very same day they tried 'one way'. A telephone call was made to the headquarters of the Ayrshire Miners' Federation at Miller Road in Ayr. It was from Mrs Jane McKay, secretary of Glasgow Trades Council and prominent member of Glasgow Communist Party. As a result, the miners of Kirkconnel were told to have no more to do with the Clydeside Anarchists and to return the several hundreds of pounds they had received.

We learned of this meeting with the Kirkconnel/Sanquhar Miners Strike Committee on 19th July. We delivered a further two hundred pounds and pointed out that this was a ploy by stalinists in both Glasgow and Ayrshire to insulate the miners from the influence of anarchist ideas. They were persuaded and accepted the money.

However, as more miners came up to Glasgow and our worst fears

were confirmed when a delegation of Clydeside Anarchists met the strike committee on Friday 27th July. Not only would they not take the £550 we were delivering, but they returned £500 plus, that had already been given! The headquarters at Miller Road had told them if they did not break with the Clydeside Anarchists and return the money, they would be cut off from all benefit and legal guidance. Further, no more money would come to the Ayrshire Federation of the NUM from Glasgow Trades Council.

We felt extremely sorry for the Kirkconnel miners because they clearly needed the money but were really frightened by the threats. It was sad to see grown men intimidated in this way.

An anarchist delegation went to the Ayrshire NUM conference in 30th July but were refused permission to address the delegates. We talked to an officer for half-an-hour confirming the hollow charges

that we were being divisive in favouring Kirkconnel. He seemed to think that we were supporting Kirkconnel for political reasons whereas, in fact, that village had been recommended to us by miners because it was getting less help than others. The hostility of local and regional authorities (Dumfriesshire) made it a special case.

£1,500 to Ayrshire NUM

So what to do with the money? At a meeting of Clydeside Anarchists on 1st August it was unanimously agreed that in spite of our criticism of the Ayrshire NUM the money should go to the headquarters at Miller Road. After all, the money had been collected for Ayrshire miners and the need was urgent. So a cheque for £1,500 was handed over at Ayr on 6th August and a receipt given.

Why have officials of Glasgow Trades Council and Ayrshire NUM behaved in this disgraceful fashion? There are several reasons for this: Anarchist solidarity with the fighting miners by-passed by the official collection thus inadvertently undermining the centralised authority of the Glasgow stalinists as organised in the Trades Council.

Also, apart from the threat of anarchist ideas penetrating mining villages the provision of local strike funds weakens the tight centralised control which the area NUM's exercise.

Incidentally, instead of using their usual ham-fisted stalinist tactics of imperiously ordering us to stop collecting, they had approached us in a comradely and constructive manner we could have reconciled the different approaches. But the approaches cannot change. They don't trust the working class (that is why they rig ballots), still less do they relish anarchist ideas which celebrate autonomy and independence of workers from bureaucratic (often self-appointed) 'leaders'.

The Communist Party thrives on the industrial scene because of apathy and the willingness of its members to carry out boring and routine tasks. Its success in the unions is in inverse proportion to its failure and political rejection by the working class. But so tenuous is its influence that it must fight a constant battle against other left groups and independent ideas. Thus

the virulence of their attacks on the anarchists.

The anarchists have been reluctant to criticise the leadership of the NUM because of basic proletarian solidarity. But we think that our experience with the Scottish stalinists compels us to highlight this phobia for centralised control. It is only when the set-piece battles with the police are abandoned and groups of miners use their initiative, ie occupations and installing central heating in scabs buses, that some progress is registered. We welcome the growing independent miners' actions in Yorkshire and Staffordshire.

The anarchist idea of mutual aid and the creation of self-help groups is essential to the success of the strike, an aggressive strategy by raising money in which hundreds of miners flood in to the cities every day of the week, joining with sympathisers to both raise money in street collections and keep the miners arguments firmly in the forefront of public discussion. Above all, we believe that the strike must spread to wider sections of the working class or it will fail.

We intend to continue with what we see as our elementary class duty. We are maintaining our street collections and will be spreading the collection among a wider range of pit villages. We also hope to help miners' communities set up 'Self Help Groups' in the immediate future.

ONE WE WON

This is not the first time that Clydeside anarchists and stalinists have clashed over striking miners. During the last bloodbath in 1943 the Communist Party tried to stop the miners at Cardowan from going on strike. The dispute concerned the intention of the Government to jail 16 miners for non-payment of a fine. The Anarchists in Glasgow were the only substantial group to support the miners and were invited to address mass meetings. The Stalinists' call for a return to work was defeated by 760 votes to 7 and support given to the anarchist demand that nobody went back to work until the fines were withdrawn. The miners were victorious.

This article originally appeared in *Practical Anarchy*.

TUC 'em ... then you don't

The failure of King Arthur and Munchkin MacGregor to carve the coal cake up to their mutual satisfaction has been highlighted by the action of The Brothers of the TUC in opting not to call a general strike to force the government back to work.

Instead The Brothers have decided on a series of actions directed at splitting the government in the hope that this will achieve a weakening of resolve, and a drift back to work. Prominent among these actions is the move to take over some of the essential services normally provided by card-carrying members of HM Government by

The Brothers and some opposition scabs who are still working. They have attempted to provide a peace formula acceptable to both Munchkin and The King.

In addition to riding rough shod through long established demarcation lines, The Brothers are also toying with the idea of sending in their shock troops - the mine deputies. These men, the sort of underground managers, could instantly stop all mining within the NCB. It is hoped that the thought of a long lingering winter, with power cuts and cold cocoa, will force Thatcher and her hard core followers back to fulfilling their

historic role in controlling the means of solution. The Brothers see this as essential if a compromise is to be reached which will be to the traditional detriment of the miners and their union.

This tactic seems unlikely to work. The threats of the dockers and Moss Evans' legions only served to harden the resolve of the striking government. It can be no coincidence that at the same time as refusing to resolve the miners' problems, they also refused to stand against Ken Livingstone and be beaten in the GLC by-elections. Thatcher seems determined to remain on strike until the Unions

come to what she sees as their senses.

The Plan for Coal is equated in her mind with the Belgrano; whichever way it turns or heads, she is going to sink it. The crew of miners, both working and striking, will suffer losses when it goes down. The lingering British winter will prove just as deadly for them as the grey South Atlantic did for her Argentinian enemies.

King Arthur can be predicted to steam on. The coal dispute has been running too long now for casualties to be avoided. But he does have one option other than relying on The Brothers to bail him further in.

The miners should take the initiative and lead a national debate on a national energy policy. This would mean forgetting the narrow basis of the current dispute - jobs, wages,

and an illusion of future security, and widening the discussion to include a comprehensive statement of energy options related to community and environmental needs. Such a step would win them many friends and allies, the whole of the non-nuclear and Green movement for a start. It would also serve to spread the justice of their case, in essence that part which relies upon the human values of their communities as opposed to the monetary value of their coal. Such a debate would have the effect of isolating Maggie and Munchkin in the intellectual bankruptcy of their case.

Energy policy needs to be a long term view. Coal has a vital place in this policy - but it must be incorporated in a way that allows its inherent drawbacks to be dealt with. The drawbacks range from

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the needs of the community structure of the mining industry to the acid rain produced by its carefree combustion. The short term view of energy policy allows King Arthur to build his empire, and allows government to dismantle it by going further down the nuclear pit. The community pays for both

forms of lunacy.

