

# anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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FIFTY PENCE

"The man who says to men 'Believe as I do, or God will damn you' will presently say, 'Believe as I do or I shall kill you'."

Voltaire

## THE POLITICIANS' CONCERN is not for a Merrie England but for THE VOTES OF MIDDLE ENGLAND!

The death of the Labour leader John Smith, set in motion not only the Labour Party's one-man-one-vote (OMOV) with potentially four million voters, but also a government reshuffle of the pack of knaves, as well as a modest one by the Liberals if only to keep-up-with-the-political-Joneses!

In the event more than three million OMOV voters (mainly trade unionists) didn't bother. We would like to think

that so far as they were concerned what was offered was a Hobson's choice. This writer, however, regretfully suggests that their abstention is part and parcel of a widespread attitude throughout the 'prosperous' capitalist world of indifference (along the 'I'm alright Jack' citizens) and complete defeatism and apathy among the ever-growing numbers on the unemployment scrap-heap.

(more elsewhere about Murdoch's soft-spot for Blair) surely one can justify those poor Tory members who were exposed by a dirty trick organised by the *Sunday Times*, who offered them (and they accepted!) £1,000 to ask a question of the government. Most of the Tory MPs have business interests galore anyway. Some even declare them in that Bible of Members 'interests'. But they obviously look upon membership of the best-club-in-London as a stepping-stone either in the political rat-race or in the business and financial world.

Whichever, we anarchists, unlike fascinating word-spinners such as George Bernard Shaw, *trust none of them*. Of the contemporaries we challenge the Tony Benns and the Dennis Skinnners to tell us in what way their own party (in which they

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### unto everyone that hath\*... A GOLDEN HARVEST FOR LANDOWNERS

A total of 651 English landowners were each paid more than £100,000 of taxpayers' money *not to grow crops last year*. Some 45 farm owners netted between £250,000 and £500,000 while a further seven actually received more than £500,000.

According to *The Observer's* correspondent (7th August) this is the first time that the Ministry of Agriculture have produced figures showing how individual landowners and farmers have benefited from the cash handout in return for setting aside 15% of their land that normally produced cereal crops. In all last year the farmers' bonanza was £759 million and is expected to rise to £924 million this year.

Has nobody suggested to the top brass in Whitehall that that £924 million could be better spent producing food that could then be given to the starving millions in Africa? Or perhaps it would upset American interests if they did?

But until something along these lines is done, all the acres of newsprint devoted to the Rwandan disaster are sheer hypocrisy.

Nothing has changed. Latest figures confirm that the rich have been getting richer, the poor poorer.

Politicians of all persuasions rely on the people putting their crosses on the ballot papers every four or five years and each one of them is hoping to receive a majority of the crosses (and as a political cynic pointed out, so that they can double-cross you for the next five years!). There is no doubt about our Parliamentary system. Seeing the fickleness of the voting public and the power of the media

### MONEY CORRUPTS: CAPITALISM CORRUPTS EVEN MORE

The anarchist argument against capitalism is that it encourages the worse 'human instincts' which more than compensate for the undeniable benefits that have accrued in the affluent West for everybody over the last fifty years. But money surely remains the historical 'root of all evil'.

Nobody is necessarily free from the temptation of making a quick buck. The media provide one with all the evidence one needs to make this point. Favourite among the news items is that of "the most senior officer attached to the 'clean hands' anti-corruption campaign in [Rome] ... who has himself been arrested, accused of taking a £63,000 bribe". We must underline the fact that the person involved is the very person involved in rooting out the corruption!

But daily there are the government's watchdogs trying to catch those poor, miserable, unemployed who have not filled in the

right forms or have not disclosed that they did a bit of moonlighting to make ends meet, while many millions of pounds are being thrown into the hands of solicitors and accountants by government departments which are only discovered when it is too late. The money has gone and nobody is worried.

A few examples to illustrate our point. According to the National Audit Office report, "the Ministry of Defence has wasted more than £800 million building facilities for the Trident nuclear deterrent in Scotland" (*Guardian*). The report "reveals huge budget over-runs, delays, mismanagement, lack of communication and design faults".

The Audit Office also reveals that almost £50 million "has been lost on speculative developments by the Crown Estate". Apparently £270 million had been invested (profits of which would go to the Treasury) which the report says are now worth £224 million!

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\* "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" - St Matthew XXV:29

## Merrie England

In 1891 Robert Blatchford started *The Clarion*, 'the first working class paper since the *Northern Star* to have gained a mass circulation and pay for itself'. He serialised in it between 1892 and 1893 his *Merrie England*, which, published as a book, sold nearly a million copies in the next few years. A *Clarion* Fellowship grew up as a loose federation of innumerable clubs and associations which had arisen around the paper, and the most significant of these were the *Clarion Cycling Clubs*, seizing upon the newly invented 'safety' bicycle and the opportunities it brought for fresh air and exercise and fun. Organised camping trips were made deep into the country to bring the socialist message to villagers. Forty years later, one of those young socialists, George Lansbury, had become the leader of the Labour Party, and declared in 1934, "I just long to see a start made on this job of reclaiming, recreating rural England".

Blatchford's message in *Merrie England* was a blend of William Morris, Edward Carpenter and Peter Kropotkin. In the course of his book he made an acute comparison of the England of the industrial working class and the Middle England of the owners of the factories:

*"You know the factory districts of Lancashire. I ask you is it not true that they are ugly, and dirty, and smoky, and disagreeable? Compare the busy towns of Lancashire, of Staffordshire, of Durham, and of South Wales, with the country towns of Surrey, Suffolk and Hants.*

*In the latter counties you will get pure air, bright skies, clear rivers, clean streets, and beautiful fields, woods and gardens; you will get cattle and streams, and birds and flowers, and you know that all those things are well worth having, and that none of them can exist side by side with the factory system. I know that the Manchester School will tell you that this is a 'mere sentiment'. But compare their actions with their words.*

*You will find these people living as far from the factories as they can get; and you will find them spending their long holidays in the most beautiful parts of England, Scotland, Ireland, or the Continent. To make wealth for themselves they destroy the beauty and the health of your dwelling places; and then they sit in their suburban villas, or on the hills and terraces of the lovely souther countries, and sneer at the 'sentimentality' of the men who ask you to cherish beauty and to prize health.*

*Or they point out to you the value of the 'wages' which the factory system brings you, reminding you that you have carpets on your floors and pianos in your parlours, and a week's holiday at Blackpool once a year ..."*

## The politicians' concern is not for a Merrie England but for THE VOTES OF MIDDLE ENGLAND!

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still remain and are very popular with the rank-and-file) has done anything to change a system which invariably favours the privileged at the expense of the 'poor'.

From all the interviews given by Labour's new leader Tony Blair, the word *socialism* has not been prominent among them, but like Bernard Shaw he could well argue (and as a lawyer he can well argue the hind leg off a donkey, as the saying goes) that it's a question of getting the right people on the job: Shaw had it in a paragraph:

"A House [of Commons] consisting of 660 gentlemen and 10 workmen will order the soldier to take money from the people for the landlords. A House of Commons consisting of 660 workmen and 10 gentlemen will probably, unless the 660 are fools, order the soldier to take money from the landlords for the people. With that hint I leave the matter in the full conviction that the state, in spite of the anarchists, will continue to be used against the people by the classes until it is used by the people against the classes with equal ability and equal resolution."

And today anarchists are as wholeheartedly opposed to the state (for quite different reasons than is Mr Portillo) and just as much to a House of Commons "consisting of 660 workmen". Apart from the fact that, like Lord Jenkins (the Labour Party renegade now Chancellor of one of the posh universities, whose father was a miner), the Labour lot are in the main upper middle class professionals: lawyers, consultants, you name them. No objections to the qualifications. Anarchists oppose the politicians because they think themselves qualified to run our lives. When they are in office, Labour or Tory, they feel they have the power to organise and run our lives.

So there is nothing to choose between the two main political parties (the Liberals, with no prospects, are the most generous). They are operating just some aspects of a social and economic system which benefits above all perhaps 10% of the population and which, so far, provides a comfortable material living for another 60% and the remaining 30% are not only poor, but getting poorer (officially).

Even assuming that the Labour lot have any intentions of changing the situation in favour of the 30% at the bottom of the pile, what can they propose? Yes, tax the other 70%, and then you lose votes because the general public is as concerned with 'I'm alright Jack' as you politicians are concerned with winning votes!

Blatchford's and Kropotkin's, and this writer's, *Merrie England* will never be in any of the politicians' programmes. Those of us who have, more or less, lived a generous lifetime learned long ago that neither the 'free enterprise' (not free by any means) of the Thatcher-Major capitalist philosophy, or the authoritarian communist (not real communist anyway) philosophies can ever lead to a society (a world) based on happiness, co-operation and leisure to pursue the joys that make life worth living.

In *Freedom* we will not stop making the point that the effective powers in the world today are the banks, the insurance companies, the multinationals and the transnationals. Governments have no power over them. Indeed, as we show elsewhere, even the Labour Party risks a 'takeover' bid by astute businessmen!

All the publicity for Tony Blair is mainly

favourable. Why not? After all, didn't the media nominate him within 24 hours of John Smith's death? Far from being a naive, floppy-eared, church-going, family-loving politician, Tony Blair is a shrewd politician, a match for Major and the journalists. After all, he is like so many of them: a lawyer, as is his wife! Poor old Bernard Shaw thinking of the House of Commons inhabited by 660 workmen! The kind of thought of an intellectual who probably never knew how to boil an egg!

Have we explained our three-line headline? We hope so. If we haven't we should mention that 'Middle England' is on the lips of the politicians and on the pages of the 'serious' press. Why? Because, as we pointed out in the last issue of *Freedom*, the Labour politicians have hitherto relied on the votes of the unemployed and the unskilled but there are a lot more wage-slaves in employment and a majority have been voting Tory. Labour, with Tony Blair, is vote-catching at any cost. And what's left of socialism in all this campaign to vote-catch Middle England? Nothing!

