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FIFTY PENCE

"Those, therefore, are fools or hypocrites, who affect to wish to better the lot of the poor labourers and manufacturers, while they, at the same time, either actively or passively, uphold the SYSTEM which is the manifest cause of it."

William Cobbett, 1825

Take-overs mean mass redundancies, but bonuses and golden handshakes for the top boys, plus corruption international ... and that's the **ACCEPTABLE FACE OF CAPITALISM!**

What with 'sex scandals', top level politicians worldwide involved in financial corruption and top management becoming millionaires overnight with share options and massive salary and pension increases, the media are enjoying a field day (we refer to their 'problems' in another column).

But *only* the anarchists draw the obvious conclusion from all these revelations: **that capitalism is at the root of all the dishonesty, the desire for revenge in personal relations that have failed, the desire for more and more money and/or power at the expense of the socially and financially deprived, by declaring that nothing will change until we can persuade enough people that capitalism must be abolished.** But only when we also know – and a small majority in the so-called prosperous countries are prepared to lose certain material

advantages that they now enjoy – what to put in its place and, equally important, realise that the privileged minority in control of the police, the armed forces and the law will use a lot more force than they are using at present in Brightlingsea, Shoreham and Plymouth with the animal-export protesters* to maintain the *status quo* – at any price.

To imagine that capitalism can be put out of business by the ballot box is wishful thinking, and is

confirmed by the fact that neither the Labour Party nor, perish the thought, the Liberals would in the last Paddy-fling suggest that capitalism and not poor old John Major is 'THE ENEMY'.

Admittedly Major is a nasty piece of work (as we illustrate elsewhere) but is the scapegoat for another bunch of nasty pieces of work who imagine (and they may be right) that the electorate have been so well brain-washed that by replacing the name at
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WHAT IS LIFE ABOUT?

This moving letter from Eileen Noakes, which appeared in the *Guardian* and is referred to in our Editorial Comment, reveals what so many thinking feeling people are seeking for happiness in their lives.

"The high incidence of extra-marital adventures among those who enjoy every material advantage suggests that prosperity does not guarantee contentment, in fact it breeds greed.

However, not everyone is obsessed with physical self-indulgence, and John Major would do well to learn that the 'feel-good' factor does not relate solely to the regular supply of Smarties and new toys that he keeps assuring us is just around the corner.

It's a very insulting assumption, and goes a long way to explaining the prevailing mood of disillusionment and dissatisfaction.

Everybody has a basic right to food, shelter, warmth and clothing, but beyond this people have higher aspirations for things which can't be defined solely in terms of a balance sheet.

This may not be John Major's experience among his colleagues, but the 'feel-good' factor will continue to be ever elusive unless he learns more about the public's needs."

POISON GAS

Earlier this month, the nerve gas Sarin was released into the Tokyo underground railway. Aum Shinrikyo, a dotty cult organisation, is accused and the hunt goes on for evidence that they did it, which they probably did. There are only two reasons for doubting their guilt. First, they deny it and they appear to be the kind of nuts who would boast of such activities. Second, they are the only suspects the police have mentioned, and when the police are so sure they are often wrong. The Italian anarchist Valpreda was kept in prison for years while the police searched for evidence that he had planted the bomb in Bologna railway station, which a right-wing political group had planted.

Since the Tokyo incident it has been revealed by the Ministry of Defence that in 1955 and 1956, 145,000 tons of chemical weapons were dumped in the sea around the British Isles, including 71,000 bombs containing the German-manufactured nerve gas Tabun, 330 tons of powder prepared for arsenic bombs, about 50 containers of seed dressing infected with anthrax and various quantities of mustard gas and phosgene.

The biggest dump is in the Beaufort Trench in the Irish Sea, and the other dumps are also in deep places which are steadily being silted up. The containers were bound to leak eventually, but it appears to have been calculated that when they did so they would be buried so deep that the gas would reach the sea-bed very

slowly and so be so diluted that its effect would be negligible.

We must hope the calculation was correct, but already there is some slight evidence that it was wrong. Two years ago scientists at Liverpool University studying industrial pollution of the Irish Sea found plaice with ten times the expected level of arsenic in their bodies. Some 700 cans of blister gas have been washed up on the Irish Sea coasts, but they were not part of the official MoD dump so that's all right then.

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THE NEXT FREEDOM ...

We publish 24 issues of *Freedom* a year so we miss the odd week to coincide with the holiday period when our generous friends at Aldgate Press close down. So the next issue of *Freedom* will appear not on the 22nd April but the 29th. So *Freedom* aficionados, when your *Freedom* doesn't arrive on the 22nd April don't be alarmed – telephone by all means, we welcome your keenness – but the next issue, volume 56 number 8, will be dated 29th April.

... AND THE RAVEN 29

We aim to bring out our World War Two Anti-Celebration issue before the official celebrations, but much depends on the material that comes in very soon. If you have something to contribute to this issue please send it in now.

ACCEPTABLE FACE OF CAPITALISM!

(continued from page 1)

the top the voters will be convinced, thanks to the capitalist media brainwashers (mainly owned by Canadian, Australian - naturalised - American tycoons concerned with circulation and the capitalist system) to vote for the longest established of the political tricksters: the Tories. But the alternative is to vote for Labour or Liberal, or Scottish or Welsh Nationalists, and as we go on pointing out *ad nauseum* (for this writer too, but we will go on repeating until notice is taken) if at the next General Election the Labour lot win with a comfortable majority they will be faced with massive demands from teachers, nurses, ambulance drivers, dustmen and postmen, all of whom provide useful services which make the daily routine and life itself *worthwhile to live to the full*. We cannot do better than reprint a letter published in the *Guardian* (25th March 1994) from a reader unknown to us but who is surely expressing the views of millions of people in all countries who are wanting the basic necessities of life:

"Everybody has a basic right to food, shelter, warmth and clothing."

But she adds, as anarchists constantly add:

"... beyond this, people have higher aspirations for things which can't be defined solely in terms of a balance sheet."

In a world which can still quote as relevant the thoughts and culture of humankind of thousands of years ago, but mainly for a privileged minority; a world which enjoys technological developments so advanced that Kropotkin's 'proof' that we only needed a three-day working week to provide the *basic necessities* of life more than a century ago is now more than ever obvious (to include telephones, televisions, freezers and fridges) ... but it's not so. Why?

Surely the simple answer is that capitalism is *not* concerned with production for *needs* but for *profits*. If *Freedom* has hecklers among its readers we will hear them declaring that this is a cliché. *But it is the reality as declared by the capitalists themselves*. They are not concerned whether where they invest their money will result in hundreds of thousands of sackings (now called *redundancies*) which they justify by referring to their 'responsibilities' to their shareholders. The extent to which capital has been invested anywhere other than in this country has now been revealed by our beer-drinking Chancellor of the Exchequer - lawyer Kenneth Clarke - when he revealed that the so-called balance of trade for 1994 was *in credit* for £155 million.

In *Freedom* (latest statistics 26th March) we had given a *deficit* balance of £11,000 million for the year. We must apologise - with tongue in cheek - for jovial Mr Clarke was introducing what the capitalist statisticians quite rightly refer to as 'invisible exports'. At one time they referred to insurances (now Lloyd's only insure disasters!) and investments as such, things have changed since the Thatcher days when export of capital was

'liberated' and, as we have quoted in these columns, there is nothing to stop multinationals and transnationals investing wherever they like in the world, even at the expense of their national industry and services. And why not? Capitalism, dear stupid 'comrades' of the Labour Party, knows no frontiers - as Thatcher made clear. But Tony Blair and his Party have not yet made it clear that even if these social democrats haven't the guts to denounce the capitalist system, they need to halt the free flow of capital if they really intend to provide more jobs here than in the Far East.