The first step should be to accept that the miners should control the mines. They will have to physically occupy and control the mines in this dispute anyway if they are to stop the 28m tons of pit stocks moving. Despite the noises of off from Brother Moss Evans and his boys, Maggie will shift them if necessary. But she would find it

difficult, if not impossible, if the workers were in control.

Make no mistake, the government is involved in a political strike. Their claims that it is absurd to expect the community to fund 'uneconomic pits' indefinitely is in stark and bitter contrast with their activity in other areas. Too much coal costing too much? - close the mines and to hell with the comm-

unities involved. Too much wheat/butter/wine/olive oil all costing too much? - put on subsidies and grow more.

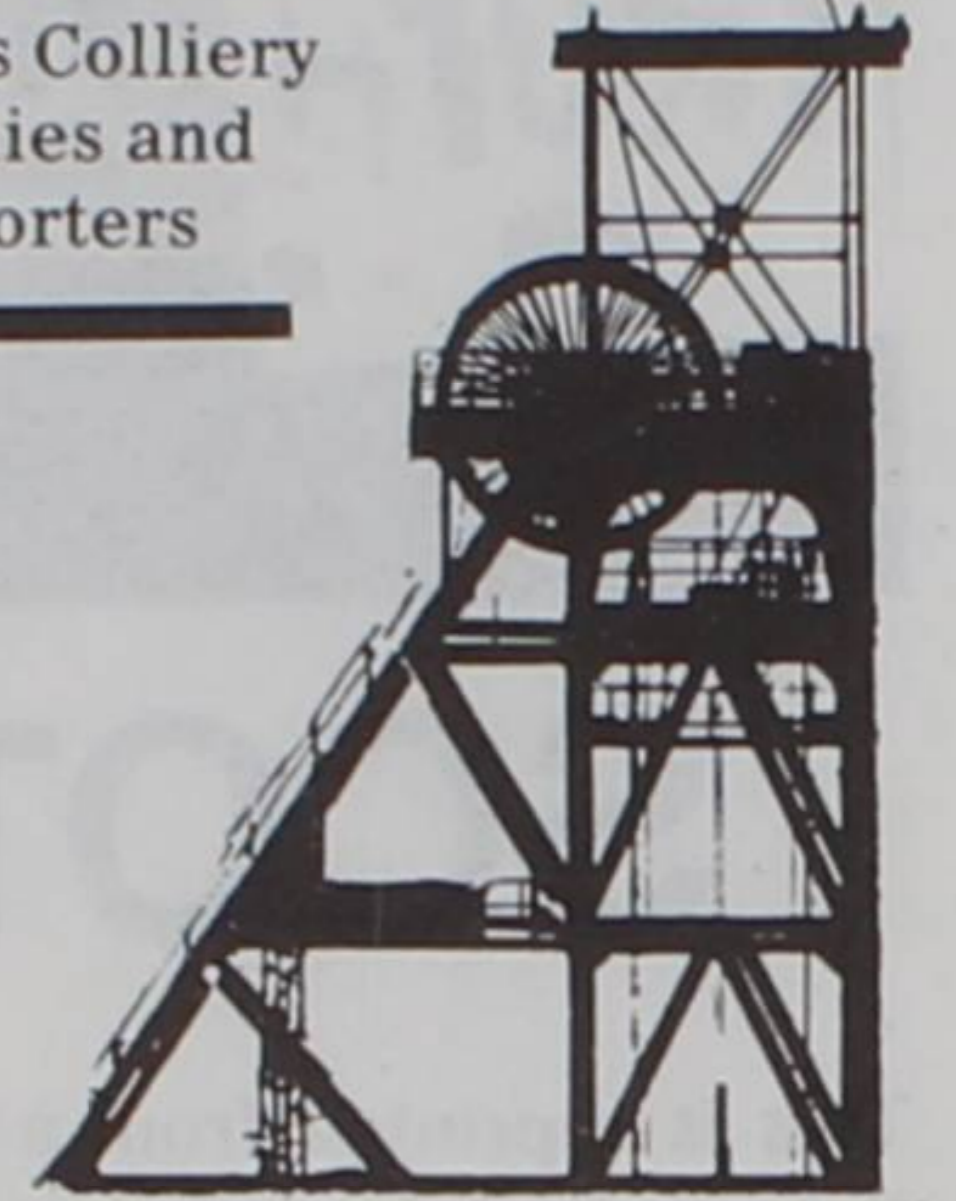
Astute observers of this phenomenon have noted that miners tend to be landless labour voters of little pedigree, whereas farmers tend to be landed tory gentry with aristocratic pretensions.

Against such an irrational approach the only viable argument is that mining, along with the other basic resource production industries should be operated under workers' control in relation to the overall needs of the communities they serve. The NUM could turn the current government strike into a victory for all of us by adopting this philosophy, beginning with the debate on energy and making plans to run the mines.

The miners should take advantage of the strike, using the time to take the coal industry into a really secure future; workers' control of the mines, in an integrated strategy, with the whole community of production and use involved. Nothing else will do. And the government can then stay on strike forever.

Colin Johnson

◆ Bates Colliery families and supporters



Reading 20th Anniversary

From September 1984 to September 1985 Reading Anarchist Group is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The group was started by some Reading University students in 1964 and was mainly involved in student politics - particularly the 'Action for a Free University' campaign. By the end of the '60s there was a 'town' group with separate student groups at the university and college of higher education.

At this time the group included some schoolteachers with an interest in libertarian education. There was interest from other teachers and school students and an 'ideas' leaflet was circulating local schools. In 1970 the *News of the World*

exposed those involved as 'a group of anarchists behind a bid to overthrow our education system'!

Today the group is involved in printing, publishing, street entertainment, new games, music and 'community arts' in general - there is also a video collective and a silk screen poster printing collective. The local 'alternative' newspaper, *Red Rag*, was started five years ago as a news bulletin for anarchists who couldn't make the weekly meetings. *Red Rag* is now servicing a broader left readership but anarchists remain a majority in the production collective. *Red Rag* is fortnightly, delivered to your door and free, (paid for by benefit gigs and donations).

The anarchist group has become an attraction on the Trades Union Council's May Day march with leaflets, banners, musicians and street theatre. On the 1984 May Day march we produced a large number of little hand-held flags for kiddies. The flags were red and black diagonal on one side and all black with a red circle A on the other. These we distributed to shoppers and onlookers as the march went through the centre of town - leaflets to adults, flags to the kids. We enjoyed little incidents like mothers pushing their children towards the flag distributor saying 'Go on, or you won't get one' (almost as much as we enjoyed seeing the Trots march past a

crowd of kids waving anarchist flags!)

For our 20th anniversary we intend organising a year of various events and would very much like to hear from comrades who would like to contribute. We hope to have a season of anarchist films and videos and we would welcome suggestions, sources and original material. All other offers invited (come on - everybody does at least one thing that's fantastic!)

Contact: Reading Anarchists, Box 19, Acorn Bookshop, 17 Chatham Street, Reading, Berkshire.

letters

FREEDOM
Editorial Collective
84b Whitechapel High St
London E1

We reserve the right to cut letters unless otherwise specified by the author.

All signed articles reflect the opinion of the authors, not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

May I make a few observations on the new *Freedom*? It was nice to see the statements from the new editorial group members, although it's sad that Arabella Melville is the only woman. Now that things seem to have settled down, please don't introduce new chaos by trying to rotate the editorial group. I think it's right to continue to provide a broad platform for all who have something to say, but I think you need an editorial to give some coherence and direction.