## MONEY CORRUPTS: CAPITALISM CORRUPTS EVEN MORE

(continued from page 1)

The same office's report accuses the government "of wasting millions of pounds on 'ineffective' or - not this, well - politically motivated advertising.

And last but not least, the government throws money by the hundreds of millions (£560 million in 1992-93) into the pockets of consultants. Needless to say, it's officially described as 'money well spent'.

There's no doubt about it: if you can convince others how to do the job you certainly make more money than those who do the job.

Bertrand Russell summed it up in two or three sentences more than sixty years ago:

*"Work is of two kinds: first altering the position of matter at or near the earth's surface relatively to other such matter; the second telling other people to do so. The first kind is very unpleasant and ill-paid. The second kind is capable of indefinite extension; there are not only those who give orders, but those who give advice as to what orders should be given".\**

\* 'In Praise of Idleness' reprinted in *Why Work? Arguments for the Leisure Society*, Freedom Press, 210 pages, £4.00 (post free inland).

## Progress report from Walworth Road From Marx (?) to Marks & Sparks!

Perhaps we exaggerate. Few of the original Labour Party leaders ever read Marx and certainly from Lansbury to Blair, God has been their guru. However, that Marks & Spencer have offered an invitation to Mr Blair to discuss his programme is a fact, and the invitation accepted.

But as we write, Rupert Murdoch the international press mogul, who owns about a third of the British daily press - *Sun*, *Today*, *Times* and the *Sunday Times*, as well as the notorious *News of the World* (circulation 4½ million) - has also expressed an interest in advancing Tony Blair's cause. Also one of the Sainsbury billionaires has revealed that he contributed a mere £5,000 to Tony Blair's party election campaign. Last but certainly not

least, the big noises in the Ministry of Defence are about to include the Labour Party in their discussions for the first time.

Tony Blair has accepted all these invitations, which he obviously feels can help him to win the next election. Apart from the fact that it is a long way off - and as Harold Wilson used to point out, a week is a long time in politics - so it means another two years at least, and a lot can change in the political game. One thing we have no doubt about is that whoever wins next time it won't be socialism. International capitalism will hardly be upset by whoever occupies 10 Downing Street.



The libel case brought by the McDonalds hamburger chain against our comrades Dave Morris and Helen Steel has been 'in recess' since 3rd August and will start again at the High Court on Monday 12th September.

As we reported earlier, our comrades lost their appeal against the decision to have the case heard by a judge without a jury. But as we did not report, they won a parallel appeal against a decision to allow McDonalds to withhold documents. The case is now expected to last until December or January. The national press (especially *The Independent*) and the American press (notably *The Philadelphia Inquirer*) reported the start of the case, but are unlikely to take much more notice of it until the end. *Freedom*, however, will report more frequently, not only because anarchists are involved, but also because it may slightly decrease the power of the powerful.

It was made clear by Richard Rampton QC, opening the case for the plaintiff, that the object is not to gain compensation for material loss but simply to shut the defendants up. Parallels are not exact, but there are similarities with the late Robert Maxwell issuing writs to prevent exposure of his robbing the pension fund, Jimmy Goldsmith prosecuting *Private Eye* for criminal libel, and the psychic Uri Geller bringing hopeless multiple actions against the magician James Randi with the object of driving Randi into bankruptcy. All are examples of the rich using libel laws for the purpose of censorship. By

## McLibel case in recess until 12th September

their defiance, Helen and Dave set a precedent which make it less easy for this method of censorship to be used in future.

### Treatment of food animals

McDonalds came off worst on days 18 to 20, when evidence was given about the rearing and killing of food animals. They may be lucky that the national press did not report it, as it seems likely that some McDonalds regulars, at least, would withdraw their custom if they thought the animals were treated other than humanely.

McDonalds suppliers denied access to anyone working for the defendants, but allowed inspection on behalf of McDonalds by a vet, Dr Neville Gregory, an expert witness whose evidence was impartial.

Broiler chickens at Sun Valley Poultry were reared in darkness with very little space. 44% had leg abnormalities. They were injured during transport to the slaughter house, some dying as a result. Before being electrically stunned, 14% received painful pre-stun shocks. 1% were decapitated without being stunned, and 1% went into the scalding tank alive.

Egg producing hens at Oasters Ltd were kept in poor, cramped conditions.

All piglets at G.D. Bowes had teeth clipped,

and one in four had tails docked. At 40kg they were transferred to fattening units where each had less than half a square metre of space. At slaughter the stunning current was low, for fear of affecting meat quality, and some animals were not stunned effectively.

McDonalds beef is mostly culled dairy cows. At McKeys Ltd they were stunned with captive bolt pistols and "the aim was not particularly good" because the killing lines move too fast for accuracy. From a survey of skulls, Dr Gregory estimated imperfect stunning at 3.7%.

### Packaging and advertising

Before the animals evidence, it was established that until 1988 McDonalds used expanded polystyrene packages with CFCs, but it was also established that since McDonalds learned about CFCs damaging the ozone layer, polystyrene has been phased out and replaced by paper (except in the Philippines and Turkey). McDonalds does not recycle paper and has no policy regarding its source.

John Horwitz of McDonalds legal department gave evidence about threats of legal action against McDonalds in the United States for deceptive advertising. They claimed that "only delicious chunks of breast and thigh meat— go into Chicken McNuggets, but chicken skin and beef lard also gets in. The claim that McDonald's food is 'nutritious' was withdrawn after objections by three Attorneys General. "We are not a health store," Mr Horwitz said, "That's not what we do".

Verner Wheelock, a consultant nutritionist for McDonalds, was getting into difficulties over the term 'junk food', until Mr Rampton intervened to say that McDonalds did not object to that description. It was put to him that before being hired by McDonalds in 1991, he had written that people should "avoid ... snack foods which are high in fat," to which he replied, "Anyone can change their views".

The McLibel Support Campaign is organising a picket outside the High Court (Strand, WC2, nearest tubes Holborn and Temple) on 12th September, when the case resumes, from 9.30am till 11.30am. They are also organising several demonstrations in October. Details from McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, telephone 071-713 1269.

railways from grinding to a halt. What these struggles show is that these laws can be beaten, along with the Tories and their capitalist paymasters, if working people in this country are prepared to take 'Direct Action' like the French working class have taken against their own conservative prime minister, Mr Balladur, who had been forced to beat a hasty retreat on more than one occasion when faced with widespread industrial action. But we should not delude ourselves that the well-paid trade union bosses are going to lead a fightback — their only concern is the union coffers. Some union bosses have not been slow in recognising that there are some advantages to these laws. The Tory anti-union laws have become a convenient excuse for some unions to do nothing and, however remote the possibility, workers who want to fight back are being fobbed off with the excuse that if they take strike action this will invite legal action against the union.

Many workers in this country have had enough of pay cuts and redundancies and the mood of workers is changing after having the boot pushed in their faces these past fifteen years. As Nigel Flanagan said outside the High Court in Manchester, now is the time for all working people to get off their knees and to start fighting back with a renewed vigour. Messages of support for the 'Sefton Two' as well as financial donations towards the defence campaign should be sent to the 'Sefton Two Defence Campaign', who can be contacted at 051-920 6140 (for further information) or 051-928 0298 (fax).

Joe McCarthy

## Through the Anarchist Press

Lo and behold, one of the few advertisements in the Underground system which was vetoed to be shown to the GP (as the General Public is laughingly referred to) was the poster designed and paid for by the Levellers music ensemble. I wonder what dreadful revelations were contained in the advertisement that our ever-loving Executive objected to people seeing. Can it be possible that it had something to do with the recent Trafalgar Square gathering (to protest against the CIB) and the imminent release of the new anarchist golden oldie 'Why so unhappy, old blue and true?', and on the flip side 'Happy days are here again'.

Every minute a cargo of cooped up humans passed through the air space above the garden of the house not as much as a quarter of a mile atop our distinguished heads. Imagine the roar these machines produced and that is life beneath the flight path to London's airport. The number of people passing over that garden in their pressurised cabins is estimated to add up in a year of traffic to a colossal number of something like 916 (wait for it) million people. It is that roar we hear.

Vacation time at Westminster. Would anybody notice if the members never returned? But they'll be back to pick up their cheques and to sign on the dotted line.

Electronic mail has broken through the barriers of privilege. The French revolution was greatly assisted by the preparatory work of the encyclopaedists who "were tainted by impracticable revolutionary ideas".

Limited choice is all we have, although some people maintain choice is endless. Perhaps the only choice we have is Hobson's choice. Hobson kept horses for hire and he gave you the choice of hiring any of them as long as you took the horse which stood already harnessed "nearest the stable door".

Life in an anarchist society should be made less difficult than it is now. Consider mother. She is willing to carry a child into the world and allows her body to take her through all the loops the body is capable. It does not stop there. Before a child is weaned, it must also be understood. As the months and years go by, the intellectual contact must be made. Something is gained, a new entity. Something is lost and must be found: equilibrium.

Education is an art of drawing out the faculties. From an old manual: "The business of education involves two main considerations: 1. What to teach? and 2. How to teach it?" But typically no answers are given.

Radioactive nuclear waste is carried by Rtrain (not usually at weekends) through North London. Last Saturday all traffic was diverted from the Chalk Farm area. Conflicting reasons were given, such as an accident with an oil lorry. The people working in the nearby market said a train was involved.

Speakers' Corner is reduced in size once more. The builders are in and they have sliced a good third off it. So another restriction on the 'valve of free speech' where people used to let off steam.