To our minds the capitalist system is destroying itself by the greed of its beneficiaries and the aspirants for the *dolce vita*. That crime and useless violence are rapidly increasing (officially) is not surprising as the rich get richer. What is clear, at least from one writer's perspective, is that the positive reactions so far are marginal, intellectual but lack the personal and community commitment. It's no longer a question of marching, sitting down, writing letters to the capitalist press or to your local MP. If we want to change the society we despise, and many of us are among the 'privileged' without being employers or exploiters, we must be prepared to make a 'sacrifice' whether in time, income or indeed in freedom. Be sure that nothing will change if we leave it to the politicians or the parsons!

* Whose protests anarchists support 100% without necessarily being vegetarians, just as we support the gay rights movement without necessarily being gay.

POISON GAS

(continued from page 1)

The reason the MoD has released the hitherto secret information now is that officials are alarmed by a plan to lay a gas pipeline across the Beaufort Trench. Explosives were buried with the poison, and there is a danger of an explosive release of poison into the North Sea - in which case, the quarrel about who is entitled to fish in the 'Irish Box' will be settled by the absence of fish.

Governments responsible

Chemical weapons are sometimes called 'poor man's nuclear weapons'. They can be made with far fewer resources than nuclear weapons, but like them are of no use whatever to sane people. They are wanted only by military folk and other lunatics.

Most of those who have used poison gas to kill and injure people have done so at ground level. In the 1914-18 war, chlorine gas was released when the breeze was blowing towards the other army's trenches. In Auschwitz and the other Nazi death camps, the gas was pumped into closed rooms where the victims were assembled. In the recent Tokyo outrage, Sarin gas was left on trains in containers resembling commuters' lunch-boxes.

Gas bombs have been dropped from aeroplanes onto people only twice, first by the Italian Air Force on unarmed Ethiopian civilians in 1936, and second by the Iraqi Air Force on unarmed Kurdish civilians in 1989. They were available to both sides in the 'Second World War', but not used.

Fear of them, however, was great. Gas masks were issued to British civilians

before war was declared, and from the first day of the war everyone was required by law to carry them everywhere. Metal gas-mask cases were fashionable for a short time, but in early 1940 all these were confiscated and everyone had to carry the cardboard boxes in which the masks were issued, though it was permitted to cover the boxes in decorative material. Horizontal wooden boards supported on long sticks were erected, like tall bird-tables, painted with yellow paint which was supposed to turn red if poison gas was about. Church bells were silenced because the bells were to be used in conjunction with air raid sirens in the event of a gas attack. Instructions were published in newspapers for the construction of gas-proof rooms. Some ARP posts were issued with gas-proof clothing, and among the toy soldiers in expensive shops appeared lead figures of men in gas-proof clothing carrying brooms and buckets.

A news film was shown in cinemas of an enormous stockpile of poison gas canisters, apparently in an open field, with a commentary threatening retaliation if Germany used gas. It was plainly intended for German consumption (news films were often sent where they would 'fall into enemy hands'), and there were those who suspected that the canisters were empty since they were only there as a deterrent and for deterrent purposes a convincing dummy would be as good as the real thing.

However, the wartime MoD had indeed gone to the danger and expense of making the real thing, and fifty years later the British gas bombs and their German counterparts menace us all from the Irish Sea. Newspapers have called the dump a 'time-bomb' but it is worse than that. Those who set time bombs know at what time the bomb will go off.

Bombthrowing hooligans

In the Cold War the 'deterrent' was not poison gas but nuclear weapons. The British capacity to use such weapons is still called 'the Independent Deterrent', although it cannot be used without American consent, and there is no enemy to be deterred. As with poison gas, a convincing dummy would deter as much as the real thing, but the real thing really exists.

It seems, however, that nuclear weapons were not enough. Both the United States and the former Soviet Union manufactured thousands of tons of deadly Sarin gas, which is still in store.

The popular press often confuses 'hooligans' and 'anarchists' and the old image of the 'anarchist bomb-thrower' persists in some places. Yet the most dangerous hooligans, with the nastiest bombs they can acquire, are the world's governments.

People tell us that although anarchy is an attractive idea, society without government is impracticable. They may be right. But if government is inevitable, we must be pessimistic about the likelihood of human survival.

Major: wrong again!

Last year Mr Major blew his top about 'L'beggars' in our cities upsetting tourists. Now he attacks schools for wanting to pay more in wages than the government offers. He argues that there are "two administrators for every three teachers", so schools could have the same level of teaching for less money simply by sacking a few useless administrators.

A school library assistant, Mrs Carol Mason, answers this misrepresentation of fact in a letter to the *Guardian*. For every three teachers there are two other workers, including:

"... cleaners, dinner ladies, caretakers, secretaries, library assistants, education welfare officers, nursery support workers, etc., in order to come up with his snappy soundbite. So everyone who works in schools but cannot lay claim to the title 'teacher' is an 'administrator'."

... I serve the needs of staff and pupils trying to comply with the demands of the national curriculum that work should be researched using diverse resources. I guide staff and pupils alike through the book stock, CD-ROM materials, videos, pamphlets, journals, free resources from commercial firms, etc. I provide a quiet working environment during lessons at lunch-time and after school, enhancing a child's chance

