

anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

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FIFTY PENCE

*"It is error alone which
needs the support of
Government. Truth can
stand by itself."*

Thomas Jefferson
in *Notes on Virginia*

The real lessons to learn from **THE AMERICAN MID-TERM ELECTIONS**

The United States mid-term elections have been declared by the press here as a disaster for the Democratic Party, and in particular for President Bill Clinton. It is noteworthy that our millionaire press

A Question for Prime Minister's Time

The ceremonial for the new session of Parliament and the government's programme, delivered with boredom and solemnity by the Queen weighed down by a 3lb crown and held to the ground by a train requiring four pages to help her on her way to the throne, should be seen by the unemployed, the old and the infirm who are being squeezed financially as the rich get richer.

This editorial writer interrupted his piece on 'Cuts in the NHS' (page 2) to watch television's report on the opening of Parliament. One can only describe the whole ceremony as a combination of obscenity and hypocrisy. We invite Denis Skinner or Tony Benn to put a question to the government (and we will not even offer them a free subscription to *Freedom*) to ask what this ridiculous farce costs the taxpayers.

And as the television cameras panned the gathered assembly in the Lords it confirmed, for this writer at least, that no law, no legislation will uproot the privileged minority. So long as the victims are prepared to go along with this situation and accept that it's their fault if they are unemployed (not enough skills, you know!) and anyway, the rich and poor, that's how it is so don't bother to vote because *that* won't change anything. The American people have already realised that.

But there is an alternative when the victims of capitalism - the underpaid, the unemployed, the old, the handicapped and now more than ever *the young*, join forces to stake their claim not with a cross once every five years but in the streets of every city, town and village. And if they organise their protests *nationally* the police and their riot shields and truncheons and mounted police will go home, defeated, and the politicians will see the writing on the wall.

And all those tiaras in the House of Lords and that 3lb crown, as well as those colourful uniforms, will disappear - or perhaps inspire a fantastic ballet?

should also maintain that the results have some bearing on, and some lessons for, their recent blue-eyed Labour-boy Tony Blair.

For anarchists the mid-term elections are full of interesting facts, hardly encouraging for the politicians and depressing for those well-meaning 'soft lefties' who think that our wicked world can be improved, nay radically changed, via the ballot box and the 'right' people.

First and foremost is the fact that of the 193 million of voting age in the United States, only 132 million were registered voters, and of those 132 million only 38.7% actually voted - that is 51 million. In other words, 142 million Americans entitled to vote didn't. Let us have our arithmetic crystal clear, of the American citizens entitled to vote 51 million did and 142 million (including 41 million who didn't register for whatever reason) didn't! So the so-called Republican landslide was determined by a 26.4% turnout of the electorate entitled to vote. So much for 'democracy' and the enthusiasm it generates among the people in the 'richest' 'most powerful' nation in the world today.

Surely the message from such a turnout is that for the majority a change of government or administration makes no difference economically, socially or politically. They have voted with their feet, but we suspect with sadness that it is more in desperation than with any intention of facing the ruling

class with the only language they can understand!

The American weekly magazine *Time* (21st November) gives a list of the "Ten Biggest Spenders" in the recent election jamboree. For the Senate, Michael Huffington, well known here thanks to his glamorous Greek wife, spent no less than \$25 million (£16 million) to buy a seat in the Senate, just as Oliver North, known worldwide as a top level crook over the arms for Iraq scandal and for which he was sent to prison but somehow never went there, spent \$16.75 million (£10.5 million). Both obviously didn't spend enough to get elected. But other millionaire spenders for the Senate and the House certainly paid their way with the cheque book.

As to what the Clinton/Democratic 'defeat', 'landslide', means our view is that if anything conditions for the underprivileged in the USA will get that much worse than they are already. After all, the majority who didn't vote are those who need most both materially and in health care. At best for them nothing will change.

Time gives answers from an opinion poll which, we repeat, only confirmed the general public's desperation so far as the political parties and the future are concerned.

To the question "Will the Republicans do a better job running
(continued on page 2)

Reflections on our ROLL-ON, ROLL-OVER FERRIES

In writing about the Baltic ferry disaster (*Freedom*, 15th October) we pointed out that while bow doors that let the sea in obviously do not contribute to the safety of the vessel, *it is the design of these ships which is at fault.*

Following the 'Herald of Free Enterprise' disaster in 1987, with the loss of 193 lives, the Royal Institute of Naval Architects (RINA) warned that ro-ro ferries were:

"... unacceptably vulnerable in that there was a likelihood of rapid capsizing should the car deck be flooded for whatever reason."

Following the 'Estonia' disaster this year the RINA warned that many ro-ro ferries, especially the older ones, are "still vulnerable to rapid capsizing", adding:

"Whilst no vessel can ever be regarded as unsinkable, it should be capable of absorbing a number of errors and misfortunes before there is a danger of sinking ... It is horrifying to find that ro-ro vulnerability has again been tragically demonstrated with the loss of the Estonia."