P.S. Those who know PS (Philip Sansom) would have been delighted to hear his name mentioned so admiringly on Radio 4 last week. On a programme called 'The Soap Box' Joan Lestor said how privileged she was to have heard him at Speakers' Corner speaking for the anarchists. Where are the new orators today?

John Rety

## — 'SUPPORT THE SEFTON TWO' —

### Fight the Tory anti-union laws

Officials of the public sector union UNISON were subjected to a torrent of abuse from demonstrators when they attended the Manchester High Court in July to give evidence in contempt proceedings brought by Sefton Council, Merseyside, against Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy, two branch officials of Sefton UNISON and employees of Sefton Council.

Both branch officers had been summoned to appear before the High Court for flouting an injunction which Sefton Council had obtained under the Tory anti-union laws to prevent the branch from organising 'illegal' strike action against the privatisation of council services. Although the branch had asked UNISON to organise a ballot when the council had announced its intention to privatise its technical services, the union had declined to do so because they claimed they were too busy with their 'check-off' campaign and they also believed that Sefton Council would take legal action against the union.

At a subsequent meeting organised by the branch, UNISON members voted by a majority to take strike action on 28th June for one day, in spite of being served with an injunction from the High Court. However, faced with the prospect of industrial action the council withdrew its privatisation plan and then instituted contempt proceedings against the two branch officials. UNISON also declared that it officially repudiated the action taken by the branch.

On three separate occasions around five hundred supporters of the 'Sefton Two Defence Campaign' demonstrated outside the High Court. Both Nigel and Martin had told their supporters that they would not apologise to the court for carrying out the instructions of their members or give assurances that they would comply with future injunctions obtained under the Tory anti-union laws. Despite the fact that both branch officials were facing terms of imprisonment and unlimited fines, an Assistant General Secretary of UNISON, Keith Sonnett, told the court that Flanagan and Murphy were on their own as far as the union was concerned.

At the first hearing on 19th July the Judge adjourned the case because he said the demonstration outside the court was too noisy. On 21st July the case was adjourned for a second time because the Judge said he wanted to think seriously and carefully about the case before making a decision. On 29th July Nigel and Martin were both fined £1,250 each and ordered to pay one-eighth of the costs. In spite of its efforts to dissociate itself from the one-day strike, UNISON was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay the majority of the costs. An application by the 'hung' Sefton Council for the injunction to continue was dismissed by the Judge

who had remarked in his summing up that he had been bound to take notice of the number of people who had assembled outside the court.

Outside in Crown Square a delighted Mr Flanagan hailed the decision taken by the court not to imprison them for contempt as a victory for the Sefton branch and he vowed that not only would he do it again but that he would not personally pay one penny of the fine. He added that the branch had taken on the courts and won, as well as Sefton Council and UNISON leadership. He called upon all working people to start fighting back with a renewed vigour and to get off their knees. Other speakers not only referred to the scandalous lack of support from UNISON, but also suggested that it was highly probable that UNISON would seek to discipline the Sefton branch. On a previous occasion we had also been told how one top UNISON official, Dave Prentice, had been speaking at CBI conferences on the subject of how to overcome trade union opposition to 'privatisation'.

The contempt proceedings brought against Nigel Flanagan and Martin Murphy are something which both UNISON and Sefton Council should feel deeply ashamed about. The case has shown, amongst other things, the extent to which individual liberty in this country has been eroded by the antics of this vile Tory government. It is nothing short of a scandal that two Merseyside trade unionists can be hauled up before the High Court because they went on strike along with others against the privatisation of council services. Not so long ago it would have seemed inconceivable to most people in this country that strikes could be deemed 'illegal' — after all, Britain does like to brag a lot about freedom and it's only slaves, so they say, who cannot withdraw their labour. Similarly, if the present Criminal Justice Bill gets passed then mass demonstrations of the sort that took place outside the High Court in Manchester will almost certainly be illegal.

The successive Employment Acts which have been introduced by the Tories amount to nothing less than a scab's-charter and a free-hand for the bosses to screw working people. Their aim has been to hamstring the trade unions by making it 'virtually' impossible for working people to take lawful strike action. Not surprisingly, the bosses are using these vicious laws and the courts to stop their workers from fighting back and to stick the boot in. However, the existence of these anti-union laws did not prevent the Timex strike last year or the wave of unofficial strikes in the Post Office this year, nor did it prevent the strike at Sefton council. The massive support for the signal workers' strike also shows that the anti-union laws cannot prevent the

Firstly some background notes. It's one of the smallest countries in South America divided into three regions – the coastal plains to the west, the Amazonian region in the east and a mountainous area in the middle. It's about the size of Britain and is the homeland to thirteen indigenous nationalities each with its own culture and language. These groupings amount to about 40% of the population – about four and a half million. Nine of these indigenous groups live in the Amazonian region, primarily hunter gatherers and fishermen with a deep respect for their environment.

Little notice was paid to them since the conquest began five hundred years ago until recently when, in the '70s, oil was discovered. In 1972 Texaco set up operations in the country in the Amazonian region to the north of the Napo river. The story that was to follow was one of misery. Land and water contamination with lagoons turned into thick black pools, fish dying in the rivers, the animals the people depended on for their

## News from Greece

Greek anarchists in Kavala have been much involved in anti-fascist activity over the last year. A two day event attracted some 50 people to discussion groups on the first day with numbers quadrupling the second day largely no doubt given the free concert that was thrown in... linked in with this a group of some seven anarchists distributing literature in the town centre concerning anti-fascism and also calling for the liberation of Balafas, Michou and Kiriakopoulos were arrested by police, taken to the cop shop where the police set about trying to frighten them before releasing them after about an hour. This event managed to get them some coverage on local radio. Another event to support the prisoners involved showing a film 'Brazil' which was followed up by a spot of graffiti in the town leading to three arrests. They were charged with 'polluting public buildings'.

Balafas is a 'social struggler' who, along with his girlfriend Michou and his friend Kiriakopoulos, were charged, last year, with 'terrorism' on spurious grounds. Unsurprisingly the main reason for the authorities interest in him is the large amount of anti-authoritarian activity he has been participating in. Their trial took place at the end of last year. They were given a 25 day prison sentence which was 'bought off' plus a three year conditional discharge. The Kavala group (anarcho-pacifist) is now organising the publication of a bulletin about activity in Greece which it is hoped will be circulated every other month.

## ... and Portugal

The Barcelona group of *Solidaridad Obrera* reports on anti-anarchist oppression by the authorities in Portugal. The Judicial Police released a story that an anarchist group had been responsible for the abduction and torture of a leading industrialist which had as its aim to extort money. The basis for the allegations would seem to be that an 'anarchist manifesto' was found in the house where the industrialist had been held captive which had been published by the 'A Hidra' anarchist collective. In dissociating themselves from the kidnapping they released a communiqué from which the following is taken...

"Anyone who knows anything about anarchism knows that kidnapping, imprisonment, torture etc. are not properly speaking anarchist methods but rather those of nazis, religious fundamentalists, members of the Irish Republican Army and other authoritarian organisations ... Could it be that the police simply didn't like the propaganda that anarchists have been putting out recently against the criminal activities of Nazi groups?"

Information from *Solidaridad Obrera* no. 247

# Focus on ... Ecuador

## The people fight back

There has been a fair amount of news – and rightly so – about the uprising of the EZLN in Mexico which began in 1st January this year. Less has been said, however, of other struggles in the region. Here we try to redress the balance a little by bringing you some information about the current situation in Ecuador.

survival becoming more and more rare. Texaco built roads. The roads brought settlers. The settlers brought deforestation.

Texaco was also responsible for building the pipeline which crosses the country from east to west and whose spillages have caused as much contamination as the oil spilt in the Exxon Valdez accident in Alaska.

Texaco pulled out leaving a mess behind it. Last year in *Freedom* we reported the call for a boycott of Texaco and the other companies that have followed in its contaminated wake. A couple of years ago Ecuadorian Amazonia was divided up into 200,000 hectare blocks allocated to several foreign concerns and PetroEcuador the nationalised oil company. This was the go-ahead for exploitation activity to expand south. British Gas was involved. After an exploratory period they decided the area was not 'profitable' and pulled out, but not before adding generously to the contamination in the Shiwiar region. Anarchist groups in Spain brought reports last year of the Texas-based Maxus company intensifying its research with a view to underground exploitation on the land of the Huaorani indians. Despite protests the government gave permission for a further 400 kilometres of roads to be built, with predictable results. Apart from Maxus others are involved: Arco, Orix, Elf-Aquitaine. In November last year the Ecuadorian congress laid down the legal framework which would fully open up the oil and gas reserves to the international companies and at the same time

allowed them to increase the capacity of the Trans-Ecuadorian pipeline.

### Resistance

April 1991 saw a historic march from the Amazon to Quito. On the way indigenous people from all over the country joined the march which arrived at Quito on 23rd April. For many Ecuadorians this was revelatory ... they didn't know there were Indians in the Amazonian region. The Indian Organisation of Pastaza (OPIP) demanded two million hectares of land from the government. OPIP makes a distinction between land and territory. Land belongs to communities with no rights to exploit subterranean resources. Territories belong to nationalities who have managerial rights. The government claimed that to give the latter would amount to creating states within states (interestingly they don't take this view when dealing with transnational companies) but they have the full support of the landowners who see uncultivated land as a safety valve – making the population agreeably docile. The unjust land system has created serious land scarcity with almost half the land in the country being owned by 1.5% of landowners.

The argument has continued over the last two years and has now come to a head\* sparked off by land reform law approved by

\* Information from *Financial Times*, 21st June 1994.