Colin Johnson mentioned graphic appeal - there's a lot of room for improvement here! I don't like the August and September front pages because:

- the title block has too much 'white space'.
- Arthur Moyses's cartoons are welcome, but are no substitute for a front page photograph.
- the tiny headings on the August issue look lost.

The overall effect is quite pallid. In contrast, the July issue looked more attractive. The inside pages would benefit from more illustrations - these unrelieved chunks of print look so indigestible. Kronstadt Kids is great.

John Griffin

Congratulations and thanks to the new editors of *Freedom*. I have been a subscriber for forty years, a contributor for thirty-seven years, and a close associate for two or three periods of a few years each. Now, for the first time ever, I know who all the editors are.

I was once told the habit of secrecy about names began during World War Two, when it seemed likely that either Nazi conquest or patriotic intolerance might force the paper underground. But it was naive to think that withholding information from comrades would prevent the political police from discovering it. Last time any editors' names were actually published was in 1945, when four of them were prosecuted for conspiring to incite disaffection among His Majesty's Forces.

For the first time I can remember, there are statements of editorial policy beyond the commitment to publish all the different anarchist points of view. *Freedom* has had editorial aims in the past, but contributors have been given no clear guidance. The remarks on length of reviews (August) and choice of language (September) are the sort of guidance I mean (though

I hope you will make it clear that the privilege of writing for *Freedom* is not absolutely restricted to those with typewriters).

Freedom has always been subject to fluctuations in readability, intellectual respectability and circulation. It has been at a low ebb recently, but the way you are carrying on, it seems reasonable to hope that an upsurge will start very soon.

Name withheld for fear of letting everyone know my age.

contact

A new group has been formed in Coventry. Before, anarchists were isolated, unorganised and therefore ineffective. We hope to remedy this, bringing together all anarchists, anarcho-feminists, anarcho-punks, and sympathisers in the city, so fostering a spirit of solidarity and strength. Anybody who wants to get involved in any way, whatever their age, sex, colour or hair style, should contact us at:

P.O. Box 125
COVENTRY
CV3 5QT

Again, would you please advertise in *Freedom* that Black Dragon Swansea Anarchist Collective is well and truly dead as we keep getting a lot of mail for it in the bookshop and I have to reply to all of the damn things.

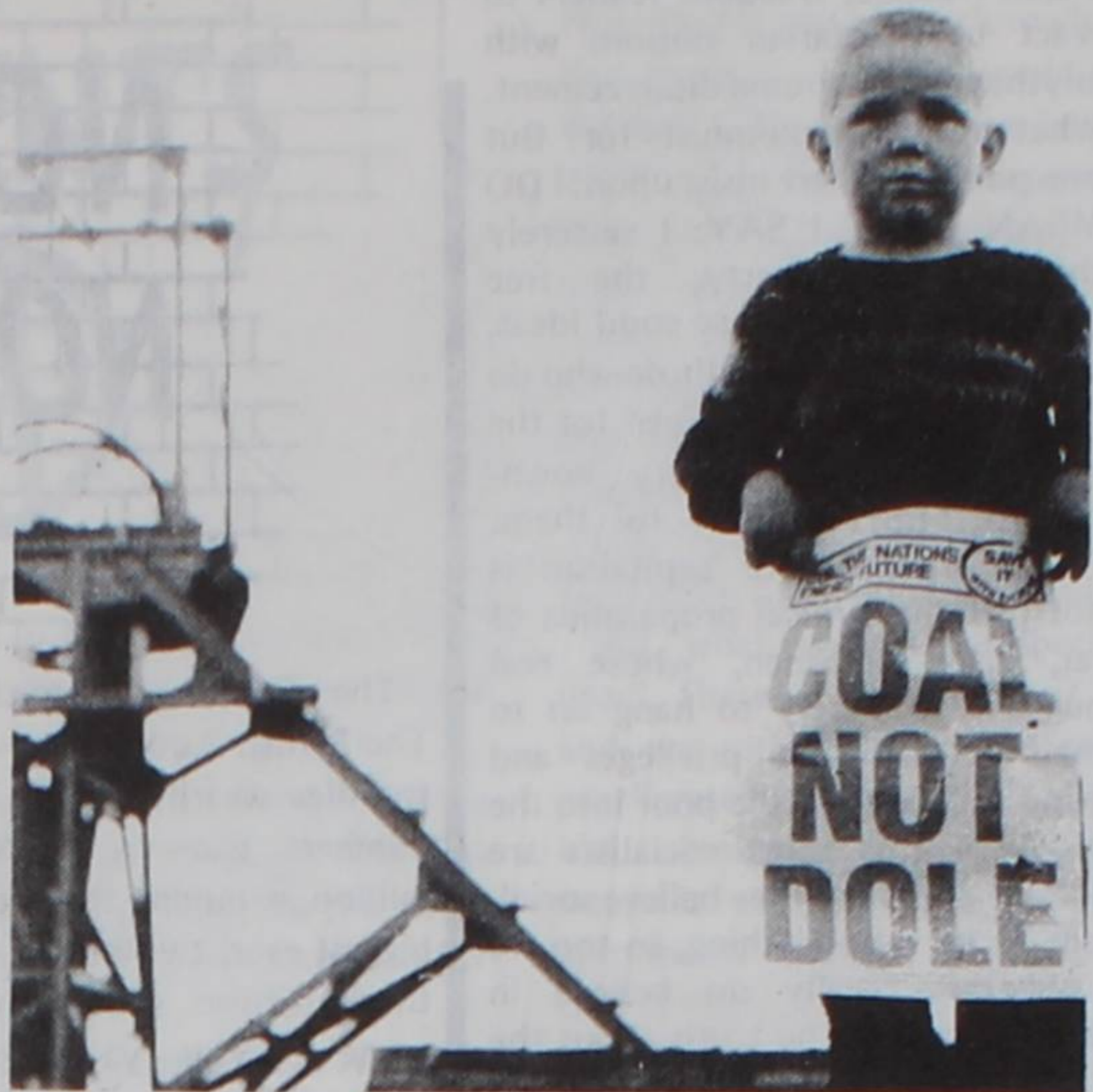
A new group is on the way!
John Andrew
Neges Bookshop,
31 Alexandra Road,
Swansea,
W Glamorgan.

Freedom has recently livened up - keep up the good work!

Les Evans
Cardiff

Notice

22 year old anarchist wishes to correspond with others (in Britain or overseas). He's intellectual and feels isolated not only because of this but also because of the nature of his views: has literary and philosophical interests and is presently writing a book on Britain and Ulster. Is there anyone out there interested in conversing? If so, write to: Jonathan Bowden, Flat 4, 19 Abbey Road, London NW8.



Freedom is produced by Arabella Melville, Colin Johnson, David Peers, John Anderson and Stu Stuart. The collective is seriously in need of more people. We would welcome new members who are cheerful, tolerant and easy going, and able to take seeing a lot of stuff go in that they don't agree with. We are not looking for anyone with a strong personal commitment to any single issue politics. You'd also need to be an anarchist and available to do the boring bits as well as the glamorous stuff.