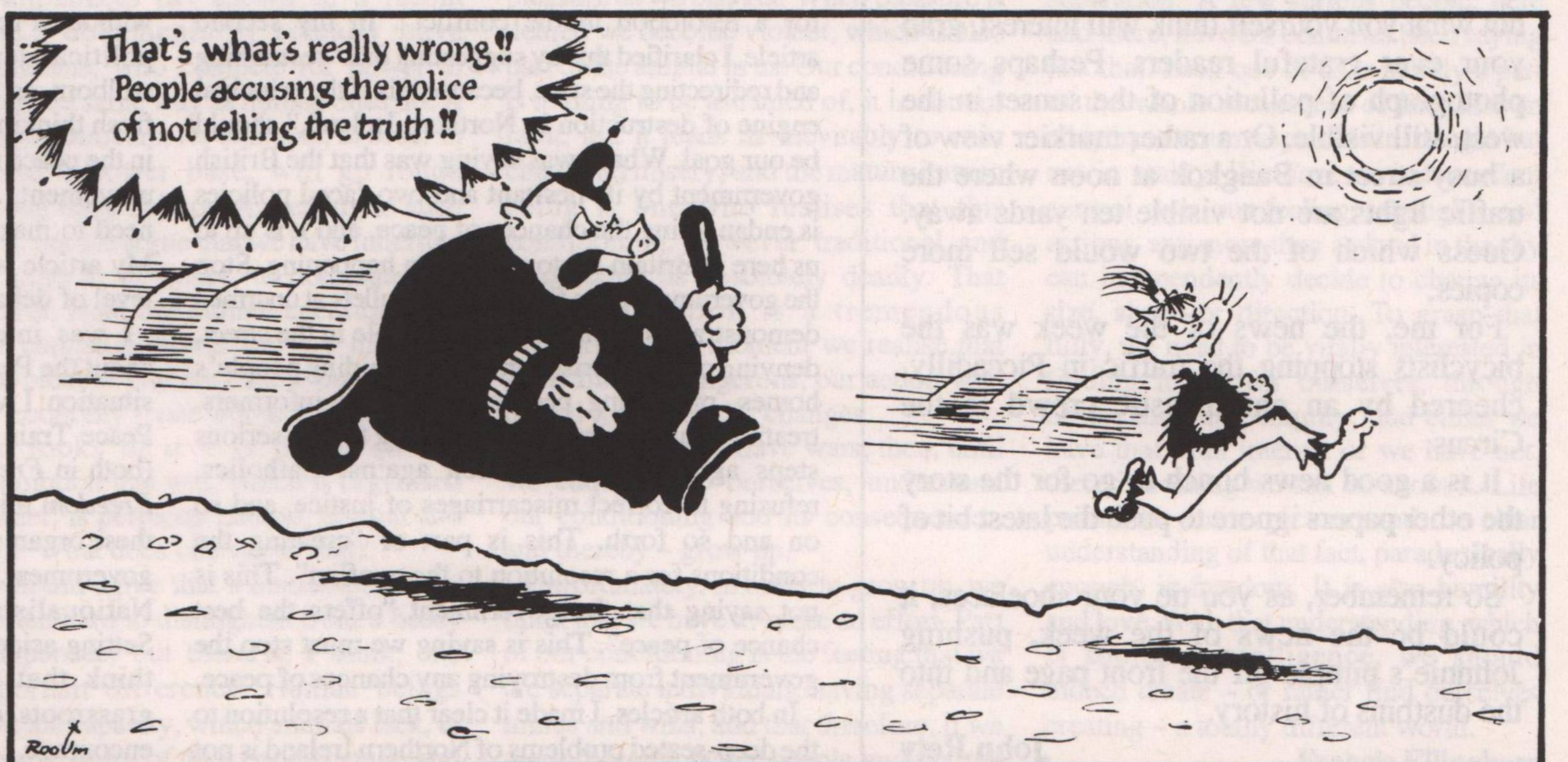
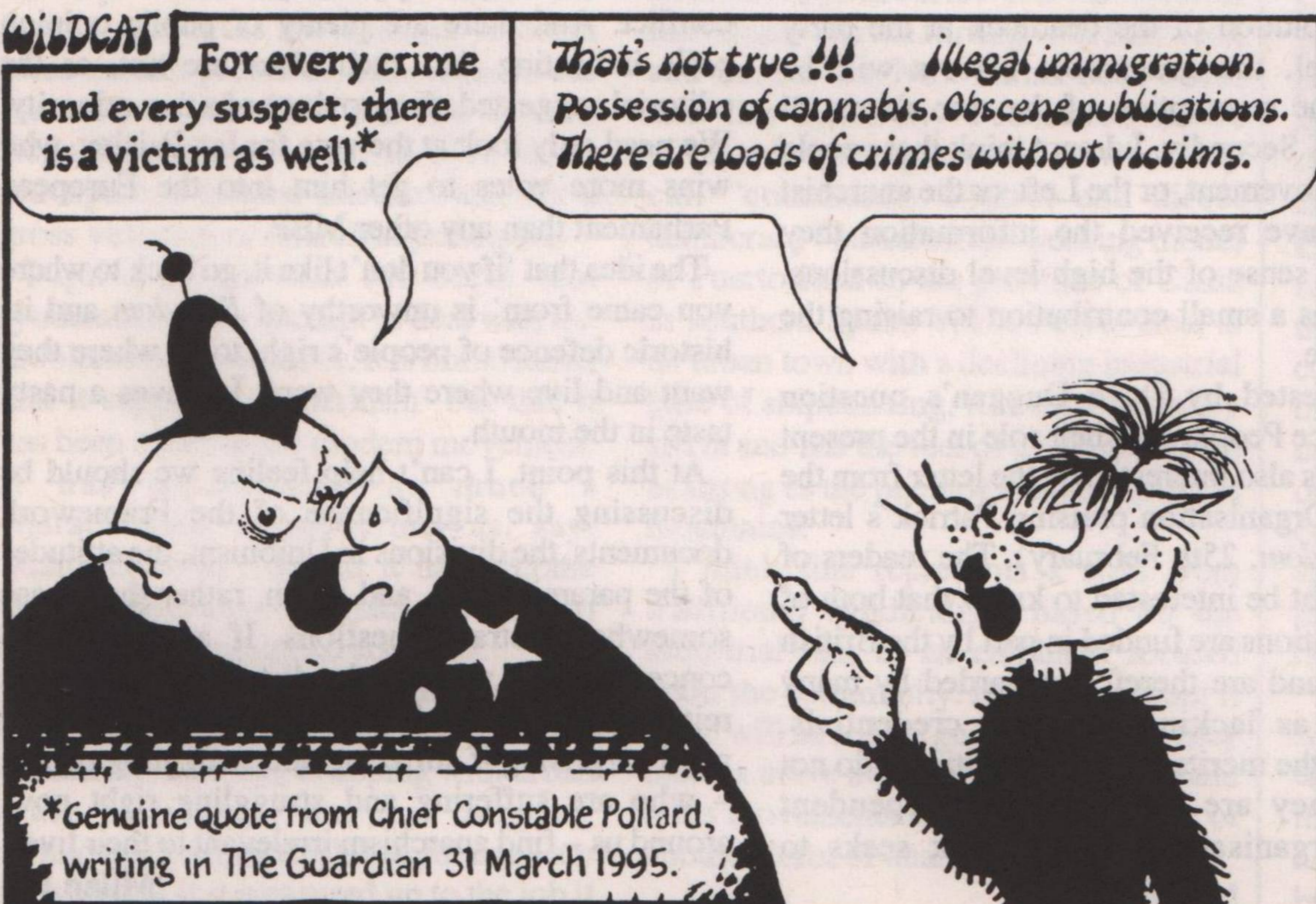
of exam success (aren't we supposed to 'do better' here in Wales Mr Redwood?). I get job satisfaction when I see the projects the children produce or a teacher says 'thanks for your help'. I certainly don't do it for the money! I am also the first-aid-er for my block - the full time school nurse (another 'administrator' Mr Major?) was cut years ago. At present (because of staff illness) I am the only non-teaching first-aid-er serving 1,100 pupils. I look after sick or injured children, 'phone parents and see to the child's needs until they arrive, 27 pupils in four days this week, with complaints ranging from tummy upsets to a dislocated shoulder on the rugby field. If John Major has his way I will be sacked as superfluous and uneconomical as I'm not 'at the chalk face' or 'in the classroom'.

So in the future it will be the teacher, not the caretaker, who fetches the mop and bucket to clean vomit off the classroom floor, holds the head of a sick child over the toilet, 'phones the parents and sits with the casualty until they arrive (if they can be found), or accompanies a serious injury to hospital."

And Mrs Mason puts the practical question that none of the politicians in the House, right or left, would think of asking:

"So would John Major like to tell us what happens to the other 29 children in the class while the teacher is doing all of this? No, I didn't think so. After all, he hasn't got a clue has he?"

Answer! Answer, Major! But answer there will be none for these people think only of budgets and not *people* and *problems*.



Through the Anarchist Press

What's the news? Some maintain that news as such is impartial; the retelling of some event which is of some interest. On this score almost anything or everything is news, even little Johnnie's bellyache.

News is all things worth remembering or taking into account. Something that the individual and all other individuals need to remember and should take into account, so the news of the day is everything that needs to be remembered and to be taken into account. Even the pimple on Johnnie's or Tony's neck. I've got a bigger pimple on my neck, says Johnnie. This is where Tony protests, that the news really is the pimple on his neck. If there is any other news, it can be safely forgotten. This of course is an absurdity, for tomorrow all which has been 'ignored' today will have to be remembered. At your peril that you or Johnnie forgets the pimple on his neck.

So news – which old readers may remember I've stopped reading in favour of *Freedom* and other anarchist literature – cannot be all the news, just a sample.

Come the anarchist millennium, a new definition for what constitutes news will have to be found. There is no doubt in my mind that trivia will still have the greatest circulation, but then little Johnnie's appetite for trivia will be no longer a major concern.

News is of constituent parts answering routine questions (what, when, where, who, which, why, etc.) with four types of answers: a) nothing, b) nothing new, c) something unusual, d) something extraordinary. Over the waters the fifth type of answer – 'You don't say' – is invariably added.