## A call to reclaim May Day: protest the IMF and World Bank on 1st May 1995

We see today that the main purpose of the Cold War was to prevent our movements for a better life, our class and our organisations in the First World, Eastern Bloc and the Third World from coming together. Such alliances seriously threaten the existence of all exploitative institutions whether they are ruled by corporations or by the state, whether they call themselves capitalist or socialist. The end of the Cold War was the result at least in part of the refusal to accept this division by people in the First, Second and Third Worlds. But the end of this form of rule has only led to the whole world coming together under the tyranny of one global system of exploitation managed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and backed up by the military repression of the United States, the United Nations and virtually all of the governments of the world. These institutions were consciously created at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 to constitute a capitalist international. The Communist and Third World nationalist bureaucracies gradually became active collaborators with the IMF/World Bank, using foreign debts to discipline their own working class. The IMF and World Bank are this year arrogantly celebrating their fiftieth anniversary. We want to ruin this party.

We at Workers Solidarity Alliance - IWA New York/New Jersey, and Neither East Nor West, New York, are writing to invite you to join in organising a day of action against the IMF and World Bank to be held on (or around) Monday 1st May 1995.

We especially hope to bring the role of the IMF and World Bank to the attention of North Americans and others from western countries who are less aware of the role of these institutions even in their own countries. The IMF and World Bank are located in the US. They are funded primarily by the richest governments. The suffering of the people in First World countries is the result of IMF

and World Bank policies no less than in other parts of the world. Throughout the world, the growth of homelessness, loss of farms and jobs, destruction of neighbourhoods, slashing of social programmes and education, de-capitalisation of local communities, creation of artificial famines, repression of labour and other social movements has grown as a result of IMF and World Bank policies. We also hope that this day of action can help build autonomous contacts and networks between peoples in every part of the planet. Such contacts have until recently been limited or made difficult by the division of the world into two Cold War blocs, and by the political loyalties which have developed around this division.

A few last words: we are not 'in charge' of this – we are volunteering to act as facilitators for the communication on this proposed project. We want to start talking about the kinds of actions that the different unions, organisations and groups would like to do and what resources they have available. We would like everyone to contact us as soon as they have some ideas about what they are going to do so we can start passing on the information to others. We will do several mailings about proposed plans and will be sending out some kind of IMF/World Bank packet (most probably in English, but if you can help on this last, please let us know this too). We are also not dictating the kinds of actions to be taken. If you feel it would be most effective participating in some larger anti-IMF/World Bank action or traditional May Day in one's area, do so by all means and pass the news on to us.

Please contact us to let us know what you think, so we can start preparing for May Day 1995. Send replies to **Workers Solidarity Alliance and Neither East Nor West, 339 Lafayette Street, Room 202, New York, New York 10012, USA.**

President Sixto Durán Ballen on 13th June which halts popular land distribution programmes exacerbating the land problem still further. Now the people are resorting to more direct forms of action.

During the last two weeks of June protesters closed off some of the main motorways in the country, hitting commerce and isolating several cities. Road-blocks successfully cut off Ambato and Cuenca (the third and fourth largest cities in the country) leading to supply shortages and price increases. The Pan-American highway was blocked off by protests from some two hundred indigenous communities at several junctions in Cotopaxi Province.

Forty thousand indigenous people gathered in the provincial capital of Rio Bamba to demand annulment of the legislation. In the Amazon region several access roads to oil wells were blocked. In mid-June a protester was shot dead by a motorist trying to crash through the barricades and further similar clashes have left dozens wounded.

Some governors are calling for a state of emergency, others to annul the so-called agricultural development law. Critics say that the new legislation ends all hope of any form of fair land redistribution and that indigenous people are now denied communal land and water rights. Talks were due to start on 22nd June.

As in Mexico, information about what is happening in Ecuador is not readily available to people in the west. We hope to get more information from contacts in South America or sources in Europe with links with the region. We will bring you news of this and other struggles when we receive it. We would of course be interested in hearing from readers with contacts or information about struggles in South America.

## News from the International Section

The first time we did this column we pointed out that most of the people involved in *Freedom's* international section helped with linguistic skills. Whilst this is still perhaps the most useful way people can get involved it is not the only way.

Bulletin number 5 is going out at the moment. It went out in English a few weeks ago and is going out in other languages as translation is completed. John Rety asked a short while ago if we are sending out information about the forthcoming events this coming October. The answer is yes and no.

Number 5 carried the Bristol address that is circulating in this country and a couple of sentences saying what it is about and that was all. Why? Because we have no information about it to send out.

We did send out a fair bit of information about McLibel, ARROW and action against the Criminal Justice Bill because those involved here have made information available either through the pages of *Freedom* or independently of it.

Clearly things are at an early stage but we would like to repeat again that we would like to receive information from readers who are involved in something which may be of interest to international readers. It's best if it's short, about 250 words – what you're reading is 290 words long – though of course we will put out longer stuff if appropriate. It's also best if it presumes no previous knowledge of the issues involved.

The next date for receipt of information is November 1st and will go out to groups in all countries where we have contacts. So if you want people abroad to know what's going on here in the UK let us know.

## — ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# Keeping the poor out of rural England

Old readers will remember the engineer L.C.T. Rolt, a campaigner for the revival of inland waterways and for saving the integrity of the railway network that the Victorian engineers had left behind. He was regarded as an awkward idiosyncratic character, but a few years ago his book *High Horse Riderless* was rediscovered by the eco-lobby and reissued by Green Books of Devon.

And in 1992 Alan Sutton Publishers brought out Rolt's third volume of autobiography, *Landscape with Figures*, written shortly before his death twenty years ago. In the course of it he describes changes in the west country village where his family lived:

"Because of mis-application of the well-intentioned Slum Clearance Act by a zealous Medical Officer of Health, most of the old village cottages I knew were condemned on the grounds of their low ceilings, or lack of through ventilation. Even with the aid of the available local authority grants, their occupants could not afford alterations which could conform with local regulations. Consequently, such houses have been acquired by those who could afford reconstruction, executives or retired businessmen, with the result that they have been 'prettified' beyond recognition and embellished with such things as bogus wrought iron work of welded steel strip, carriage lanterns or wooden wheelbarrows filled with flowers. Meanwhile such old village families as have survived this upheaval live in council houses on the

village outskirts from whence they are collected and delivered daily by special coaches which take them to work in the nearby factories."

Here is the authentic voice of the pugnacious Mr Rolt. But it brings to mind several forgotten bits of recent history. The first is that those pathetic and neglected cottages were knocked down by the thousand in the post-war decades as unfit for human habitation, before they were seen as precious relics of vernacular building. The second is that their inhabitants were thankful to be allocated one of the raw new council houses, with all those modest facilities that had been beyond their reach for years.

The span of time between the writing and the publication of his book is a reminder of two other social facts. One is that those nearby factories were probably driven out of business in the early '80s. How thankful we'd all be today if they were still providing local employment. The other is that those council houses aren't being built any more, and all attempts to provide 'affordable housing' for rent in the current political regime have to negotiate an impenetrable thicket of provisions to prevent them from moving up-market in the future, quite apart from the

soaring price of land and the shift in attitudes that makes all new building (apart from agricultural structures, thanks to the political influence of the farming industry) a blot on the landscape. The most vehement landscape cherishers are the new occupants of those picturesque cottages.

In my nearest village two parish councillors had laboured for years to bring a housing association proposal for affordable housing into existence. But the *East Anglian Daily Times* reports that by 25 votes to 15 a public meeting recommended that there was no need for new housing. Bryn Hurren, the parish vice-chairman, said that local people had been 'mugged' by newcomers who had railroaded the meeting and forced a decision which went completely against previous, carefully researched opinion. Another councillor, Andrew Hazell, said that the decision was a "nail in the coffin" for the younger generation. "I was born and bred here and think the people blocking this scheme should hang their heads in shame. The haves have delivered a very raw deal to the have-nots".

Of course the district council's planning committee may take a different view, but if it does it will be accused of ignoring local

opinion. What always surprises me is the blatancy with which the privileged present their case. They are not being selfish, they are protecting our common environment. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, the author of *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, remarks in a new book, "I am one of those who believe that our current guilt-ridden worship of the environment is a sign of moral and cultural disarray". My trouble is that I don't find much guilt in evidence.

However, the announcement of a conference on 27th September on 'The Future of the Southern Shires' (and organised by the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages of the United Kingdom) includes a pungent quotation:

"The shires of Southern Britain are to the late twentieth century what the industrial towns of the north were to the beginning of the nineteenth except that instead of attracting the rural poor they are attracting the urban rich."

We could pursue this analogy further and accept that the Victorian cities which expanded like mushrooms were an historical aberration brought about by the speed of industrialisation and that, just as Ebenezer Howard predicted, the twentieth century was bound to be "the period of the great exodus". The exodus of the footloose affluent who can buy their way in anywhere doesn't help the urban poor with the same aspiration to join the trend, but it does destroy the hopes of low income rural families of getting a home in their own parish. In July one of the CPRE's responses to the DoE publication *Quality in Town and Country* was to urge new approaches "to stem the out-migration of people and jobs from the towns and cities to the countryside". What measures will deter the urban rich from worsening the lives of the rural poor? Their arrival doesn't improve the viability of local services. They don't use local shops, they rove in their Rangerovers. They don't improve the numbers at the village school, as their children are privately educated. They can afford to laugh at the county council's efforts to keep the buses on the road. They are certainly active in the village preservation society, since as the late Gerald Wibberley explained years ago, they "want their particular village to stay as it was when they decided to move there".

As to the measured needed to deter the urban poor from moving out of the city, they have existed for years. Maurice Ash, when chairman of the TCPA (Town & Country Planning Association), declared that the combination of efforts to shore up the inner cities amounted, in practice, to nothing less than a conspiracy to contain the disadvantaged, "a conspiracy" he said, "because it suits the policies of our centralised state to keep the cities and prisons for the poor. It suits both those who want to manipulate the poor for reasons of power, and those who want to keep them from the preserves of the rich".