If you want to help out without getting seriously involved, then come along to the Freedom mail-out sessions from 5:00pm til at least 9:30pm. Next ones are on Thursday October 25th and Friday October 26th.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The good news is that we have finally got all the bureaucratic info on subscriptions from the old collective. The bad news is that absolutely none of the letters have been dealt with since September 1983 when the old collective had a pretty terminal row. There are people who sent cash in three times and still didn't get their Freedoms! Quite how long it's going to take us to sort out this dreadful backlog we can't yet say. Even with the computer to ease the pain, it's going to take at least a couple of months. We are working from recently received letters backwards in time through it all. IF YOU HAVEN'T RE-SUBSCRIBED RECENTLY, PLEASE SEND US SOMETHING FOR THE FREEDOM DEFICIT FUND.

In the August issue, no 8, we published a number of letters similar to JW's in this one. At the time we had a policy of not replying to letters in the same issue (inherited from the old collective). In issue no 9 I let Andy Brown's excellent letter answer for me to save space, although I disagreed with his view of issue no 8 being 'liberal crap' . . . they were essentially leftist crap. We have formally altered the 'reply policy', for which indeed the new collective never voted in the first place. Individual members of the collective now have the right to stick their reply in the same issue and the collective reserves the right to stick comments on anything we publish. You will have to get used to this as the 'price' of the open-door policy. We mean it to be part of a more open, chatty and personal editorial style.

We are, however, going to view the childish abusive letters we sometimes get (no 8) a good deal more harshly in the competition for space in Freedom. We will not expose contributors to painful and inaccurate abuse from now on. After all, nothing could be more off-putting to people writing for Freedom from outside the collective. It is a well-known psychological fact that humans siezed with a strong hostile emotion are incapable of reading what has actually been written. For instance in Freedom no 8 a letter from 'Dennis the Menace' said "The piece entitles 'Orgreave Fantasies' was a disaster area. . . . Incredible that an anarchist (?) can write shit that's more backward than left. Fair enough, criticise set-piece battles which the cops will win, and demand that the struggle be taken out of the hands of the bureaucrats; but why not conclude by encouraging self-organised widespread, simultaneous actions, maybe in conjunction with 'set-pieces' to draw the police away to one place". But then we turn back to read Orgreave Fantasies (no 6) and we find. . . . "If Orgreave is not to be renamed as the place where All grieved then the miners must take back control of this strike from their incompetent bureaucrats. Against concentrated police power, only widespread, simultaneous action to stretch police numbers thinly offers any prospect of success." Dennis then goes on to criticise Freedom as an "embarrassment to anarchists who are revolutionaries". We, however, feel that Denis and other junk is an obstacle to the Social Revolution. An apology would be nice, Denis.

Stu Stuart

PS We will each be taking it in turn to deliver the news from Angel Alley.

letter

I wonder how often we have heard condescending 'sympathetic' liberals announcing that anarchists are 'people whose hearts are in the right place but brains someplace else'. It is indicative that Andy Brown uses this description of a number of his comrades who argue for solidarity with the miners strike. Indeed, one had to turn the page of Freedom to Malatesta to assure oneself it was not the Observer or Guardian that was being read.

Quite apart from a ¹national delegate conference being the basis for 'workers democracy' in the NUM strike, the issue of a ballot is a weak one for libertarians to go overboard about. Since when has democracy been an anarchist objective? ²Majority decisions are nothing to get reverential about — sure Andy Brown gives the conventional wisdom, taught to this writer by Tom Brown many years ago, that you need a majority of workers to win a strike. But like all conventional wisdoms this statement requires critical assessment. ³In a parallel field Albert Meltzer once made the calculation that the Brixton riots of '81 involved about the same number of people as carried through the French Revolution of 1789. ⁴You can also make quite a reasonable strike with a determined minority, as the current dockers strike shows.

The media cannot be glibly dismissed in the way Andy Brown does. Firstly, why the hell should the NUM have taken any risk with their members' livelihoods with a ballot which could have backfired? It is the Government that wants ballots before strikes are launched because they need to know far better than Andy Brown does how often ⁵they can manipulate the media to deliver the vote they want. Just consider the millions spent on TV advertising before dismissing the power of the media too lightly, or reflect on the massive support for the stage-managed Falklands war.

Secondly, the miners have now had more than six months of strike — ⁶a very solid strike given the pressures. To continue the bleat about a ballot is pitiful. It is to come perilously close to siding with scabs who have taken the NUM to court, to associating with those who have used police brutality to stab their fellow workers in the back. It might have been thought such a stance was unthinkable for any anarchist with a grain of sense, let alone decency.

We are all in danger of falling for the personalisation of this dispute — it is mineworkers, not Scargill, who really matter. However, as a trade union leader Scargill is very unlike others of his ilk. ⁸Joe Gormley would surely not

have led such a strike — Bill Sirs never attempted a real defence of steel workers. With his weakness for publicity and his wrong-headed authoritarianism, Arthur Scargill is certainly to be condemned, to recognise his abilities is not to agree with him about everything.

With the ⁸new-found love for ballots perhaps the new editorial collective will hold one of Freedom readers a) to see if we support their takeover of the paper, b) to see if we support their 'line' on the miners strike. Like good anarchists, readers will give an overwhelming vote, I am sure, by not voting.

JW

(1) Anarchists see the local, direct, face-to-face associations to be the basis of workers democracy, not the national delegate conference.

(2) Anarchists aim for consensus, but no-one, except the leftists, thinks that anything less than a majority is good enough for collective decisions.

(3) This sort of 'wisdom' gets anarchism a bad name.

(4) Ho. Ho. Ho. The failure of the dock strike shows exactly why attempts to impose decisions on the workers in their unions are in the end disastrous to the workers' cause. Your position can only be maintained by ignoring history and reality.

(5) Any sociologist can tell you that peer-group effects (what your mates say) are much stronger than the mass media. If you seriously believe that people are that gullible, then the only hope for revolutionary change is via a ruthless vanguard organisation . . . which is why I labelled all such arguments as anarcho-leftism.

(6) 20 percent of miners still working cannot count as 'very solid'.

(7) Joe Gormley, in fact, successfully led several such strikes. In 1974 he led the miners directly against a clear government policy (the wage freeze). The miners got every inch of their demands and the government suffered a clearly visible defeat. Joe Gormley also maintained and strengthened the 100 percent solidarity amongst miners. The contrast between his record and Scargill's is indeed very striking.

(8) If you go back to the '72 and '74 strikes you find that, from Albert Meltzer to the Morning Star, nobody ever missed an opportunity to stress the 'democratic ballot vote' in favour of those strikes. Everybody seemed to love ballots. No-one ever criticises ballots that go the way they want! The difference between anarchists and the rest is that we are supposed to believe in people's right to disagree and even do different things.

Finally, let me say that these arguments against ballots, which even have an 'official' voice in Black Flag, indicate that the reduction of anarchist objections to representative government down to

the crude DON'T VOTE slogan has had disastrous effects.

Anarchists do vote. They vote in collectives, at meetings, at Federations, on what goes into Freedom and Black Flag. Anarcho-syndicalists never stop voting . . . for the delegates, what the delegates should say, etc. CNT conferences are a veritable orgy of voting . . . and the majority decides the issues.

The whole argument for delegate democracy rests on the delegates faithfully representing the majority view of their members. Any argument against ballots must therefore hold true against delegate democracy, unless you accept the right of a vanguard to run the struggle.