So when Oscar Wilde was asked at American customs 'What have you got to declare?' he had every right to declare 'Nothing [category a)] but my genius [category d)]'. And it has been news ever since.

Usually when the answer to the question 'What happened?' is 'Nothing' it can still be category d), for all things may be expected to happen so if nothing took place how did that happen, or even not happen.

However, the meaning behind the laconic answer 'Nothing' may be understood as 'Everything continues as before and as expected, there is nothing to report'. When there is a slight alteration it produces a new development, something unheard of or unconsidered before, and the mention of it is a small indication of its news content, c). However, the billions of human activities, although individually of equal importance, are discounted in favour of a short range of samples such as Johnnie's pimple revelation, or anything else which passes for thought in editorial circles.

So there you are, sitting in your editorial chair, sitting by your cosy fire, and you choose the item for your all important front page. Without a doubt you will disregard any others but what you yourself think will interest, grab your ever grateful readers. Perhaps some photograph of pollution of the sunset in the west, still visible. Or a rather murkier view of a busy street in Bangkok at noon where the traffic lights are not visible ten yards away. Guess which of the two would sell more copies.

For me, the news of the week was the bicyclists stopping the traffic in Piccadilly, cheered by an enthusiastic crowd in the Circus.

It is a good news hunch to go for the story the other papers ignore to push the latest bit of policy.

So remember, as you tie your shoelaces, it could be the news of the week, pushing Johnnie's pimple off the front page and into the dustbins of history.

John Rety

THE MILLIONAIRE MEDIA AT WAR

... but where are the left alternatives?

In spite of government reassurances that the recession is over, and echoed in the news and financial pages of the millionaire press (the *only* daily press in this country) we judge the situation not by record 'invisible exports' which have allowed the Chancellor to convert an £11 billion deficit Balance of Trade in 1994 into a modest £114 million in the black, but by quite different criteria. Capitalism, in most anarchists' opinion (we can't speak for the American self-styled Rothbardian anarchist-capitalists) is essentially monopolistic. When business is flourishing there is no need to compete. Take-overs, cut-throat competition is a true sign that business is bad.

60% of the national press income comes from advertising, but with all the competition from commercial television and radio the amount available to the newspapers is going down, just as are also their sales (and therefore the rates they can command from the advertisers). The first recent example of a take-over was the *Independent* group when Lonrho's decided to sell the *Observer*. Their intention was to incorporate it with the *Independent on Sunday* and hopefully add the bulk of the *Observer* readership to its circulation figures – for the benefit of the advertisers, needless to say. In the event the well established *Guardian*, spared the demands of a Murdoch or the *Telegraph's* Black, was able to take over the *Observer* certainly not for philanthropic reasons but because a Sunday publication would keep their presses running seven days a week instead of six.

Then Murdoch launched his price war, apparently discovering late in the day that the nationals were overpriced! It's obvious that the first target in the media war has been the *Independent* and more recently their Sunday edition.

Not only are a number of the dailies (including some tabloids) being sold at reduced prices, but the extreme examples of

this war of the millionaires is with the Sundays. Readers who purchase their Saturday editions can remove coupons which allow them to purchase the Sunday editions at completely unrealistic prices. As we write, last Sunday's *Telegraph* was available to the coupon holders for 10p instead of 70p, the *Times* at 50p instead of £1, the *Sunday Mirror* at 25p instead of 50p, the *Observer* at 50p instead of 90p and, believe it or not, the *Independent on Sunday* at 10p instead of £1!

Bear in mind that the wholesalers and retailers get the full discount, which means that the publishers are actually paying to sell their papers!

Now what can be the only outcome that the media tycoons expect from this 'war' if not that the 'weakest' – relatively, since they are all tycoons, including the no-longer independent *Independent* which is now more or less owned by the Mirror group and an Irish press tycoon – go to the wall. So be it, and there will be no crocodile tears from the writer of this column.

But let us face the realities of this capitalist world. Apart from the *Guardian* – which is a conventional liberal paper in that it has pages of city and finance news (which we find useful to attack the capitalist system) and pages of professional so-called sport but also, fortunately, some good political correspondents, some good editorials and Steve Bell to debunk both, not to mention some interesting letters, examples of which figure in this issue of *Freedom*.

Let the national mass media wage war among themselves to bankruptcy. But let us also face stark realities. There is a so-called Labour Party which when elections take place can secure some ten million votes and yet today there is not a *daily socialist newspaper!* The easy reply is that neither the Labour Party nor the ten million voters are socialists. Indeed, if only they were! But in the distant past (even then they weren't!) there was nevertheless the *Daily Herald*, launched in

1912 with a capital of only £300 and, according to Francis Williams, "It did not even start with the blessing of the leaders of the Labour Party". The millionaire proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, Lord Northcliffe, considered its survival in the early years as "the miracle of Fleet Street".* Good old George Lansbury was the editor in the early days until 1922. Thereafter it would appear that it joined the mass circulation war with a vengeance. Francis Williams relates that when he was editor it had the largest circulation – two million – of any daily paper. By then the Odhams Press and the trade unions were involved. And of course it was no longer the old *Daily Herald*. It eventually spawned, believe it or not, the present Murdoch *Sun!*

In 1995 not only has the *Daily Herald* gone but also an interesting Labour Party journal *Labour Weekly*, which was axed some years ago as part of its economy measures. So the Labour Party today, apart from its news bulletin to members, has no propaganda outlet to the general public. It relies on television appearances!

Is it being unrealistic to believe that the political and economic situation is such that there must be room for a daily paper which exposes not only the corruption at all levels of society but the growing inequalities that capitalist technology is producing in society willy nilly. No national paper today is questioning capitalist production and technology so far as it affects the majority in our world. When will enough people of good-will, not only for themselves but the future of their children, realise the need for action to destroy a system that will inevitably destroy not civilisation but *civilised society* within the lifetime of the young generation?

* Francis Williams, sometime editor of the *Herald*, in *Press, Parliament and People* (1946).

Justice and Peace in Ireland

Dear *Freedom*,

Patrick Nicholson is rightly uneasy with any "association with those holding power", and, again rightly, sees real solutions to the problems of the North of Ireland arising only "from the bottom upwards" (25th March). However, he then goes on to characterise my stance, spelt out in *Freedom* in two articles (14th January and 25th February), as believing that "governments and political parties offer the best chance of peace in this situation". This is not exactly what I was saying. In my first article, I wrote, "it is up to people here in Britain to force our government to show a real commitment to the peace process, and to create the conditions for a resolution to the conflict". In my second article, I clarified this by suggesting that "restraining and redirecting the state, because this is the principal engine of destruction in Northern Ireland," should be our goal. What I was saying was that the British government by its hesitant and two-faced policies is endangering the chances of peace, and it is up to us here in Britain to stop this from happening. Stop the government from firing rubber bullets at unarmed demonstrators, from harassing people in the street, denying political prisoners' rights, raiding people's homes, pressuring people to become informers, treating Sinn Fein as a pariah, failing to take serious steps against discrimination against Catholics, refusing to correct miscarriages of justice, and so on and so forth. This is part of "creating the conditions for a resolution to the conflict". This is not saying that the government "offers the best chance of peace". This is saying we must stop the government from destroying any chances of peace.