Professor Kenneth Rawson, chairman of the RINA safety committee, expressed the view, according to an
(continued on page 2)

Cuts in the NHS, but there's taxpayer's money for private hospital

The government is always reminding us that when they make cuts in the public services they are after all acting on our behalf since it's *our money* which they are using to the best advantage, etc. However, how many of us were aware of the fact that some six months ago a £180 million private hospital near Glasgow opened its doors, and offered its beds and services and its four hundred staff to members of the oil-rich nations to enjoy luxury operations at luxury fees? Very few of us outside Scotland. But how many even in Scotland were aware that the government had contributed £30 million of 'state aid' to this £180 million project until last week when the news was that the managers of the Health Care International (HCI) hospital (did you even know the name?) had called in the receivers after only five months that they had been in the sickness (perhaps including *maladies imaginaires*) business for the rich because the private money-lenders had refused a "£15 million rescue package".

Once more Michael Heseltine had to explain away using our money for speculation in the private sector. The American backed HCI hospital was, he said, "a very deliberate decision to create health excellence and jobs" and the old chestnut "if you never take risks, you never achieve anything" - which of course multi-millionaire Heseltine can well afford to say, but he is using *public money* which is apparently not available for all kinds of urgent services in the NHS.

The Opposition can protest until they are blue in the face and nothing changes. We repeat for the umpteenth time, when will we the victims decide to act, and not via the ballot box or new political gurus? The anarchist message is ACT FOR YOURSELVES against governments but, in concert with your friends and neighbours, against privilege, against the built-in corruption that is capitalism.

ROLL-ON, ROLL-OVER FERRIES

(continued from page 1)

East Anglian Daily Times report (8th November), that "new measures should be brought in to give ro-ro ferries greater stability". For, as the professor points out, since the 'Estonia' conformed to the present international stability standard SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea), 90 he must "cast doubt on its validity".

Christian Wolman in *The Independent* (8th November) makes it quite clear that:

"The disasters have led the RINA to say the design of the ships is *inherently unstable* and that transverse retractable bulkheads, dividing up the car deck, should be fitted." (our italics)

At last an admission that the ships are unstable *per se*. But who designed the ships? And what pressures were put on the architects involved to cut corners by the prospective clients, who after all are concerned with making money from the enterprise?

As we reported (*Freedom*, 15th October), the Estonian carriers declared they would weld the bows of their ferries the much larger British operators made it clear that they wouldn't, and we commented:

"... in a sense they are right for the *inexorable fault is that these vessels are unstable in their very design.*"

Now following the virtual confirmation of this view by the RINA, the spokesman for one of the large operators, P&O Ferries, obviously had to do something to reassure the travelling public. Not having ever made the drawings even for a rowing boat, he was able to declare that safety issues are not as black and white as the RINA suggests. It is worth quoting the P&O spokesman, Brian Rees, verbatim:

"If they emphasise the technical side what people lose sight of is that the ships are only as safe as the people operating them", he says. 'Our safety comes into play in the way we train our captains to have the top qualifications - a

Class One UK Certificate in Competence'.

He says P&O insist on its captains and their second-in-commands having this qualification.

He adds: 'Ferry safety depends on the way it is operated more than any other factor'. (*East Anglian Daily Times*, 8th November)

But what has all that assurance to do with whether the ship's design has been for profit and not for safety and is unstable?

Again a spokesman for the merchant navy officer's union NUMAST said:

"It is all very well clamping down on the conditions of ships, but *stress and fatigue on seafarers should be given equal attention.*" (our italics)

How right he is, but is he not also concerned about the "conditions of the ships"? Again no capitalist enterprise operates other than for profit. So not surprising that not only have the designs of the ro-ro ferries cut corners for profit but conditions for crews have made demands that would have not been acceptable when, for instance, the cross-Channel services were operated by British Rail. To demand 24 hours on and 24 hours off, let alone 48 hours on and off, invites human beings to neglect their duties on which the safety of the ship and its passengers - especially in the Channel - is concerned.

But that said - when will the seafarers rebel? - we return to the major threat to our safety as travellers, which is ferry boats designed for profits and not for safety. Surely this is a scandal that needs the kind of attention that is currently being concentrated by the media on a few Don Juan politicians. Indeed, could all this not be just another example of capitalism at work. We would not dream of using the word 'sleaze' - only because, as readers must surely know by now, we anarchists maintain that capitalism by definition is *corrupt!*

In Brief

According to Alex Bellos (*Guardian*, 5th November) the Church of England is urging the clergy to "modernise their style of preaching. Instead of mumbling, boring, rehearsed speeches, it wants services to be more entertaining and effective." And our upbeat Archbishop of Canterbury, as he re-launched the ecumenical College of Preachers, added his contribution to the jazzing up of religion with the reflection that:

"In any age of mass media and secular influence, effective preaching is required to renew the churches and transform the country."