Arguments for delegate democracy against direct ballots amount to the intolerable (to anarchists) position that delegates know the workers' minds better than the workers themselves! Anarchists have only supported delegate democracy when it was hedged around with numerous qualifications to prevent delegates from behaving like MPs or representatives, voting the way they want personally.

The bottom-line social act on the issue is that, whether or not anarchists, or anybody else, think that ballots are superior to delegate conferences, the British working class themselves clearly do. They know that delegate conferences just tell you what the various activist and vanguardists, who control their unions, think. Frequently the workers themselves just ignore these decisions. They do not ignore the results of national ballots. If you want 100 percent solidarity in a strike . . . then ballot the members. If you want to retain sectarian control . . . then don't.

Stu Stuart

In Brief

The number of centenarians in Britain has increased at least ten-fold during the past 30 years, according to the Royal College of Physicians. There are about 2,000. Nine out of ten are women.

More morbidly, another report, by the Government's Census and Surveys office, says that the death rate is at least 21% higher amongst unemployed men, and 20% higher amongst their wives. (Figures for unemployed women are not quoted) This would account for the deaths of over 1,800 men and 1,000 women this year. Suicide rates amongst unemployed men are about twice those for others.

The Conservative Party continues to roll back the frontiers of the state by selling the profitable bits of nationalised industries. In the case of Telecom, at least, this is presented as 'widening' the ownership. This causes indignation amongst those who had thought that a nationalised industry in fact belonged to everybody. Serves them right for being naive. However, the 'libertarian' model has always been quite happy to use the 'minimal state' to keep others in order. Accordingly, the remaining fragments are to feel centralised control more firmly. Plans have been leaked which reveal planned legislation to strengthen Ministers' powers to interfere, dismiss board members, order the sale of assets and to set profit limits.

The Spanish Government has banned school homework and official exams on the grounds that children have 'got to have time to play and meet other children'.

The Soviet Government has banned jogging in the streets of Moscow. Western embassies have been warned to stop their staff, as such activity could cause injury and 'interfere with the normal life of the city'.

Two fishermen in the Pacific are reported to have been held underwater and drowned by giant octopuses. The animals were said to be three or four yards long.

There is currently a conference in Geneva to draw up a treaty outlawing methods of warfare which 'severely damage the environment'.

Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's personal press secretary, has loyally turned down an offer of a job as director-general of the Central Office of Information in order to stay on in Downing Street. His employers are so moved by this gesture that they are going to raise his salary to what he would have got if he had moved. The £2,850 raise brings his annual salary to £32,350.

Soviet authorities are disturbed by the growing popularity of 'American style' T-shirts with slogans. They are to begin producing their own with more ideologically acceptable messages, such as commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany, Young Communist slogans and the emblems of work brigades.

The latest estimate by the Child Poverty Action Group is that social security benefits worth £900 million per year are unclaimed. They put it down to fear of means tests and Government fraud squads.

DP

The denial of Liberty by imprisonment in prison or incarceration in Psychiatric Hospitals has long been a subject of anarchist critique, is it not time that anarchists looked again at the plight of mentally-handicapped people in hospital? One person in every hundred born suffers some level of mental handicap¹. At present 44,000 mentally-handicapped people live in mental-handicap hospitals. For the vast majority there is no reason by virtue of proven medical need that they ought to be in such hospitals².

In fact, they are there for a variety of reasons, such as that they lack the social and self-care skills to care for themselves unsupported, or they have no relatives/relatives no longer able or willing to care, or no other place to go to, and no systematic attempt has been made to give them the skills needed to survive with dignity in society, or to provide a place for them to live within society.

An anarchist approach to the plight of the mentally-handicapped would involve client and worker self advocacy and control, community based services which could give the mentally-handicapped and their carers in society the support, the facilities and skills needed to cope with a wide variety of needs. These services should include involvement and participation of the community. This set-up would be care by and within the community *ie applied mutual aid*. At present there is a dual system of containment of mentally-handicapped persons and their carers.

44,000 live outside of society's sight, knowledge and concern. These 44,000³ people live in conditions often lacking privacy, dignity and the rights of controlling one's own life which the rest of us enjoy even within the state's and capitalism's set limits. These 44,000 have to put up with often poor to disgusting food, laundry services which ruin or lose personal clothing and inadequate occupational, recreational and training facilities, with staff who are tired, strained, over-worked, who react under stress. Assaults on residents occur in every hospital. Many staff have been guilty of this at some time in their careers.

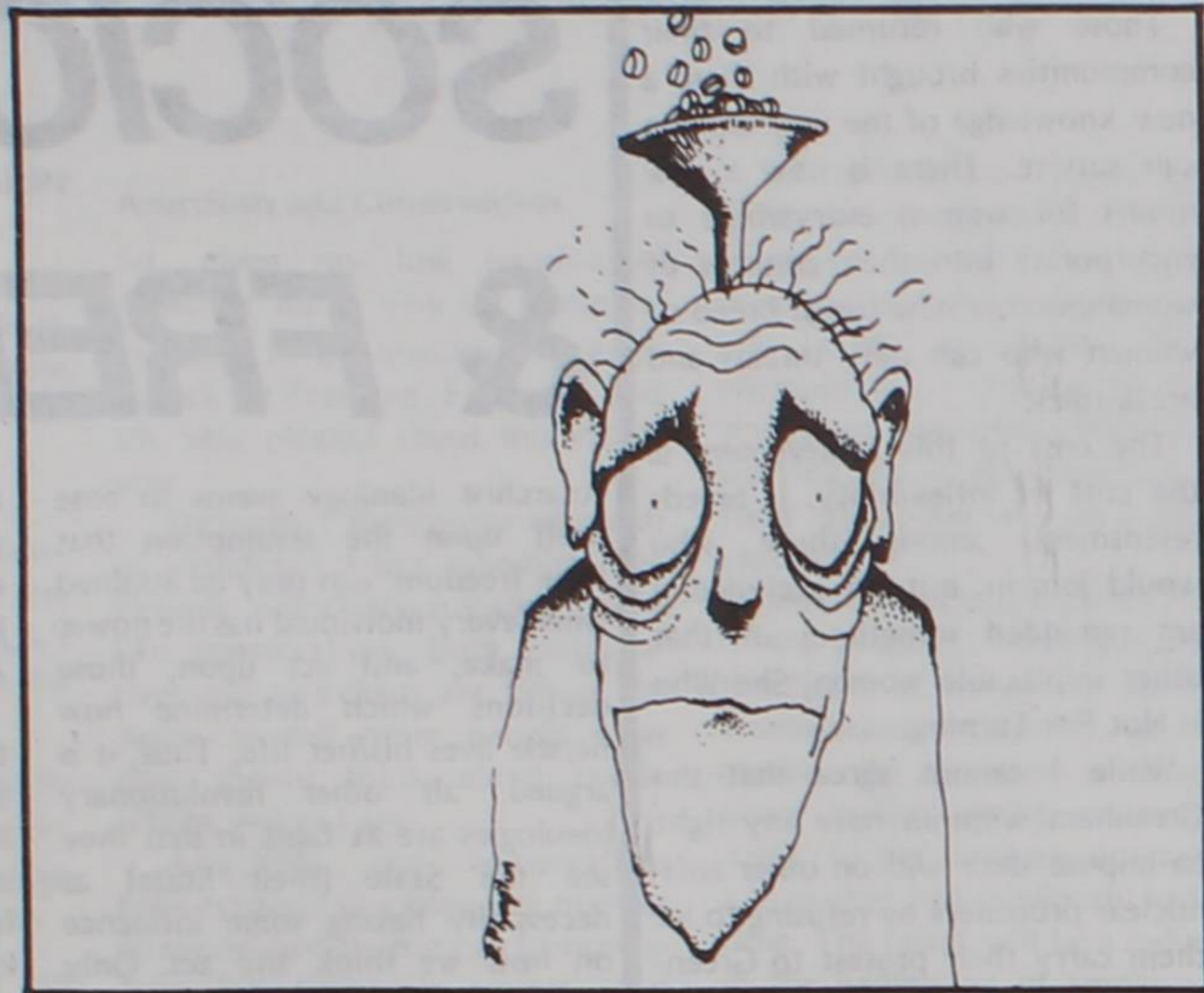
The other 85%⁴ of mentally-handicapped people live in the community in a variety of living situations/conditions. Many live with parents, who have never had much support from society or neighbours, but who cannot bear despite their own advancing age to be separated from what many regard as their 'child'. Often they carry on through great strains and hardship to care for their 'child', rather than see him/her taken from them and placed either in a hostel or hospital.