In both articles, I made it clear that a resolution to the deep-seated problems of Northern Ireland is not

up to the British government or indeed the British people. It is up to those who live in the North of Ireland. As I wrote on 25th February: "It is up to them what kind of agreement they come up with; it is up to us to ensure that the environment for their negotiations is as benign as possible". As you might expect, I completely agree with Patrick that people in the North of Ireland should gain control of their own lives directly. In fact, there is a lively network of community groups who are attempting to inject some popular participation into the political process. That is certainly worth writing about. The reasons why I wrote about the peace negotiations rather than grassroots stirrings are twofold. Firstly, without a resolution of the deadlock at the party political level, the grassroots efforts will be stillborn as the resumption of the war aborts all fresh thinking. Secondly, I do not think that people in the peace movement, or the Left, or the anarchist movement, have received the information they need to make sense of the high-level discussions. My article was a small contribution to raising the level of debate.

I was interested by Dave Duggan's question about the Peace People and their role in the present situation. I was also interested by the letter from the Peace Train Organisation praising Patrick's letter (both in *Freedom*, 25th February). The readers of *Freedom* might be interested to know that both of these organisations are funded in part by the British government, and are therefore regarded by many Nationalists as lacking 'neutral' credentials. Setting aside the merits of their activities, I do not think that they are the kind of independent grassroots organisations that Patrick seeks to encourage.

There are a number of other points I would like to raise about the discussion of Ireland in recent issues. I will restrict myself to one: the editorial in the 11th March issue proclaiming "No political solution to the Northern Ireland drama" was the kind of outside intervention which unites both Nationalists and Unionists in anger. The suggestion that those who feel themselves Irish should head south of the border, and that those who feel British should cross the water, is extraordinarily insensitive and betrays a fundamental misunderstanding. For Unionists, they are *already* living in the United Kingdom, just as, for Nationalists, they are *already* living in Ireland. So far as they are concerned, there is no need to move – all that is needed is a social and political structure that will entrench this identity. This irreconcilability is precisely the heart of the conflict. And there are plenty of public opinion polls indicating that such ideas are not, as the editorial suggested, the province of a tiny minority. We need only look at the vote for Ian Paisley, who wins more votes to get him into the European Parliament than any other MEP.

The idea that 'if you don't like it, go back to where you came from' is unworthy of *Freedom* and its historic defence of people's right to go where they want and live where they want. It leaves a nasty taste in the mouth.

At this point, I can't help feeling we should be discussing the significance of the Framework documents, the divisions in Unionism, the attitudes of the paramilitaries, and so on, rather than these somewhat abstract questions. If anarchists are concerned only with the far distant future and the reiteration of vague, if worthy, principles, it is not at all surprising if suffering and struggling people – who are suffering and struggling right now, around us – find anarchism irrelevant to their lives.

Milan Rai

In the light of the huge banking losses and top boss salaries revealed recently, full marks go to the *Observer* business page for pointing out the official meanings of million, billion and trillion, so important when assessing the extent of our own 'culture of envy'. All government statistics define a billion as a thousand million and a trillion as a thousand billion, that is a number plus twelve noughts or zeros. Let us try the following calculation:

Question: How long would the following people need to work to buy a pint of milk? (semi-skimmed, pasteurised, doorstep).

- 1) A home carer;
- 2) A senior staff nurse;
- 3) Ed Wallis (Power Gen boss).

Answer:

- 1) 20 minutes;
- 2) 3 minutes;
- 3) less than half a second.

In the 1970s managerial salaries seemed to depend on the number of people being managed. An RAF commodore, a factory manager and a secondary school headteacher in charge of 2,000 people would each earn roughly the same. During the Thatcher years this arrangement has changed and salaries in the teaching profession have fallen behind those of both the armed services and industry.

VIOLENCE

Nicolas Walter gave the Comment on the Radio 4 Sunday programme on 12th February 1995.

Violence isn't new, but it's always news. The most surprising thing about it is that it's so surprising. Of course an unusual murder comes as a shock, but if soldiers or sportsmen or sports fans or boys fight and even kill, this too becomes a matter of scandal and concern. There's a moral panic in the media over every case, from James Bulger to Eric Cantona, guardsmen in Northern Ireland or paratroopers in England. Yet, after all, soldiers are trained to kill, sport is ritualised battle, boys are miniature fighters. Just think how many stories and plays and films and television programmes there are about war and crime.

The fact is that violence is part of nature, and especially human nature. All animals live by killing other living things, and so do we. Our ancestors were hunters as well as gatherers, and we still eat meat and fish as well as vegetables and fruit. Unlike most other animals, however, we also attack one another. We love our friends, but hate our enemies. In-group solidarity is balanced by out-group hostility. The old religious view was that we had fallen from our divine origins; the later scientific view was that we haven't risen above our animal origins. Whether our viewpoint is theological or biological, we see that human nature is evil as well as good and nasty as well as nice. But our violence, which was a great advantage in the struggle for existence, is becoming a great disadvantage in the struggle for survival. We must recognise and control our double nature before it destroys us.

Not by suppressing it; we all have violent feelings, unconscious if not conscious, and they will be expressed somehow. Not by exaggerating it; to make violence exciting is to make it more attractive. Nor by punishing it; those to whom evil is done do evil in return, and prisons are universities of crime, especially with so much homelessness and unemployment outside. What is needed is not short sharp shocks, or long blunt ones, but something that people – especially young males – find worthwhile: work, risk, challenge, service, struggle, responsibility, achievement. If our society can't provide these, it deserves to perish.

[This text was abridged before being broadcast]

Milk and Honey

Whilst the National Lottery has quickly established itself as the acceptable face of gambling and people across each class and culture openly fantasise about how they'd dispose of millions of pounds, the newly introduced lottery scratch card is altogether more vulgar and tempting. These red and silver rolls of cards wave at us from dispensers on supermarket and Post Office counters. They are instant, private and untraceable. A quick fix to spice up and bring momentary hope to a dreary day. Judging from the spent cards littering the floors of Woolworth and the streets of Camden Town, it is obvious that these are to be the impulse buys which sap the ever-diminishing incomes of the poor.

The lottery draw is at number four in the

BBC ratings list, and a Tory MP suggested a further dimension to augment people's pleasure and excitement – violent offenders could be publicly flogged as a run-up to the lottery draw. Perhaps disgruntled losers could volunteer to swish the whips themselves as a sort of consolation prize.

This mixing of real life with fantasy time could be extended – the mourners from the Kray funeral could have appeared in an Eastenders episode calling in at the Queen Vic to drown their sorrows and wallowing in the sickening nostalgia that filled the newspapers last week.

It felt like a return to Dickensian times when Boots, the all-merciful employer, restored the job of a woman employee sacked for eating an

after dinner mint whilst clearing tables after a banquet. A foolishly generous gesture by Boots, perhaps, but the woman had worked for them for thirteen years without previous misdemeanour. The worker sacked for eating a left-over apple crumble, however, was not so lucky – his was an altogether different offence. These are examples of the important and difficult decision of management so how could we begrudge them their high salaries.

An extract in the current *Anarchy* magazine entitled 'The Fatuousness of Cynicism' gave warning to those amongst us that cynicism saps the will to resist or even struggle. It claims that cynicism is just another off-the-peg ideology and the cynic is the defeatist who has walled himself into a tomb of self-justifying excuses. Oh dear, it does sound familiar.

"There is in society only one reality that everything can be reduced to and that is because everything is reduced to it and produced by means of it. It is something whose mundane familiarity fools not only the cynic, but all of us, into thinking we must understand it. That thing – which is not a thing – that which we all imagine we know about – is money!"

In the midst of our struggle to avoid the culture of envy, to continue our quest for ill-gotten gains and that elusive feelgood factor we are often overwhelmed by cynicism. Some comfort can be found in the words of the BBC Radio 3 announcer who assures us this week that though the country may be going to the dogs, there are still some excellent recordings to be had of Thomas Tallis. Well that's alright then.

Silvia Edwards

Green Anarchist magazine raided by police

The Inner Bookshop in Oxford was raided by police early in March. We have no details, but it was probably connected with the fact that the Inner Bookshop provided our contemporary *Green Anarchist* with a postal address (they now have a new one).