To my mind, the conspiracy to exclude the poor from rural England is the first item on the agenda in any discussion of the future of the shires.

Colin Ward

## — OBITUARY — James Joll (1908-1994)

James Joll the historian died on 12th July at the age of 76. He came from a military family, was educated at Winchester College, Bordeaux University, and New College, Oxford, and served in army intelligence during the Second World War. He was a lecturer at New College from 1946 to 1950, then Sub-Warden at St Antony's College, Oxford, from 1951 to 1967, and finally Stevenson Professor of International History at the London School of Economics from 1967 to 1981.

He was a conscientious and popular academic and also a reputable historian. He wrote several books — *The Second International* (1955), *Intellectuals in Politics* (1960), and *Europe since 1870* (1973), *Gramsci* (1977), and *The Origins of the First World War* (1984) — which were very successful, and an inaugural lecture — *1914: The Unspoken Assumptions* (1967) — which challenged excessive reliance on documents and had a considerable impact. He also wrote *The Anarchists* (1964) and co-edited *Anarchism Today* (1971), a history of and a collection of articles on anarchism produced when the subject had become fashionable.

Joll saw anarchism from outside in a romantic way which attracted many non-anarchist commentators but irritated most anarchist activists, and he was surprisingly careless with facts. He did no more work on anarchism for the last thirty years of his life, but continued to write articles and reviews which maintained his attitude and displayed his ignorance — most recently in a long review of Peter Marshall's recent book *Demanding the Impossible*. At the same time, he was helpful to other researchers on the subject and, though he was hurt by the hostile reception his work received from anarchists, he seemed to bear no personal grudge. When he sheltered Anthony Blunt from the media in 1979, he was grateful for messages from libertarians who supported his practical expression of E.M. Forster's principle that one should betray one's country rather than one's friend.

Joll was a connoisseur of the arts and an enthusiastic musician, and he lived for nearly forty years with John Golding, the art historian.

NW

## Truth at the end of the line

The signalpersons are finding their employer intractable in the face of repeated costly industrial action. This comes as no surprise to anarchists and other similarly perceptive groups.

I was on a strike-dodging train trip recently. I found myself in conversation with a suited refugee from the first-class cocoon. We met in the neutral territory of what they still, from habit rather than accuracy, describe as the restaurant car.

It came as no surprise when he turned out to be a free-market capitalist entrepreneur. Why, I asked, didn't the government get out of the way and let the signalpersons and Railtrack come to a free-market negotiated settlement? Not the point, old boy, (amazing how these archaic forms of speech survive, is it not?) I was told. I fished for elaboration.

It turned out that when himself a younger boy, my companion had set up a firm which manufactured insulated containers. What? You know, those transit boxes that got rid of the dockers and 'cut their stranglehold on the movement of goods'. Yes, quite so.

And (he bought me a drink before ending the story) it was a jolly good thing we got enough containers together before they hacked the steel makers to pieces! Cheers!

After that, and spurred on by the way they stick Heath's head down the pan, the miners were the next to go. He agreed with me that Heseltine had to act quickly before those Eurocrats could interfere (see 'ere we go, 'ere we go, 'ere we go, a review of the Maastricht Treaty in *Freedom*, 13th November 1993).

So who does that leave on the Tory Shousecleaning list? Just the railways of course. A few moments reflection produced the underlying common pattern. First initiate moved towards privatisation (in the case of the docks it was deregulation, which amounted to the same thing). Next, stir up the workers. The ensuing workers' action in defence of the industrial *status quo* invariably pulls the industry apart. This enables the plums ripe for free-market capitalist entrepreneurial picking to stand out and be plucked.

The result is industries disconnected from any connection with a social base. The

remaining workers will be prevented from re-forming into an organised labour force, and what was once a coherent industry will remain fragmentary and chaotic, permanently on the edge of competitive crisis; in short, ideal for money making.

So *quo vadis* Railtrack? The historical agenda demands that British Rail falls apart. Intermittent strikes are seen as a good way to rehearse people in finding other routes to work. My companion looked at his Rolex and asked me to excuse him. He pulled out the obligatory mobile phone and got on to someone called Janice. When finished he confided that he had decided to fly back; it's only two hundred and fifty quid to my local airport including the car home, not bad, eh? Not bad at all, compared to sixty quid in the cocoon.

Of course, the ripe railway profitable plums will be picked up once the system as a whole has been wrecked and the labour force fragmented. The great car economy will once more emerge as the ultimate destroyer of everything in its path, an apt analogy of this particular government, but ultimately of all governments. Any group which has sufficient potential power to resist their will must go. The fallacy of democracy is of course that your choice is to agree or disagree.

The more of us on the roads choking each other with our highly-taxed petrol fumes, concreting over at enormous expense what used to be countryside, cutting swathes through what used to be communities, the better for government and its friends. That we may not travel in anything like a civilised manner is irrelevant — the market will ensure that 'economic' functions continue. And anyway, important persons can either get the traffic cleared or fly above it.

Democracy, my right wing companion confirmed, is just about shuffling the pack, not changing it. What about a totally different sort of game, I asked. As we stood up to leave the train he looked over his gold-rimmed glasses at me with an expression of mild amusement. "I say, old boy," he asked, "you're not some sort of anarchist, are you?"

Colin Johnson

NEW FROM FREEDOM PRESS

### Health Service Wildcat

As it says on the front cover, "this book is dedicated to the daft doctrine that people trained in making profits can run a better health service than people trained in caring for the sick". It is the fourth book of Donald Room's 'Wildcat' cartoons to be published by Freedom Press, but the first in which Donald has worked with a collaborator. Most of the hilarious scripts are by a well-known writer, not an anarchist, who works for the National Health Service.

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## Back-door bid to boost blasphemy law

A call for the total abolition of the blasphemy laws is made in the August issue of *The Freethinker*, the 113-year old Secular Humanist journal, pages 122 and 123.

And an article in the paper suggests that Muslim leaders were behind a recent House of Lords move which would have strengthened the existing laws 'by the back-door'.

The amendment was defeated by 96 votes to 25 after a late-night debate on 12th July. But a leading article warns: "That is far from being the end of the matter. There will be renewed attempts by different routes to introduce the changes ... which would make it much easier to suppress open discussion of religious doctrines and practices".

One of the sponsors of the 12th July move, Dr Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, told the paper's editor following the debate: "The proposal is not dead. I may be in touch with the Labour Party to see if they would be interested in pursuing it as party policy."

And the journal notes: "... there does appear to be strong cross-party support for Dr Harries. He said Liberal Democrats had given considerable backing to the amendment, and the government had 'seemed sympathetic, but then for various reasons couldn't accept it'."

*The Freethinker* reports that in the Lords debate Earl Ferrers, speaking for the government, had admitted to discussions with religious groups on the subject through the

Inner Cities Religious Council, and the Home Secretary had discussed it with a group of Muslim leaders, adding: "We will continue to use these routes to explore the issues with the care and thoroughness they deserve".

The defeated proposal was put forward as a Clause to be added to the Criminal Justice Bill:

"A person who uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or who publishes or displays any written material which is threatening, abusive or insulting is guilty of an offence if  
a) he intends thereby to stir up hatred against any group of persons in Great Britain on the ground of their religious beliefs, and  
b) having regard to all the circumstances such hatred is likely to be stirred up thereby."

*The Freethinker* believes – in the words of contributor Nicolas Walter of the Rationalist Press Association – that such a law "would give dangerous power to theistic fanatics such as evangelical Protestants, traditional Catholics, fundamentalist Muslims and extremist Jews, also to Christian Scientists, Mormons, Moonies and Scientologists, and to any group which believes in divine beings and

in using the courts to enforce its convictions.

"Even if cases were difficult to prove in court, the threat of prosecution would suppress legitimate criticism of objectionable practices justified by religious doctrine – such as the doctrine of hell, the indoctrination of the young, the subjection of women, the prevention of birth control, discrimination against homosexuals, torture of animals, mutilation of children, and so on.

If there is a genuine need for more legal protection of vulnerable minorities, any new law should be properly discussed and prepared before it is introduced into Parliament.

A better course would be to abolish *all* laws giving specific protection to religion. After all, some religions deserve hatred, and we insist on our right to say so."

The Bishop of Oxford described "resentment" that only Christianity and the Church of England in particular had their beliefs protected by law.

And co-sponsor Lord Lester told the House: "Members of the Muslim community – I speak here of the decent moderate majority, not of extremists – settled in this country

undoubtedly feel affronted because of what they regard as the discriminatory legal position, protecting only Christianity."

But Lord Sefton of Garston is quoted in *The Freethinker* as insisting: "Nobody is going to prevent me from standing up in public and saying I detest the very idea of somebody being condemned to death because he wrote a certain book which offended a religion which is based on a supernatural myth which I do not recognise. If that is interpreted as preaching hatred against the sect that would do such a thing, so be it; but I shall do it ... I shall bring forward a Bill. It will deal with the abolition of blasphemy."

Barbara Smoker, President of the National Secular Society, says in *The Freethinker* article:

"Muslims are stealthily winning their battle to amend the law of this country so as to curb freedom of expression about religion in general and their own religion in particular.

Their bid, in the wake of the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, to get Parliament to extend the reach of the Common Law offence of blasphemy beyond its present protection of the Established Church has failed so far to gain a foothold in the legal process, in spite of having won favour with a number of politicians – particularly those of the two Opposition parties, who recognise the inequality of one religion only being thus protected. So, indeed, do we in the Secular Humanist movement – though we see the only acceptable solution to be the complete abolition of the blasphemy law.

Some of us think the Race Relations Act was itself ill-advised, since general laws against violence, incitement to hatred, racial discrimination, and so on, should be sufficient without special protection for particular groups."