There is a great shortage of community facilities for mentally-handicapped people. There are long waiting lists for placements at adult training workshops, there are too few mentally-handicapped persons working in 'ordinary' jobs, there are too few hostels, too few group homes. The social workers and community-mental-handicap nurses have too few resources to meet the needs of those currently living in the community aside from the 44,000 living in the hospitals.

Public concern is miniscule, public prejudice is great. Joe Public thinks that a group-home means 'freaks' in his/her street. The present care facilities for mentally-handicapped people outside of hospitals equals care *in* as opposed to care *by* the community/society. The fact is that many if not most people fear and reject the mentally-handicapped. The 'public' need to be educated that the mentally-handicapped are people too!

How can anarchists help those 44,000 still in mental-handicap hospitals? I would suggest that they

ANARCHY and INSANITY



visit such a hospital, get to know a mentally-handicapped person and befriend them, that similar support as we give prisoners could be provided. Anarchists should also support and encourage those libertarian ideas which occur in the theory of care for/care of/services for mentally-handicapped people.

One distinctly libertarian concept is that of 'self-advocacy'⁵ ie that mentally-handicapped people should speak for themselves about their wants, needs and desires. This has led to one self-advocacy group at an adult training centre in London demanding that mencap get rid of their 'little stephan' logo, which depicts mentally-handicapped persons as perpetual children. They produced badges with 'little stephan' with clenched fist salute saying 'make love not bird boxes' — a reference to the fact that many adult training work-shops have carpentry sections producing these and other similar items.

Another libertarian trend is the idea of 'Core and Cluster'⁶. This idea provides a flexible means of developing locally based residential and training services for mentally-handicapped people and their carers. The 'blue-print' which emerges is still care in rather than care by society but until mentally-handicapped persons live, work and enjoy their leisure within society acceptance by society will never be fully achieved. The idea of 'core and cluster' is that a 'core residence' provides a place of training for ex-hospital residents, for parents/carers. Mentally-handicapped people might move via such a unit from hospital to the living unit suitable to their level of skills and which meets their expressed needs.

This unit could be a place in a hostel, a staffed/unstaffed group home, or a sheltered flat or on to full independence. The 'core unit' might be home for a family group, it may provide support to a staffed group home, an unstaffed group home, a hostel, a foster home, a

bed-sit, a special care/needs unit for the profoundly and multiply-handicapped. Thus persons suffering from every level of mental and even physical handicap could have a worthwhile life to lead within the community.

Some core and cluster schemes aim at the total integration of the mentally-handicapped into society by using wherever possible the same employment, leisure, recreational, sport, medical facilities as used by 'normal' people. The 'core and cluster' scheme is supported by pressure groups as 'The campaign for Mentally-Handicapped people', MIND, The National Association for Mental-health, and MENCAP.

However, unless the government can be forced to provide the resources to fund this much needed reform the ideas of community care will fail, or if implemented be insufficient to meet the needs of all mentally-handicapped people. There might develop as in the USA a back-might develop as in the USA a

backlash against the de-institutionalisation of mentally-handicapped people if they are left to live in unsuitable situations with little social contact and no job/leisure or occupational day facilities. Unfortunately a Parliamentary select committee currently examining community services seems set to reduce/freeze funding. The mentally-handicapped, it seems, are not to escape the attention of Mrs Thatcher's victorian values.

In an anarchist society it would be possible to develop an anarchist version of 'core and cluster', this would include self-advocacy, client's and worker's control/self management and active community involvement in planning and caring. Utopian perhaps, but anarchist

society will have to include all people not just the able-minded and the able-bodied. In the meantime anarchists should press society to give all disable people the right to an ordinary life.

Jonathan Simcock

Footnotes

1. MIND Factsheet No 2.
2. MIND Factsheet No 2.
3. Campaign for Mentally-Handicapped People Newsletter April/May 84.
4. Mental-Handicap H Kekstadt p 39.
5. Campaign for Mentally-Handicapped People Newsletter Feb/March 84.
6. Open Mind No 1 'A home of one's own' p 14.

UNIVERSITY OF CRIME

Thoughts on visiting Reading Prison

Oscar Wilde wrote 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' in memory of C.T.W., who died in prison on July 7th, 1896.

In Reading gaol by Reading town

There is a pit of shame.

The pit is still there shaming all of us as do the other prisons in this and every land. The state has some 50,000 inmates incarcerated in Britain. Brigid Brophy once used the vivid expression BURIED ALIVE to describe the situation of those held in these hell holes called jails.

Peter Kropotkin described the system that, with cold cruelty, perpetrates suffering often far greater than that originally meted out as *organised vengeance called justice*. Prisons are the art work of the state; they are enervating, mean and soulless. They are, indeed, like tombs.

The message of imprisonment is a four letter obscenity: OBEY. This message is, however, wrapped in hypocrisy. The first prison rule is that 'The purpose of prison is to encourage a good and useful life'. Yet even a Conservative Home Secretary, Rab Butler, agreed with Kropotkin's verdict that 'Prisons are the universities of crime'. They may wish to inculcate the message of obedience but they flout their own number one rule.

More and more people are being sent to prison in Britain — the inmate population has doubled over the last twenty years. Between 1978 and 1984 expenditure by the State on the Police, Probation, Prison and the Courts has doubled. In 1978 42% of 'offences' in England and Wales were 'cleared up' by the

police, but in 1982 the percentage of 'cleared up' 'offences' was 37%. We are far more at risk of being hurt and killed in a traffic accident than we are of suffering a violent attack from a fellow citizen. Yet the economy demands this human sacrifice on the roads whilst the state and media condemn the inhumanity of thugs.

Nothing effective is being done to end the absurd prison system. Indeed more prisons are being built. Yet, why should anyone change for the better by being confined in a small area for a long time? There is much evidence to suggest that people deteriorate in such an environment and return to 'society' to steal, hurt, rape and maim again — thus 'society', in the long run is endangered by prison, not protected by it.

Why does such stupidity continue and flourish? Why does all the evidence of the vast con trick pass without a murmur? Apart from the vested interests, which are some of the most powerful in the country, that benefit from the cruel farce, there seems to be another reason — for it is not in every country that the idiocy is carried out with such relish as in Britain. The loss of colonies may have something to do with it — penal establishments used to be called penal colonies and serve the same work role for those whose desire is to make others into obedient numbers. The work force in prison has a large percentage of former military personnel.