Shortly afterwards, on 14th March 1995, the address of the editor of *Green Anarchist*, and the printer, were raided and many of the magazine's records were taken, together with copy for the next issue, cheque books, computer discs and a computer.

The police force concerned is believed to be Hampshire Special Branch. Precisely what they are after is not known, but we guess there is some connection with *Green Anarchist's* support for the Animal Liberation Front and other violent groups.

Green Anarchist have supplied the following background information.

Background

Founded in 1984, *Green Anarchist* is a militant magazine which rejects technology and calls for sustainable self-sufficient villages of less than 500.

Green Anarchist deals with travellers, squatters, animal rights, environmental issues, anti-motorway protests, anti-fascism, sexual liberation and counter culture. We reject non-violence and report actions carried out by the ALF (Animal Liberation Front) and ELF (Earth Liberation Front).

In 1991 Frontline Books, Manchester, was raided after police took exception to *Green Anarchist* issue 27. Frontline subsequently doubled their order.

In 1993 *Green Anarchist* helped to expose *Searchlight* as a destabilising influence on the left and an arm of the state in the booklets *A Lie Too Far* and *At War with the Truth*.

Green Anarchist was linked with the campaign to stop the Grand National in an

article by Chester Stern in the *Mail on Sunday*, 6th February 1994.

These police raids follow on from the July *Sunday Times* John Harlow 'Summer of Hate' smear campaign against radical greens and a repetition of the unsubstantiated Harlow smears on television and other places, especially the false and slanderous description of *Green Anarchist* as a terror organisation by Jason Bennetto in the *Independent*, 28th December 1994.

New contact address: *Green Anarchist*, BM 1715, London WC1N 3XX.

'Left-wing' my foot!

Recently two writers in the *Grauniad* referred to Michael Foot as the most left-wing leader the Labour Party had ever had. It was a small enough claim certainly, but even then untrue (both Keir Hardie and George Lansbury compare favourably) and still would have been if they were confusing uncle with nephew. It's perhaps worth recapping and recounting some of the highlights of Foot's career.

In the mid '30s he combined with the Labour Party right-wing and the Stalinists to oust Lansbury. He then posed as a leading anti-fascist, while retaining close personal links with Oswald Mosley at whose house he dined at least once a month. He was a regular columnist – indeed for a time an editor – for papers of the Beaverbrook Press at that time (with the exception of the *Northbrook Mail*, the most right-wing string of national papers in the country).

Then in 1957 he apparently moved left (taking over *Tribune*, which he kept unilateralist, when Nye Bevan sold out) and it is on this that his present reputation hangs. So it is worth recalling one of his first acts as editor. 1957 was a year in which a number of ex-Stalinists were re-examining their consciences and trying to find a new political position, joined in this by disillusioned Bevanites with a sprinkling of far leftists joining in. Amongst

the groups that grew up that year was the *Universities and Left Review* which held weekly meetings (far larger than anything that had been seen on the left for some years) that summer in London.

Foot wrote to Ralph Samuel (one of the four founders) asking that the *Universities and Left Review* should sell *Tribune*; thinking that he meant that we should have it on the literature stall at the meetings (indeed it already was on it) or that the *Universities and Left Review* Club members might sell at other meetings or on the streets (no doubt many did). Ralph replied 'yes, of course', only to get the reply that that was not what was meant. Foot wanted the *Universities and Left Review* Club to subordinate all its activities to sending its members out to sell *Tribune*. Naturally Ralph replied that the Club was not a party organisation, it had no power to order its members in that way. If the members wanted to put selling *Tribune* above everything else, they no doubt would already be so doing.

Foot was very dissatisfied with this and wrote back in unpleasant terms lauding the virtues of 'democratic centralist discipline'. He then, instead, made a deal with the RSL (a somewhat boring Trot group which has previously been expelled from Labour and was then trying to return – the ancestor of the Militant group which Foot was to attempt to hound out of the Labour Party when, years later, he became leader, attacking it for that very commitment to 'democratic centralist discipline').

About eighteen months later, when CND was growing and direct action was gaining support, Foot spoke at the *Universities and Left Review* Club. He devoted the whole of his talk – the best part of an hour – to saying that in the then conditions of the day, nuclear weapons were the most important aspect of socialist politics, everything else must be subordinated to campaigning against them. The next day he spoke at a by-election meeting in Swaffham marketplace, three miles from a nuclear rocket base at which some had been arrested the previous month. The bomb was not mentioned at all.

The events of the early '80s are sufficiently recent that all but the youngest *Freedom* readers will recall them: he ran for leadership, more or less in conjunction with Tony Benn, and once elected turned round and supported Healy (and announced that he would do nothing to offend the consciences of multilateralists, implicitly saying that the consciences of unilateralists did not matter), and accused Benn of disloyalty when the latter continued the campaign. Even by the standards of Labour politicians, it's hardly a left-wing CV.

LO

GERRARD WINSTANLEY (1609-1676) A learned merchant tailor, Winstanley became in the English Revolution a 'True Leveller', and founder of the Digger Colony in Surrey in 1649. A prodigious

pamphleteer, he developed a collectivist theory with particular appeal to modern libertarians, not least because he called upon the oppressed themselves to put it into action. "I took my spade and went and broke the ground ... thereby declaring freedom to the Creation, and that the earth must be set free from intanglements of Lords and Landlords, and that it shall become a common Treasury to all ... for freedom is the man that will turn the world upside downe, therefore no wonder he hath enemies."

The portrait, right, is a black and white copy of one of 36 portraits of anarchists drawn in three-colour line by Clifford Harper, included in a set of picture cards each with a potted biography on the reverse and published by Freedom Press. Other portraits include such varied anarchist figures as Errico Malatesta, William Godwin, Marie Louise Berneri, Rudolf Rocker, Emma Goldman, Emiliano Zapata, Noam Chomsky, Étienne Reclus, Colin Ward and many more.

The 36 picture cards (known to collectors as trading cards) come in a neat box, price £5.00 (post free in UK, or at £5.45 including p&p abroad) from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.



— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

The anarchist as liberator

On this year's first sunny Monday afternoon I was, as usual, sitting at my typewriter with the radio on bashing out a review for another anarchist journal on a subject which was, as A.S. Neill used to complain, "outwith my ken".¹ Radio 4's short story was *Skiffle Night* by Philip Norman. Evidently autobiographical, it was set in the summer of 1957 when I, though belonging even then to the pre-skiffle generation but anxious to extract the anarchy-quotient of current trends, had written about skiffle in this journal.²

The story's protagonist, Ivor, was just 14 and working all through the holidays in his father's seaside café and dance hall. One of the girls tells him that another, Tonie, had "been potty about you all summer". What should he do? Carol pityingly suggests that he should take Tonie to hear the Vipers at the Commodore on Friday night.

"Who are the Vipers?" he asks. "Only the best ruddy skiffle group out. They've even knocked Tommy Steele off the top of the charts." So he approaches his father:

"Dad, could I have a night off? I want to go and see the Vipers. 'The Vipers?' he repeated blankly. 'They're a famous skiffle group.' My father sighed in the manner of a regimental colonel confronted by a habitual malingeringer. 'All right, Ivor', he said in a disillusioned voice. 'If that's really what you want to do with your life...'