Miss Smoker sees the instigators of the 12th July proposal as "almost certainly" the Islamic religious leaders. She adds:

"On this occasion, the proposed new Clause was defeated: but the issue will not go away ... When (not if, unless we really wake up to the danger and do something about it) any one of these attempts finally succeeds in becoming law, it will inevitably lead to social friction and considerable litigation, resulting in censorship – not least in defensive self-censorship.

It will affect satirical writing and broadcasting in general, but particularly specialist journals like *The Freethinker*. We will have to stop writing anything that might be construed as derogatory of Islam, unless we are prepared to meet exorbitant fines and legal costs and our editors are prepared to risk imprisonment. It will put the clock back more than 100 years, to the time of the imprisonment of the first editor of this journal, G.W. Foote."

**"For over a century, freethinkers and anarchists have enjoyed cordial relations. Both groups are libertarian and distrustful of authority, temporal and spiritual; and both have members covering a spectrum of opinion ranging from individualist to collectivist."**

Thus writes David Tribe, former President of the National Secular Society, in reviewing our current issue of *The Raven* on religion in the August issue of our contemporary *The Freethinker*, which was founded by G.W. Foote in 1881 and is thus a few years older than *Freedom* and *Freedom Press*.

In addition to its call for the abolition of the blasphemy laws, the latest issue also includes an account of the case of Bangladeshi author Taslima Nasreen, in hiding from the death threats of fundamentalist Muslims, and the editor's open letter to Mrs Gillian Shephard on her appointment as Secretary of State for Education.

We commend this publication to *Freedom* readers who we are sure will be at one with *The Freethinker* in opposing the blasphemy laws.

*The Freethinker* is available from the Freedom Press Bookshop, price £1.00 (please add 19p for a single copy by post) or from *The Freethinker*, Bradlaugh House, 47 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8SP, from whom subscription rates are available.

## Masturbation for Almighty Rationalism

### The Raven 25 on Religion

Freedom Press, £3.00 (post free anywhere)

This is a predictable document on religion to come out of the Freedom Press stable. 'STAND UP AND PROCLAIM YOUR FAITH IN RATIONALISM!' All the old stalwarts are there! Nicolas Walter, of the Rationalist Press Association, writes a clever clarification of the proposition that 'anarchism implies atheism'. Mr Tony Gibson, who once asked in *Freedom* 'Is Religion a Mental Illness?', now questions 'Should We Mock at Religion?' Colin Ward offers up his contribution, an entry on anarchism for the *Dictionary of Theology and Society*. Mr Walter delivers a new translation of the classic text by the French anarchist Sébastien Faure, *Twelve Proofs for the Non-Existence of God*. Peter Lumsden claims: "Only the atheist can understand religion" arguing that the time has come to give up God, rather as one might give up smoking, and that "... nothing now stops us from forming the world to our heart's desire". Michael Duane tries to disentangle the concept of God from 'religion', while insisting that "God is the creation of undemocratic societies" and that through Him "tyranny enters the minds of its subjects to internalise its control over them". Mr Duane was by profession a headmaster, who then quotes Lenin to back his case against God.

The only relief from this solemn, serious, rationalist sermon comes in a delightful piece of eccentric agnosticism from Arthur Moyses entitled 'Boo', and in two short essays, one by George Walford claiming religious concern leads ultimately to anarchism, the other by Brian Morris on the feminist case for 'Matriline and Mother Goddess Religion'.

### Laughter and smirks won't help!

Mr Walter concocts a mock trial for religion pretending to put a balanced case for and against, and not surprisingly comes to the conclusion that perhaps the Church is withering away. Tony Gibson insists "religion is the tragedy of mankind" and says anarchism implies active struggle against religion itself. He advocates satire and mockery as a weapon.

Is satire and mockery up to the job of dealing with religious fundamentalism? The idea is a charming absurdity. Mr Gibson claims that in the 1930s even Hitler and Mussolini were cut down to size by being mocked as clowns by the cartoonist David Low. George Orwell

derided this kind of thinking in 1941 when H.G. Wells called Hitler "that screaming little defective in Berlin". Orwell argued: "The people who say that Hitler is Antichrist, or alternatively the Holy Ghost, are nearer an understanding of the truth than the intellectuals who for ten dreadful years have kept it up that he is merely a figure out of comic opera not worth taking seriously".

Mr Gibson goes on about the monstrous lies of the religious adherents, but he too is harbouring a gross delusion.

But there are other problems with this rational argument, and the sneering against religion. Wittgenstein asserts that people are not deterred from religious practices by the breakdown of a theory which they previously held. Thus the story of Adam and Eve, and even in some cases the Virgin Birth, are not taken literally by believers. No amount of subjecting these particular beliefs to satire will make any difference if they are merely seen as poetic accounts.

Equally Peter Lumsden's claim that only "the atheist can understand religion" or that only someone convinced of the essential meaninglessness of the cosmos can give it all meaning, is not convincing. Peter Wynch in his book *The Idea of a Social Science* took the

reverse view:

"... that a historian or sociologist of religion must himself have some religious feeling if he is to make sense of the religious movement he is studying and understand the considerations which govern the lives of its participants."

This is a development of Wittgenstein's idea about keying into the world of the believer in order to interpret it. An art historian would expect to have an aesthetic sense if he is to understand the problems confronting artists.

### Religious instruction brings relief

Michael Duane may assert that God is the creation of undemocratic societies, and Peter Lumsden has said that the way is open to a return to Paradise, a Garden of Eden, of our own making, but they both must be aware that the argument has been put that the two great tyrannies of the twentieth century, German National Socialism and Soviet Communism, were themselves attempts to create heaven on earth.

My use of Wittgenstein to make a case is not by chance. Ludwig Wittgenstein, whose book *Philosophical Investigations* may prove to be the most important and influential philosophical work of modern times, was deeply influenced by the Christian anarchist Leo Tolstoy. Indeed he was so influenced by Tolstoy that he decided to give up all his money, which he gave not to the poor for fear it might corrupt them but to his sister who was already rich and therefore already corrupt. Tolstoy himself gets a bit of a mention in *The Raven* text both in Nicolas Walter's essay and Colin Ward's entry, but he is presented as a kind of oddity well outside the mainstream of anarchism.

For me Arthur Moyses gets it about right where he says:

"In the matter of religion it is foolish to believe that anyone calling themselves an anarchist has a definitive answer of 'I don't believe in God' or 'God does exist' for both claims ... are unprovable assertions."

I don't know if faith requires proof, but much of the rest of this month's *Raven* is about masturbating to the God of rationalism. Which reminds me that it was a regular ritual for the lads to masturbate during classes in Religious Instruction at our school, but I don't think there would have been many orgasms if the rationalists had been lecturing us in ethics.

Brian Bamford

## Raven 25

on  
Religion

Freethinker Christmas Number

MOSES GETTING A BACK VIEW

And it shall come to pass that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and I shall take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts. — Exodus xxxiii. 22

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## Anarchism and breaking free

Dear Freedom,

I agree with Peter Neville that exceptions disprove rules. What I object to is turning exceptions into rules.

I mentioned the NKVD and Gestapo in connection with Lysenkoism and 'Aryan physics' to point out that these aberrations were 'accepted' by science only in the totalitarian societies enforced by these organisations. (I think Peter's mention of Cambridge in this context refers to a group of scientists there who supported Lysenko's theories for a period in the late '40s, but my memory is a little hazy here.)

The point is that the main body of world science, being free of political control of this type, was not taken in.

Obviously social sciences cannot be as precise as physics, chemistry, biology, etc., because they are dealing with unpredictable processes – the beliefs and behaviour patterns of human beings. But if they dogmatically reject scientific methods and insist on following their own perception, intuition and creative thinking *only*, they will produce nothing except the type of arrogant bullshit one can get from any religion or political party, which I think the world can do without.

Science may appeal to the authoritarian personality (like religion and art), especially when it can be used to secure power and privilege, but rulers are very nervous about scientific attitudes spreading among their subjects, e.g. the education department's recent ravings against 'exaggerating' the value of science at the expense of religion and 'morality'.

All scientific theories, hypotheses and laws can be falsified *in principle*, but that does not mean any of them has or necessarily ever will be in fact. Still less,

does it justify the irrationalist position that all have been overthrown and science is therefore invalidated.

Kropotkin's belief in an 'evolutionary march towards anarchism' mentioned by John Griffin is an example of scientific ideas being applied outside their proper field. Kropotkin stressed the cooperative aspects of natural selection just as the 'social Darwinists' emphasised competition, both sides seeking to use science to justify their opposing political ideologies, forgetting that the processes of biological evolution are not necessarily relevant to the far more rapid evolution of human societies.

We should be wary of searching for scientific theory to justify political ideas. John Griffin may be in danger of this in his enthusiasm for Chaos Theory. 'Holistic' and 'reductionist' are not synonyms for right and wrong, true or false. I take 'holism'; to mean an inter-disciplinary connection-seeking outlook and reductionism as a simplifying specialising approach. Both are necessary in attempting to understand reality, which is complicated, and one should not be over-stressed at the expense of the other.

There can be no such thing as 'anarchist' or 'capitalist' science, but there could be an anarchist technology since a free society would put science to very different uses. One purpose of John Griffin's proposed study group might be to explore ways in which technology can make a free society practical.

A major problem when introducing anarchism to people for the first time is that it sounds on a par with flat-earthism. This can be overcome by showing that it enables us to understand the causes of features and events in society which were previously unclear. If we can do this,

people may actually start to listen. But if we endorse every wild crackpot theory as irrationalists are prone to do, dismiss the achievements of science as though they don't exist, most people, who have more hard common sense than pseudo-intellectuals credit them with, will ignore us as just another bunch of cranks, and rightly so.

John Wood

Dear Editors,

John Griffin's proposal to start a study group to take a new look at the parameters of anarchist ideas and policies could be important. An update is long overdue.