Again, we should perhaps not be surprised if the state runs such a useless enterprise — what do you expect? So people are buried alive in pits of shame as visible (or invisible tokens of the power of anti-life forces in society.

JW

LAF

These are the minutes of the Last London Anarchist Federation meeting to be held. Due to extensive beer stains and illegible scrawl they have taken us many months to translate and publish. The reasons for this will become apparent as you read on. . . .

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:00pm at the Prince of Wales pub by the chairhuman, and then adjourned till 8:30pm due to his being the only one there.
2. 8:30pm . . . further adjournment to 9:00pm.
3. 9:00pm . . . ditto until 9:30pm.
4. 9:30pm . . . a move for further adjournments was overruled from the floor by the treasurer who felt that, along with the multiple tables, ceilings, etc, there seemed

to be enough of everything for a meeting, including a full one he hadn't started yet. After a brief struggle, this point was taken up from the chair and drunk. The chair then called for the treasurer's report, and he found he had enough for one more.

5. Upon his return, the chair asked what had become of the £37.06 in the LAF account. Knowing the treasurer since the day he was born, he feared the money might not be available for more draught Guinness. Amidst cries of 'Shame!' from the floor, the treasurer was forced to admit that he had suffered yet another attack of principle, and fearing pressure from his alter ego concerning outstanding phone, gas and electricity bills, he had sent all of it to the South Wales NUM.

6. Worse than this, the treasurer admitted that the money had been paid into the miner's account the

day before the court had siezed the South Wales NUM funds. Thus he had handed over all the financial assets of the London Anarchist Federation to the State. . . .

7. At this point the treasurer was most surprised to find the entire person at the meeting yelling 'Perfect! Perfect! The perfect end to the experiment. . . . The treasurer then demanded a full explanation of the chair's attitude and his use of the word 'experiemnt' in respect of the LAF.

8. The chairhuman admitted that he had not been entirely (if at all) honest as a member of the Federation. He admitted that, as a youngster, he had studied sociology at university (cries of scab, traitor, etc) where he had been officially classified as a genius (IQ 162) and allowed to do whatever he liked. So he had developed an (almost) entirely original analytic

REVIEWS

The Freedom Bookshop address is 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1. It is hidden away at the end of Angel Alley, which leads off the High Street down by the Kentucky Fried Chicken close to Aldgate East tube. The bookshop is open 10 till 6, Tuesday to Saturday, and for those who are unable to visit there's a mail order service. Add 10% for postage (minimum 20p), but orders of over £10 are post free.



How to commit suicide in South Africa by Sue Coe and Holly Metz. Knockabout £3.95. ISBN 0 86166 0137.

A coffee table book, according to my dictionary, is one with large pages and lavish illustrations which one is proud to leave about for visitors to admire. By this definition *How to commit suicide in South Africa* is a coffee table book, or perhaps (since it is only 44 pages) a coffee table pamphlet.

The text, by Holly Metz, is a catalogue of straight information. A chronology of Southern Africa from 300 AD, a list of 'homelands' with their dates of 'independence', an account of fines levied on white employers for allowing maids to bring their black babies into white areas, a list of deaths in detention with official explanations, and many other useful items. The last section, directed at American readers, includes a list of US firms who invest in South Africa, and a speech by President Reagan about South Africa being essential to the Free World.

One small error: The San (Bushmen) and Khoikhoi (Hottentot) people who lived in the area before 300 AD are said to be the ancestors of the African population, whereas the majority of South Africans are descended from the Bantu who

arrived at about the same time as the Dutch. It does not change the case in any way, but being in the very first sentence, it could provide material for disparagers.

Precise sources are given for every other statement. The language is concise and unemotional. Apartheid is exposed as a nauseating cruelty by the careful recital of facts.

Sue Coe's illustrations, by contrast, are a screaming polemic of passionate intensity. In sombre greys spattered with blood red, she depicts torture, murder, and hate-filled dogs, all covered in graffiti. The combination of factual text and raging pictures makes this an exciting work of art and a devastating work of anti-apartheid propaganda.

Donald Room

VIRUS, 10 pages, price 15p c/o Albany Bookshop, 36 Albany Street, London NW1

SOCIALIST OPPORTUNIST, 20 pages, price 15p Box 91, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

Two small papers/magazines. *Virus* (in the body politic) describes

itself as 'anarcho-socialist' and 'libertarian socialist'. It has a statement of 'what we stand for' and a couple of topical articles on the miners' strike and on the recent visit by the evangelist Luis Palau and his links with right wing dictators in South America. The rest of the paper is critiques on non-libertarian socialism. There is a criticism of Engels' views on authority and a longer analysis of democratic centralism, with its inbuilt tendency to bureaucracy and elites. The whole magazine is clearly written and presented. Worth a look.

Socialist Opportunist (for all specialists in indirect action) describes itself as a 'special miners issue'. Maybe in spirit, but there's very little coverage inside. Again there is a statement of principle. The first two articles are personal, an emotional cry about the degradations of the DHSS and a conversation with a senior policeman at the May 'Stop the City'. There is a fair amount of attention to the police, including a piece on police weapons. Two contrasting articles put the violence/non-violence debate. The last, longer article is on the Labour Party. The presentation is rather smudgier, but still worth a look.

DP

A Dictionary of Political Thought by Roger Scruton, Pan Books £3.95

Roger Scruton is an academic philosopher at Birbeck College, London, and also a right-wing journalist, editing the *Salisbury Review* and writing a column in *The Times*. In the latter he recently included in an attack on bad journalism the attribution of *The Anarchist Cookbook* to Stuart Christie, which caused a lot of embarrassment for him, a lot of expense for *The Times*, and a lot of amusement for everyone else. His prejudice against and ignorance about anarchism also appear in his contribution to an otherwise excellent series of paperback reference books.

A Dictionary of Political Thought looks impressive and authoritative at first, but a closer inspection shows that its coverage of topics of anarchist interest is vitiated by errors and omissions. The entry on *anarchism* says little about the ideas of the mainstream of the anarchist movement for more than a century, and nothing about later developments by individuals from Landauer to Bookchin, or later influences of movements from situationism to feminism. It wrongly says that Proudhon 'attempted to make anarchism into a conscious movement', that Nietzsche and Sorel were anarchists, and that Marx's (actually Engels') concept of 'the withering away of the state' was 'directly inspired' by anarchism.

The entry on *libertarianism* says nothing about its early use as a euphemism for anarchism or its later use as a right-wing form of liberal anti-statism. There is no entry on *minimal state*, though there are cross-references to it. The entry on *class struggle* mentions only Marx and Weber. The entry on *commune* confuses the many meanings of the term. The entry on *guild socialism* says nothing about its relationship with syndicalism. The entries on *syndicalism* and *anarcho-syndicalism* repeat the standard errors that they were 'guided and endorsed' by Sorel.

The entries on *individualism* and *communism* and on *ecology* and *feminism* say nothing about the connection with anarchism. There is no entry on *situationism*.