And Ivor borrows his cousin's charcoal-grey worsted trousers, several sizes too big but

concealed by his cavalry twill jacket which, in the sweltering hall, he dare not take off. "You look warm" say the girls. But when the lights go down and the Vipers appear, embarrassment is forgotten. He described the impact of the five performers, and how:

"... with no technical aid beyond three old-fashioned stand microphones, their attack and energy were phenomenal ... On the final chord of each song, the washboard player swept both sets of thimble fingers into the air, tilted his chair on to its back legs and kicked his feet up as if spontaneously levitating. For the middle-class boy of 1957, there was no body language to register the wonder of all this ... But as I sat there, awkwardly enthralled, I felt my schoolboy emotions, the tension, nerves, guilt and shame, all magically ebb away ... For the first time in all my 14-and-a-bit years, I didn't care what I said or how I looked or what anyone thought of me. I cared about nothing but that stupendous music ... meanwhile, as I suddenly recollected, Tonie's heart went 'whoops' over me. The way I was feeling now, born again, seven feet tall and invulnerable, who could blame it. 'I'll walk you both home then', I announced with a decisiveness never heard in my voice before."³

The anarchist interest of this story is, of course, that the levitating performer on the washboard in the Vipers was John Pilgrim, a contributor to *Freedom* in the '50s, *Anarchy*

in the '60s and editor of two issues of *The Raven* in the '90s. Old London readers will remember his nocturnal news-stand selling anarchist and sci-fi magazines outside St Martins School of Art in Charing Cross Road. New readers in East Anglia can encounter him on jazz nights in pubs performing with other enthusiasts, or can hear his comments on record releases on BBC Radio Suffolk's Saturday night 'Suffolk Blues'.

What I now realise, and it is beautifully expressed in Philip Norman's story, is that the Vipers were, all unwittingly, involved in Gestalt Therapy with those members of the audience like young Ivor who were needing it. Notice carefully the language the writer uses and compare it with the language of what I now learn is the classic text in this field, *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* by Frederick S. Perls, Ralph E. Hefferline and Paul Goodman.⁴ I have owned this book for many decades, simply because I have always been impressed by Paul Goodman's contribution to anarchism. I read it in a very superficial way, as I tend to share the standard English approach to the concept of psychotherapy, outside the treatment of recognisable mental illness, seeing it by way of Woody Allen films

as a typical preoccupation of the New York intelligentsia, in the cult of the self, just like other Americans getting right with God in a variety of revivalist religious movements.

But a few years ago, taking advantage of our Eurocards giving us half-rate fares on the railways, we made a round trip of friends in Italy and Switzerland, staying a night or two in Zürich with a pair of psychotherapists. I was interested in the fact that the worthy councillors of the city commune had set up kiosks in the park in the middle of town to meet the needs of drug addicts – the closest thing, including the equally bold approach of the city of Amsterdam, to the experiment proposed by Malatesta in 1922.⁵ The citizens have, of course, paid a heavy price for their councillors' policy, in that they aren't use their own public gardens, now known as Needle Park.

I wanted to praise the communal council for its willingness to face up to the drug issue but was told emphatically that it was all due to the sinister influence of Paul Goodman as the principal author of that celebrated book and that its translation was responsible for subversion in the teachers' colleges of German-speaking Europe, leading to people in authority in secondary schools conniving in the spread of a subversive drop-out generation of teenagers. As a guest in that specialist household, ignorant both of Gestalt Therapy and of whatever variety of psychotherapy my hosts practised, I had to stay silent.

(continued on page 6)

1. Lowland Scots for 'beyond my understanding'.

2. Colin Ward, 'Is Skiffle Piffle?' in *Freedom*, 18th May 1957.

3. Philip Norman, *Skiffle Night*, Radio 4, 20th March 1995; also published in *Daily Telegraph Book Section*, 18th March 1995.

4. New York, Julian Press, 1951; 24th reprint, New York, Dell Publishing.

5. Vernon Richards (editor), *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas*, Freedom Press, 1965, pages 110-111.

Sick Cows

Not BSE but BST again, the genetically engineered hormone that can be injected into cows to increase milk yields by 10-15% in a world so mad that some UK cows are now reared to produce milk that is sprayed onto the pasture to grow the grass that feeds the cows to produce milk that ... and millions in the world go hungry. BST, produced by the Monsanto Chemical company of America and sold as Posilac, has been available to American Farmers for over a year (*Freedom*, 25th June 1994) and now the company has its eyes on the European market, but there is a problem. Use of BST is associated with an increased incidence of mastitis, a painful inflammation of the udder, although whether this is due directly to the use of the drug or to the consequent increase in milk yield is not clear. Three British researchers who have analysed test data produced by Monsanto claim that publication of their results was blocked by Monsanto for three years because the company disputed their conclusions and on the label, although no doubt in small print, the company admits that cows given BST may suffer from some twenty disorders, including digestive disorders such as indigestion, bloat and diarrhoea, but only they say as protection against legal redress by farmers should their cows fall ill.

Potentially more serious perhaps, milk from treated cows has been found to contain greatly increased amounts of an insulin-like growth factor that is known to over-stimulate growth of human cells. Does it increase the risk of breast cancer? Unlikely. Does it stimulate gut wall cells to multiply excessively? Possibly. There is disagreement about the significance of these findings, but at the very least more research is needed. Monsanto have said that they will soon publish new evidence that BST is safe, but one is reminded of past efforts in this direction by the tobacco companies and isn't it strange that they would prefer you not to know whether the product you buy comes from BST-treated cows or not.

Back to Europe where the European Union agricultural ministers banned the use of BST for one year in December 1993, although more out of concern for the milk mountain than the health of cow or human. In this country some sixty organisations, ranging from

SCIENCE NEWS

supermarkets to cheesemakers and including Compassion in World Farming and the Institute of Biology, are against the use of BST. Farmers and the milk processing industry fear a backlash from the consumers if BST is introduced. It seems that only this government's agricultural minister is in favour. However for the moment we are spared because, last December, EU agricultural ministers voted to renew the ban by 11 to 1 until the year 2000. Or are we? US dairy products from BST treated cows are allowed into the UK market and apparently without even being so labelled.

Computer Porn

What is worse than bullying and solvent abuse? According to some teachers, the chance that their pupils might use a computer to gain access to some inevitably grainy pornographic pictures and circulate them amongst their friends. When have they not? The technology government minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, Ian Taylor, has even used this as an excuse for not approving school computer access to the international network of computers (Internet). What a gift for the tabloids when a research paper on computer pornography in schools was published from the University of Central Lancashire. You can imagine headlines like 'Computer porn rampant in schools'. But let us look at some of the figures. Head Teachers of all 28,000 British schools were asked whether they thought that their pupils were aware of computer pornography. From the results we are told that in 31% of boys-only secondary schools (the highest percentage recorded) and 13% of mixed secondary schools, the Heads responded yes. But let us look more closely at the figures. Only 27% of the 28,000 actually responded and of these only 1.4% (just over 100) were from all-boys secondary schools. So a more accurate headline would be 'In only 33 of all-boys secondary schools does Head believe boys are aware of computer pornography'. But then that would not be news. Only by extrapolating unjustifiably and accepting the researcher's

suggestion that some schools might not have replied because "maybe they don't necessarily want to admit they have got illegal material on their premises" can one conclude that large numbers of pupils spend much of their time looking at pornographic pictures, as the researcher wishes to suggest. This note is not really about pornography at all, we have had enough on that recently, but about researcher bias and the need to look carefully at the actual data before accepting a scientist's conclusions.

Computer Anarchy

Can an information network devised and developed by a US Defence Agency in the 1960s at the instigation of the Pentagon to ensure survival of US military communications, even when many computer centres had been destroyed in a nuclear war, be of any interest to anarchists. It was, incidentally, also originally intended for use in the command and control of nuclear weapons although soon abandoned for this purpose because of its unpredictability? If freedom of information is a prerequisite for any free society then a communication system such as this which is fast, world wide and free of government control, at least so far, should not be ignored. What started as ARPANET (Advanced Research Project Agency) has now become the Internet, the international open-access network, which is a genuine network, open, uncontrolled and non-hierarchical. It is at the heart of a high-tech information revolution which Alvin Toffler, the futurist author, has argued that, with its universal accessibility and cross-border connections, will topple bureaucracies and reduce the role of the nation state.