We have a special problem to solve. In our empirical culture, affecting every shade of political opinion, we labour under a constant disability, that of a deep division between activists and theoreticians. They despise each other and so ensure each other's defeat.

What we need is something that subsumes them both: wisdom in action (the original Greek definition of philosophy), but we have yet to get round to it.

The test of theory is practice, the test of action is a sustainability that can only follow an understanding in depth, i.e. valid theory. We need both as an integrated whole. This is easy to say but very difficult to do because it involves parting with an empirical tradition that has been bred into us for some four hundred years, since the days of Francis Bacon and Galileo.

What happened all those years ago was that science and technology were elevated to the god-head with the help of

the telescope, the microscope, the sextant, the theodolite and chronometer all underpinned by mathematics and statistics. Thus arose modern mechanics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and map and chart making. For the world 'out there' there were huge new certainties. Since there was no way, with comparable exactitude, to measure the human heart and human relations, they were suitably put down. The arts were reduced to entertainment and decoration. 'The two cultures' of the arts and science thus gave us the dualist division that plagues us to the present day.

Interestingly enough it is the scientists themselves who today are questioning and undermining the old certainties of their own tradition, via relativity, uncertainty, chaos theory and sub-particle physics, so the ground is well prepared. There is a reaching-out to a new holistic conception of the nature of being and becoming.

Further there is the same time the new liberation from the dogmas loaded on to us by Bentham, Marx, Freud and the Cold War. The old order is fragmenting before our very eyes and in that condition ideas cease to be a luxury and become imperative.

My bones tell me that matters will come to a head, politically, in some four to five years time. By that I mean that our politicians of all parties, their civil servants and local government officers will get to the point when it is self-evident that they cannot cope, that they have no answers to their own problems and so the prospect is that of inadmissible chaos or something quite new.

Who or what is to fill the vacuum? That is the question. As of now, the man of the moment (in the public prints at least) is not Tony Blair but John Gray of Oxford in his *The Undoing of Conservatism* (Social Market Foundation). Originally from the right, he is currently rubbishing

the old left/right divide in the name of community regeneration. In France, Alain de Benoist is doing much the same thing in the current issue of the journal he edits, *Krisis*.

The left has no god-given or history-given mandate any more. Everything has to be earned the hard way, by production of results; ideas, policies and structures that work.

The think-tank of activists of which I am a member – Values and Vision – is now well into its fourth year. It is committed to being a small (single figure), unstructured (no officers as such), multi-purpose (takes on anything), independent (no party political connections) group of equals – the SUMIGE principle. It works.

The most difficult problem is equality. The only answer to that that I know is hand-picking. There is nothing unusual about that. Our whole appointments system throughout the country is done by hand-picking – it is the rule. Nobody complains. The meetings are open to members only, plus an occasional invited guest. One dogmatist, one ego-tripper, one loyal party member and the whole thing will go down the drain. There is a good case for therapy groups, but that is something else. Values and Vision is *not* one of them.

We need study-and-action groups in every area and covering every subject. And we need them over the next two to three years if we are to be prepared for what is to come. So I wish John Griffin well and hope others will think and do likewise. (Please do not use the name of Values and Vision – we have no wish to become an empire.)

It occurs to me that if *Freedom* was to act as a means of communicating ideas produced by such groups, and their interaction, it would perform a signal service to the cause and do no harm at all to its circulation!

Peter Cadogan

Education is a hugely problematic sector for India's ruling élite. On the one hand the development of a national system of education has been critical to economic development and the transmission of a national ideology. On the other hand Indian thinking on education during the period of the freedom struggle came to embrace all the principles of egalitarianism with the consequence that education is synonymous with ideals of liberty. Hence the lofty phraseology and noble objectives that introduce the mass of policy statements on education since 1947.

However, only a cursory glance at educational development in the last 45 years reveals that it is the first set of principles that has been dominant. Through the National Policy Statement on Education in 1986 and its subsequent appraisals in 1991 and 1992, the government indicated an outward sincerity to achieve the universalism of elementary education, the Gandhian dream. The hope was that years of rhetoric would now be turned into reality. However, it is questionable whether the government is now in a position to translate the policy into practice. This is largely due to the structural changes in the economy that the country is currently undergoing under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. These changes emanate from the New Economic Policy reforms and the Stabilisation and Structural Adjustment Programme (SSAP).

How, briefly, does 'adjustment' affect education? The experience of many African and South American countries suggests that adjustment measures affect education through changes at the macro- and micro- levels of the economy. Adjustment at the macro-level often implies a combination of budget containment measures for the public education system, limited access to post-primary public education and higher user fees for education at the secondary and tertiary levels. At the micro-level changes in household incomes

and prices directly influence the demand for education by altering the opportunity cost of attending school. Household incomes also affect health and nutrition status, and thus indirectly influence attendance and learning. Finally adjustment affects education through changes in markets and infrastructure (resulting from currency devaluation, fiscal and monetary restraint and price liberalisation) that affect the supply of education services and the opportunity cost of attending school.

### Educational provision and access

The National Statistical Survey (NSS) in its 42nd round in 1991 has identified amongst other things important trends in 'social consumption' of different sections of population. Education is part of it. Just over one third of males and over half of females in India remain illiterate forty years after independence. The situation is worse in rural areas than in urban areas. School attendance in India is staggeringly low and the level being lowest among the lower strata of society. Significantly, also, education in rural areas is confined mostly to primary and middle levels.

This then was the broad picture of school attendance and literacy levels in India in 1989, the time at which the Indian government began looking to the World Bank and IMF for financial assistance in the wake of a massive balance of payments deficit. Stabilisation and structural adjustment has now arrived, and one can now begin to consider the possible implications of this development in the light of the clear crying needs of the Indian educational system.

### What lies ahead?

The most important impact of SSAP on education is the restructuring of the financing

of education. Expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP grew from 2.5% in 1960 to 4.2% in 1989-90. In 1994 the National Government has agreed to increase funding to just under 6%, but now the figure necessary is more like 10%. Furthermore, the increase in national government expenditure hides other more significant developments in the financing of education than emanate from SSAP.

Firstly, it is clear that the already existing disproportionate allocation across primary, secondary and higher education levels where the latter gets the cream share is to be exacerbated. As recently as 1987 per student expenditure at primary middle schools and higher education worked out to be 260.9 rupees, 301.4 rupees and 12,499 rupees per annum respectively. In the 1993-4 budget capital expenditure on higher education was given yet further priority with the recommendation that its overall share of the educational budget be increased by 4.5% with cuts on primary and secondary schooling being an inevitable consequence. This relates directly to IMF recommendations that expenditure on higher education be increased as a priority.

Secondly, again in response to IMF recommendations, it is clear that as a result of the four budgets since 1991 spending on education in the primary sector is now predominantly on salaries. Since 1991 money spent on buildings and resources at the primary level had fallen.

One needs to ask, firstly, how can the education sector cope with SSAP? Secondly, is SSAP likely to accentuate or aggravate educational inequality? Thirdly, what is the position of deprived sections of society in relation to education in the changing economic climate? It is worth looking at the

forecasts of the World Bank itself. The Bank's Economic Memorandum (1990) observes:

"Reforms of the scope and magnitude of a structural adjustment programme will have significant social costs. In the near term, fiscal austerity inevitably will cost some output and income growth and the impact on the poor in India will be enormous."

Indeed the impact is being felt. The IMF fiscal constraints have affected expenditure on social services and poverty alleviation and rural development programmes, all of which affect educational access considerably. If a family needs more money to survive it cannot afford the luxury of sending its children to school. In the 1990-91 budget the burden of adjustment fell on rural development programmes and social services, both of which registered an actual decline in plan expenditure.

What conclusions does one draw? In many ways it is still early days but the lower allocations to the social services in recent budget indicate that the burden of fiscal adjustment is falling harshly on the poorer sections of Indian society. What one can quantify about educational access, opportunity and achievement within this is also not particularly encouraging.

Looking at an extrapolation of net expected enrolment at different levels of formal educational institutions in India for 1991 based on the 1981 census returns, the enrolment figures for all categories are way below the extrapolation, the more so among females. What one is effectively talking about is a drop off in the growth rate of attendance at formal institutions of education that correlates remarkably with the advent of SSAP. One is tempted to speak of coincidence. What is probably much more the reality is that the situation that is emerging in India is identical to that experienced in other developing countries which were forced to sacrifice social policy to the whims of the IMF and World Bank.

John Shotton

## INSIDE INDIA

# Herbert Read's Anarchism

Dear Freedom,  
I have always appreciated NW's book reviews, whether in TLS or in Freedom. So, I have very much enjoyed his review of the collected anarchist articles by Herbert Read and Alex Comfort ('Remarkable authors: admirable books' in Freedom, 23rd July 1994). I haven't read anything by Alex Comfort, but I have read and admired a few things by Herbert Read. NW expresses surprise that some people have been converted to anarchism by his writings. Being one of those few, I should like to share my experience with NW, although it is necessarily very personal and may offer no parallels with Read's other 'converts'.  
Around 1959 I picked up a copy of Read's *Philosophy of Anarchism* (7th imprint, 1949) from your bookshop, then near the British Museum. I was struck by the opening sentence: "The characteristic political attitude of today is not one of positive belief, but of despair". Despair indeed was my feeling as a Polish refugee in England! After the suppression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 the neo-Stalinist night had fallen upon all of Eastern Europe. I could no longer identify with Polish emigré anti-Communism which by then had degenerated into near-fascism. I was disgusted with Western capitalism. I abhorred British and American imperialism, although at that time I did not consider them as evil as the Russian one. Every Pole needs a political idea to live by, just as every Englishman needs a sports team to support. Here was a light of hope in the sea of despair!  
Unlike some people, I never had any doubts about the desirability of anarchism, but I did have some doubts about its feasibility. Here a very reasonable, obviously highly learned man was telling me it could be done. Rather naive, you will say. Yes, but I was in my twenties!  
Also, as a religious believer, I appreciated Read's sympathetic treatment of religion (chapter 3, pages 19-25). It was in marked contrast with the

fierce attacks on religion (not just on corrupt, authoritarian clergy, but on the very idea of religion) in Freedom of the time. Read was too much of an aesthete not to have appreciated the contribution of religion to art and culture.