The new Bishop of Durham, who has survived the gutter press's reminder of a 'naughty' incident in his distant past, aided his mite when he said that:

"Those who preach must be more professional in their methods of communicating Christ's message in a modern world. The preaching of the Gospel both inside and outside our churches needs close examination and probably radical revision."

Our first reaction is to ask these God-lovers what is God doing? Is he Almighty or not? And if he is, why is Mammon winning all the tricks and the churches are emptying? Those who might conclude that Freedom's Godless editors are being more than irreverent should read the Archbishop of Canterbury's address to the Manchester Business School (*Guardian*, 8th November) when he said, among other things, that "wealth creation is part of God's plan", that the Church should "improve its relevance to people in their working lives - not least in business. I should like our liturgies

and worship to reflect more adequately ... the aspirations of all those who strive to create the wealth of our country." And the most important quote since the above were hedged in with conditions such as that "wealth creation is not synonymous with the co-called free market", was that:

"The archbishop's speech was part of a campaign to reconcile churchgoers with the business world. Defending the role of financial markets, he said it was a cosy myth that 'real work is making things whereas the really questionable activity is financial wheeler dealing'.

However, financial markets could be 'exploited for evil or unwholesome purposes', he said."

Among the lowest paid workers in this country are the farm workers who produce the food that even the Archbishop of canterbury needs in spite of his important connections with 'God'. And of course his salary is paid for by the Church which, as we all know, depends on its investments in the 'financial markets' to keep him and the thousands of other 'professionals' in jobs!

The blackleg former president of the break-away so-called Union of Democratic Mineworkers, Roy Lynk, who to a certain extent contributed to prolonging the miners' strike of 1984-85, has received his reward (unlike his union, which suffered major closures of pits which it controlled) by being appointed as one of the five part-time members of the Coal Authority, established last week to oversee the mining industry after privatisation.

His successor as leader of the UDM, another rat whose privatisation bid was rejected last month, commented on the appointment of Mr Lynk: "No doubt people will say he's been rewarded for supporting the Tories - and he probably has".

And we ask: What about Neil Greatorex? What was he trying to do?

It's twenty years ago that Lord 'Lucky' Lucan bludgeoned to death his children's nanny and disappeared, and nothing more has been heard about his death or whereabouts. Needless to say it is making good television. What interests this column are the statements by his widow. We quote from *The Independent* of 8th November:

"He is dead. My husband was a nobleman and he would behave in a noble way."

The fact that Lady Lucan was also attacked on the night the nanny was murdered has not prevented her from saying that she was not bitter about her husband. Indeed, she went so far as to declare:

"There was no bitterness on my side. I have always called it a tragedy, a misunderstanding."

Surely, since the 'misunderstanding' was that he killed the nanny instead of his wife she must, considered as a candidate for sanctification in due course!