The entry on *violence* again concentrates on Sorel, and ignores the dialectic of violence by and against the state. The entry on *terrorism* raises the problem but drops it, and refers only to the state terrorism of Robespierre and Stalin. There is no entry on *propaganda by deed*, and no reference to it in the entry on *propaganda*. The entry on *direct action* says nothing about its

origin in the labour movement or its centrality in anarchism. There is no entry on *mutual aid*. The almost identical entries on *non-violent resistance* and *passive resistance* refer only to Gandhi and resistance to foreign occupation in Norway and Czechoslovakia; there is no entry on *passive obedience*, which spoils the point of the latter entry. The entry on *civil disobedience* mentions only Thoreau and Gandhi, and wrongly says that the term was 'given currency' by Thoreau (it was actually coined by his posthumous editor, probably his sister Sophia). The entry on *pacifism* wrongly says that 'pacifism has been an important force in modern politics', and says nothing about the actual movement. The entry on *unilateral nuclear disarmament* similarly gives the theoretical arguments, but says nothing about the actual movement.

The entry on *Godwin* wrongly says that he was an anarchist (which he never quite was), that he supported the ideas of natural rights and social contract (which he rejected), and that he was 'never associated with any definite political movement' (though he was closely associated with the radical Whigs for half a century). The entry on *Proudhon* ignores his more idiosyncratic ideas. The entry on *Bakunin* says nothing about his participation in the anarchist movement, and wrongly says that he 'advocated . . . individual acts of terror' and that he is 'increasingly seen as a precursor of Bolshevism'. The entry on *Nechayev* wrongly says that he was an anarchist. The entry on *Kropotkin* says nothing about his participation in the anarchist movement, and wrongly says that he was the 'founder of anarcho-communism' and that he 'opposed Darwinism'.

What is depressing is not that a right-wing intellectual should produce such stuff, but that it should be passed by a panel of respectable advisors and published by two reputable publishers (Macmillan in the cloth edition of 1982 and Pan Books in the paperback edition of 1983), so that it will be bought and read by thousands of trusting people and the false image of anarchism will be prejudiced to yet another generation.

NW



system, which had profoundly revolutionary implications for the whole of mankind. (*Oh dear! eds*) 9. The initial joy at finding that not one of the professors (from Marxist to careerist) could find anything wrong with this theory, soon gave way to morbid fears. The chairhuman had become obsessed by the notion that there might be something wrong with his system, which no-one could see(yet). Thus he might wind up being responsible for even more death, destruction, doom and despondancy than Karl Marx.

10) This fear, combined with a tragic affair of the heart and some bad acid, led in the end to a sudden decision to join a north-bound R&B band before the thesis was completed or published. However, the wandering minstrel life proved a shaky sanctuary. Buried deep in his subconscious thought his

revolutionary ideas became, they were never so deeply submerged that they could not be unleashed by just ten trivial pints of Guinness. 11) Thus every night, the crystal vision and its uncanny predictive powers tormented the chairhuman until, embittered by the public's willingness to accept ex-private school young conservatives (Clash, Sex Pistols, Ian Bone) as revolutionary rock musicians, he convinced himself that if the human race was that dumb they deserved any shit they got, especially in the cause of justice, world revolution and becoming very famous.

12. At this point there was a sudden interruption from the floor which rushed up, slammed the side of the chair, and told him to get on with it and use shorter sentences. Why had the chairhuman joined?

13. Pulling himself together (for the first time that evening) the

chair-treasurer claimed that he had needed one little empirical investigation to prove a tiny point about delegate democracy. While it was an obviously hierarchical system, which would create a new ruling class (of delegates), there was a need to provide experimental evidence that the main function of the delegate system, that of excluding people from decisive activity, would still operate even when there were no real decisions to be taken.

14. For this he had needed a group of between 30-80 strong, if not very bright (in case they sussed the manipulations), lonely (to remove peer-group effects), repulsive personalities (to prevent the formation of in-group friendship networks) with unusually poor real social world knowledge.

15. The opportunity occasioned by the London Anarchist Federation,

even though provided by a tainted source (the CIA organises the early meetings every three years as an economical way of collecting not very important names) had thus been gratefully siezed . . . and had vindicated the analysis almost too perfectly.

16. For once, the ritual collapse of the London Anarchist Federation within six months had served some useful purpose, the chairhuman observed.

17. However, the chair noted that his theory predicted that this lesson would not be learnt by the anarchist movement until some six weeks into the winter of 1992. Taht is, some eight weeks after the appointment of Albert Meltzer as Minister of Justice in the Scargill Government, which should of course be far too late.

18. The Federation was formally dissolved.

LEGAL BRIEFS

There is indignation in liberal circles at the revelation that court administrators manipulate court lists so that 'serious' cases are kept away from judges with a reputation for leniency. The study was actually funded by the Home Office. It was intended to be the first part of a three year review of judges. However, after seeing these initial findings, the Lord Chief Justice decided to cancel it. He told the researchers that their findings were already well known to judges, which at least shows more realism than the liberal circles. Unfortunately he muddles things a bit by denying that these practices are taking place and if they are, they should not.



contacts

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Liverpool Direct Action Group same address. Do not mention anarchist on envelope.
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Greenpeace (London), 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 - Meet Thursdays 7pm
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Copy for **FREEDOM** should be typed or on lined paper, triple spaced and in 'conversational English' wherever possible. Closely scrawled Basildon Bond cuts no ice with our typesetter. We have a thing against language that can only be understood by other revolutionaries. **INSPEAK** is out. OK?

THE MINERS....

J Whiteman
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Dear Brother/Sister,
As you are no doubt aware, we have been on strike for 27 weeks and we find that our families are now suffering extreme hardship. We as a branch are paying over £3,000 per week in hardship payments to our members and our funds are now almost depleted. We have been forced to come to London to try to raise cash so that we can continue to help our members in this way.
We would like to appeal to your branch for help in this matter and would be grateful for any donation you feel you can make. If you can help us in this way or by purchasing or raffling such items as mining history books or miners' lamps, please contact our number.
We are also available to attend meetings if required. We thank you for your support during this struggle and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Fraternally,
J Whiteman
Financial Secretary, Bates NUM

WITH YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT WE CAN AND WILL WIN

The Freedom Office has been handed over to a group of Geordie miners for the duration of the strike. They came down of their own initiative, which is probably how come they found us. We should stress that they have official approval, in view of the 'Scottish Event'. Obviously they want your money, which you should sent to:

Bates NUM, or Blyth Miners Wives Support Group,
Bates Pit, Ms Lynn Camsell,
Blyth, 17 Cowper Hall Road,
Northumberland Cowper Estate,
Blyth,
Northumberland

There is also the Freedom Flying Picket Fund to help out with the lads expenses down here.

To all 'provincial' anarchists

This strike is probably going to last all this year and more. The need for direct aid and Miners Mutual Aid groups is at least something we anarchists will be way ahead of the leftists on. Lets have a little more feedback and a few more womens support group names and addresses to Freedom and Black Flag.

To all London anarchists

Please note that you now have your very own miners available for meetings, official street collections, etc. They don't get upset if you pop round to Angel Alley and buy them a drink, either. Perhaps now would be a good time to get together in a loose London Annarchist Association with membership on an individual basis to aid the 'Starve Maggie - Feed a Miner' campaign. Whatever our differences, that much we are surely agreed on. I suggest a meeting of those interested at Freedom on the next A Distribution day, which is Thursday 11th October at about 7:00pm. Phone and check first. Willing street collectors should pop round or phone and arrange things quickly with the miners themselves. You are much needed.

Stu Stuart

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