I had thought of meeting Mr Read, but was too shy. Too bad, because all non-anarchists who knew him agree that he was a very nice man.

The *Philosophy of Anarchism* was my introduction to Read's writings. I had not at that time heard of Read as an art historian, a literary critic or a poet. Since then I have come to very much admire his writings on art history and literary criticism. I have read just a few of his poems. I thought they were good, but not particularly great. Maybe I should have read more? NW calls Read a novelist. To my knowledge he had written only one novel, *The Green Child*. I have not read it.

Like most anarchists I was shocked by Read's acceptance of a knighthood. A Canadian anarchist friend dismissed it: "Probably Mrs Read wanted to become Lady Read".

NW calls Read a "bourgeois intellectual". Maybe I am a bourgeois intellectual (or just plain bourgeois), and maybe this is why Read's interpretation of anarchism has appealed to me.

Jan Weryho

# Money from the State

Dear Freedom,  
I think certain points need to be clarified concerning Larry Gambone's comments (Freedom, letters, 6th August) on my reaction (Freedom, letters, 9th July). First things first, sorry to hear about your impending unemployment Larry, I hope things work out for you.

I wish to raise three points (and I have read the whole debate which began with Derrick Pike's article in Freedom, 14th May).

My first point is that I did not 'misconstrue' Larry's letter. I agree with him and Derrick in their refusal to condemn those working in certain state paid positions or claiming benefits. My letter was badly phrased, I extend my apologies. Had I thought either were making such a condemnation, my language would have been a little more brutal.

On the issue of encouraging others to claim state benefits, it goes without saying one should explain one's reasoning behind such encouragement - I always have. In my area, many workers have been reduced to the state of 'welfare bums', to borrow Larry's phrase. Few workers harbour outright hostile assumptions about benefit claimants any more, most know someone who is unemployed. This appears to be resulting in a change in attitudes towards the unemployed.

As for Larry's comments about revolutionaries in the early '70s, I wasn't there, but I would suggest that his reading of what happened is rather simplistic. Are we to assume that those who hold to my 'warped' principle are irretrievably lost at some future time to 'statism'? Who can tell, but it seems a little like 'mud-slinging' to me.

That my 'warped' principle happens to coincide with many's economic interests and necessity is another matter. Is it not a matter of degree? Larry has written on the Black Economy. Black Economy participants are frequently withholding revenue from the state; so, it's alright to withhold revenue from the state, but it is against anarchist principles to try and claw it back. I'm sorry, but there has been a failure to grapple with the economic case I have presented in defence of my principle. What ends do justify the means? My principle is based on active economic measures aimed against the

# Problems for Anarchists

Dear friends,

It is often said that anarchists have a strong criticism of existing society but are weak as far as proposals for the transition to a more libertarian and egalitarian society. In an attempt to stimulate debate on the subject, I have listed the following points which would provide problems and need to be considered if anarchists were reasonably successful in a modern industrialised society.

1) I feel that attempts to realise libertarian communism on a large scale would probably make for chaos or a dictatorship based on a command economy. In a society with a high degree of specialisation of labour money is a useful means of exchange. Controlled market mechanisms can be used to transfer resources. This would imply a centralised banking system for accountancy / transfer of credit. If anarchists / libertarian socialists are going to keep the use of money, which I suggest is the sensible option, they need to consider

a) some sort of social security system for people who are out of work,  
b) some form of taxation to redistribute money.

2) There would still be a need for administration / decision-making which would perform government functions. My feelings are that the best chance is probably a dual federation based on workers councils and community organisation (organised in the form of a council). This is a modified form of organisation derived from the ideas of anarcho-syndicalists such as Rudolf Rocker, but it involves the community as well as purely industrial organisation. Decisions probably would still have to be taken by voting on a majority basis using delegates with a revocable mandate. These organisations would be based on a local, regional and national level. A national committee would also be needed to help coordinate activities at a national level. Important services could be coordinated at local, regional and national levels. These would include transport, water, electricity, sewage, etc., which have a fairly permanent organisation. Hospitals / health care could also be coordinated in this way.

3) The problem of crime / anti-social behaviour also needs to be considered. I think there would still need to be some sort of police force or specialised body to deal with anti-social behaviour. The question of social control is likely to raise its head in any complex modern society.

state, puny yes, principled yes. I accept the reasoning behind Larry's (and Derrick's) principle may be distinctly anarchist, the principle is not.

As I have said, anarchists should explain their position and seek to undermine a work ethic that dictates that only those that work, or who have worked, should receive the 'bounty' of the state and I'm not, for a moment, suggesting Larry and Derrick's principle is based on any adherence to the capitalist work ethic.

Excuse my ignorance, but I don't know what Larry is referring to by his reference to "class in 1910". In my letter I stated that perhaps Larry thought "that class politics is becoming increasingly irrelevant in today's society," he corrects this with "less relevance" - much the same thing I would have thought. Class as realities and concepts are, and have always been, a complex matter which some devalue as having 'less relevance'. Thus, class can be consigned to the past and the marginalisation of class issues and conflict continued - and yes, we are relatively "poor and beaten-down wretches" compared with the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

Ron Millichamp

4) The last point is how would such a society relate to other parts of the world which had not undergone such changes. How would trade and international relations be organised? What sort of defence would be needed?

As can be seen, this list of points presents problems (particularly 3 and 4). I may well be completely wrong where I do suggest answers, but I would be interested in hearing of alternative ideas.

D. Dane

# Slogans?

Dear Editors,

Peter Neville (Freedom, 6th August) refers to the cliché "an exception proves the rule".

This statement is, of course, meaningless now because 'prove' has changed its meaning fairly recently. It meant 'test', hence also 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. (As recently as the 1950s the US missile testing range was known as The White Sands Proving range.)

This may seem a minor point, but it is worth bearing in mind when we consider that so much 'commonsense' traditional wisdom is transmitted in clichés which, because of the constant (and currently accelerating) change in language, now mean less, or more, or sometimes the complete opposite, and sometimes nothing at all.

The same probably applies to political slogans, when we consider how much such words as 'property' or 'liberty' or 'democracy' have undergone changes in meaning. And 'freedom' for that matter.

Tim C. Beswick

# PC: what it is

Dear Editors,

There appears in Freedom (6th August issue) an article entitled 'PC: what it is and how to fight it'. When I first read it I was overcome by compassion. Here is someone who has not lived in the real world for many years and hence has no conception of what has been going on. It seemed to me that he was obviously one of the many victims of the cruel Tory policy of discharging 'into the care of the community' those who had previously been looked after at public expense and, as Donald Room and Victoria N. Furmurry have shown us, are now being given large cardboard boxes to live in. The article might as well be called 'A view from the cardboard box'.

A less sympathetic reader than myself might brutally condemn it just as 'a lot of drivelling nonsense' and cite such passages as: "The same is true of the academic world where funding is denied, publications refereed and ideas which challenge the status quo are carefully suppressed or altered to conform with the 'acceptable opinion'. All this pre-dated the concept of 'political correctness' and attracted little if any protest." Small hope for the sale of Alex Comfort's *Writings Against Power and Death!* But our author in his cardboard box, or previous place of residence, has probably never heard of Alex Comfort.

Btu drivelling nonsense though it is, it should invite compassion and serve as a warning: for it is an obvious example of the Ganser Syndrome. In this unhappy condition things are expressed by their opposites; thus a right-wing movement such as PC is perceived as being left-wing, the attempted suppression of free speech is perceived as a liberating movement, and a silly bitch who tries to stop children from seeing *Romeo and Juliet* is perceived as a martyr. The Ganser Syndrome afflicts unfortunate individuals, but it can also serve the ruling classes of sick societies, and they coin such slogans as 'War is Peace', 'Freedom is Slavery' and 'Ignorance is Strength'. We should be perpetually on our guard.

Tony Gibson

# News from Angel Alley

Freedom is published 24 times a year. So in a year although we do not take a holiday, we do not publish our journal on two occasions, and this year there will be no Freedom on 3rd September and 24th December. These dates have been arranged to coincide with public holidays and our printers Aldgate Press' working schedules.

But we hope that contributors to Freedom will continue to send material for publication as normal, which if they do so will provide us with a stock of 'copy' for future issues of Freedom. Thank you!

The summer issue of *The Raven*, which is Science 2 and edited by Donald Room, should have been dispatched and received by the time you receive the next issue of Freedom. If not, be patient for a few more days!

A further issue of *The Raven* on Religion is in preparation, which is intended to deal with fundamentalism, among other matters - not to print material which would be more appropriate in other publications such as *The Freethinker*, but to give a specifically anarchist political point of view on this so topical question.

Please note that the bookshop will be closed on Bank Holiday Monday, 29th August.

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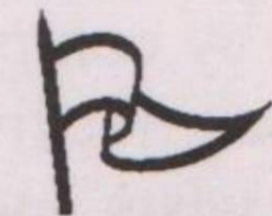
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**16th September** Should Anarchists Take Part  
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introduced by David Dane)

**23rd September** General discussion

**30th September** Speaking in Hyde Park  
(speaker Peter Lumsden)

**7th October** Gustav Landauer: The Spirit of  
Place and Anarchism (speaker Andrew  
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If anyone would like to give a talk or lead a  
discussion, overseas or out-of-town speakers  
especially, please contact either Dave Dane of  
Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville  
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