THE AMERICAN MID-TERM ELECTIONS

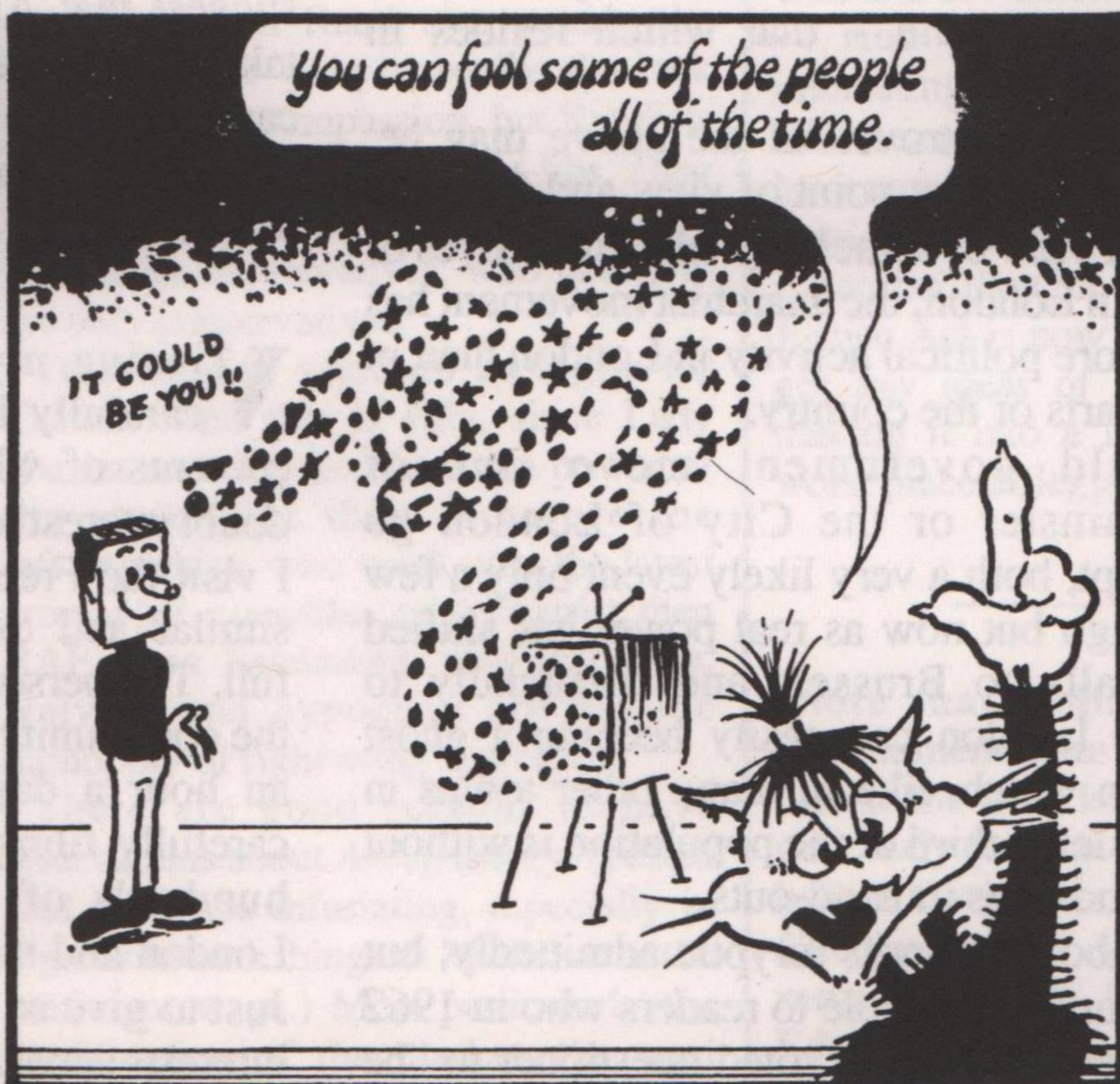
(continued from page 1)

Congress?" - 31% said 'better', 16% 'worse' and a majority of 45% said no difference. Again in another poll to the question "Now that the Republicans control Congress, is this a new era of government in Washington ..." (32% said it was) "or will there be a continuation of politics as usual?" (63% said politics as usual).

Anarchists will not get much consolation from the results of the mid-term elections, nor even, alas, from the overwhelming majority - 142 million out of the 193 million who were entitled to put their cross even if in the end to be double-crossed. But surely we are entitled to argue that the electoral system, referenda and any other system, have no meaning or usefulness in a society divided between a minority that owns everything and a majority which owns but a worthless vote. No wonder they don't vote. But when will they realise that they are the real producers of wealth with the real power in their hands?



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9th December Sanctuaries (speaker Adrian Williams)

16th December CHRISTMAS PARTY

7th January Employment, Unemployment, Further Education and the State (speaker Peter Neville)

14th January General discussion

21st January Cities and Libertarian Social Movements (discussion led by Dave Dane)

28th January All slots are vacant to the end of July, although a number of invitations have gone out.

If anyone would like to give a talk or lead a discussion, overseas or out-of-town speakers especially, please contact either Dave Dane or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (telephone number 081-847 0203, not too early in the day please) giving subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate. These could be instead of a general discussion but the latter are not merely unfilled slots but popular occasions in their own right so we are unwilling to relinquish too many.

Peter Neville / Dave Dane
London Anarchist Forum

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Sunday 15th January: Derbyshire Edges walk. Meet 11.00am for 11.15 start at National Car Park next to Robin Hood Pub on A619 Baslow to Chesterfield Road. Length of walk 7 miles.

Sunday 12th February: The Roaches and Ludd's Church, Staffordshire. Meet 11.00am for 11.15 start at roadside near to 'Windygates Farm'. Length 5 miles.

Sunday 5th March: Edale and Kinder Scout. Meet 11.00am at Edale Railway Station Café. Bring waterproofs, walking boots, food and hot drink. Length 8 miles.

Sunday 9th April: Brassington and Harborough Rocks. Meet at Brassington Village Hall at 11.00am. Length 5 miles.

Sunday 7th May: 'Mayday' walk and picnic. Blackbrook Reservoir near junction 23 on M1. Meet at roadside near Mount Bernard Abbey at 11.00am. Length approx. 6 miles.

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ANARCHIST DISCUSSION FORUM (formerly Northern Anarchist Research Group)

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26th November 1994**

David Morland
**'Anarchism and Human
Nature: where do we go
from here?'**

2.00pm to 5.00pm

at

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