Any system that governments are at a loss as to how to control must at least be worth looking at and the British Government recently admitted that it was powerless to prevent the spread of information on the Internet which, if published on paper, broke laws governing obscenity, contempt of court, or copyright. Not surprisingly the government finds an unregulated spread of information

worrying and the Minister Ian Taylor (again) said recently: "By definition, because the Internet is anarchic it's virtually impossible for us as a government to say what can and cannot be done on it. We are in no position to prevent something where the access for anybody is instantaneous".

In recent weeks this network has been described by the media as anarchy, anarchic and anarchism and by users as utterly ungovernable anarchy and the world's largest functioning anarchy. For a refreshing change the words have been used seriously and correctly and not as a term of abuse or a synonym for chaos. The network is used by Amnesty International to obtain information on human rights abuse in countries where censorship effectively blocks most information sources and I doubt that we would have heard as much as we have, about the struggles of the Zapatista rebels in the Mexican Chiapas and of the oppression of the people by the Mexican army, if the Zapatistas had not had access to the Internet.

Although electronic messages are not confidential, unless efficiently coded, they are much more difficult to intercept than mail, so governments, including that government-in-waiting the leadership of the Labour Party, are clearly having difficulty in devising systems of censorship and control. What better way for them to make a start than with the pursuit of the pornography circulating on the Internet especially if it can be linked to the possible corruption of children and so get the maximum of public support. If they succeed in that they will have the technology in place to pursue others, including all kinds of political dissenters.

However, now all you need to join the network is access to a computer and a modem to connect it to the telephone system, and although costs are not insignificant they need not be beyond the means of a group, club or collective. Alternatively such a terminal could eventually be available in the local library. The initiative by Australian anarchists (*Freedom*, 11th February 1995) to set up an anarchist computer network is to be welcomed and supported, so let us hear from those who have some experience with the Internet ... and I really must find out the cost of modems.

HS

(continued from page 5)

Today I would be better able to enter into a discussion of the issue, as I have been reading with great enjoyment a new book by Taylor Stoehr, *Paul Goodman and the Origins of Gestalt Therapy*.⁶ Stoehr, who is Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, is Goodman's literary executor and in the years since Goodman's death in 1972 has edited over a dozen volumes of his writings. He has been working for years on a Goodman biography, of which, I suppose, this is a foretaste.

Goodman got into the therapy industry after years of disappointment and poverty trying to keep a family on his minimal income from writing, and Stoehr argues that:

"Gestalt Therapy may be seen as the necessary groundwork for Goodman's later career as a social critic and political philosopher. My book then is not simply a history of the Gestalt Therapy movement and its antecedents, nor a biographical study of Goodman's own participation in its founding and development, but also an examination of that great upheaval of the sixties known as the New Left. More than any other person Goodman articulated the point of view, at once utopian and practical, of that remarkable political movement. And at every point Gestalt insights and therapeutic experience informed his ideas."

And he shows how "translated into terms relevant to psychotherapy" the anarchist thinking in Kropotkin's tradition of seeking "a citizenry that can rely on its own initiative and resourcefulness, that is not at the mercy of a

6. Taylor Stoehr, *Paul Goodman and the Origins of Gestalt Therapy*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Inc, 1994, \$28.95. The same publishers have also issued Stoehr's edition of Goodman's final essays as *Crazy Hope and Finite Experience*, 1994, \$26.95.

MAY DAY PICNIC

The London Anarchist Forum have been organising May Day and August Bank Holiday picnics for some years. However, attendance has often been rather poor despite the fact that these have been held within easy reach of the public transport so beloved of the anti-car brigade. Nevertheless, we are persisting.

The May Day picnic will be held from 2pm on Monday 1st May at The Pond, Ham Common, between Richmond and Kingston. This is accessible by rail from Richmond Station (District Line, North London Line and BR from Waterloo to Reading, etc.) or Kingston Railway Station. Both towns have many bus links including two services through Ham.

Ham Common can be approached from Richmond either by a short two-mile walk along the Thames and then left up Ham Street, or a three-mile walk up Richmond Hill and through Richmond Park via Richmond Gate, turn right, eventually right again through Ham Gate and along Ham Gate Avenue. From Kingston a two-mile walk along Richmond Road, left into Bank Lane, right into Lower Ham Road which joins the riverside walk, right at Teddington Footbridge footpath and through Ham village, or a pleasant mile further to Ham Street. Ham is on the A307. There are four pubs on or close to the Common. Parking is possible on adjacent streets. Ham House, a Stuart building (NT, open 1-5pm), off Ham Street, is worth visiting. There are refreshments both at Ham House and Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park. Richmond Museum near Richmond Bridge is worth a visit too.

For further details please contact Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW.

Our August Bank Holiday picnic is being organised by Bernard Miles in Surrey. Details later.

Humanist Anthology

Humanist Anthology
compiled by Margaret Knight, revised by Jim Herrick*
RPA, 157 pages, £7.50

Recently when 15,361 people aged 13 to 15 were asked to state their religion, their answers were classified as follows: theists, various 6,401 (42%); agnostic 5,120 (33%); atheist 3,840 (25%); humanist 0 (0%). A complete dearth of self-declared humanists, yet Nicolas Walter writes in *New Humanist* magazine: "This ... means we are a growing majority ... which will be a growing argument

* When ordering by mail from Freedom Press, please add 75p postage and packing in the UK, £1.15 elsewhere.

system outside its real experience but knows itself and its world and can act for its own good" is precisely the rationale and aims of Gestalt Therapy.

Stoehr writes with a dry wit and often had me laughing out loud. He is excellent, for example, on the transatlantic disputes between Goodman and A.S. Neill on child-rearing, with Neill winning through his stance as the simple guy that he actually was. Part of this revolves around Goodman's essay 'On the Intellectual Inhibition of Explosive grief and Anger', which years later he sent in the form of a smudgy carbon copy for use in *Anarchy*.⁷ Neill thought it too clever by half.

Maybe the Vipers' performance at the seaside in 1957 that transformed the hero of Philip Norman's story really did have the same effect that people paid cash for in therapy sessions in New York. Significantly the number that wrought the miracle was *Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O!*

Colin Ward

7. Paul Goodman, 'On the Intellectual Inhibition of Explosive Grief and Anger' in *Anarchy* 61, March 1966.

for bringing humanism into the educational system."

The explanation is that 'humanism' in this context is a euphemism for atheism, introduced in the 1950s so that thinkers like Margaret Knight and Julian Huxley could express atheist opinions on the wireless. The Christian bigotry of the BBC was relaxing slightly, but it was thought that the word 'atheism' would offend people, and that the impact of the idea could be softened by theologians giving talks on 'Christian humanism'.

"Today", wrote Margaret Knight in her 1961 introduction to *Humanist Anthology*, "to describe someone as a Humanist ... implies that he sees no reason for believing in a supernatural God, or in life after death; that he holds that man must face his problems with his own intellectual and moral resources, without invoking supernatural aid; and that authority, supernatural or otherwise, should not be allowed to obstruct inquiry in any field of thought."

Today in 1995 people might be offended by Margaret Knight's use of the masculine gender ('man' and 'he') to mean both sexes, but the word 'atheism' offends no one. 'Humanism' is obsolete as a euphemism, but for historical reasons it still occurs in the names of some anti-religious periodicals and societies, in editorial writings and formal meetings, and of course in re-issued books like this.

The trouble is that, because they are different words, 'humanism' and 'atheism' may be taken to mean different doctrines. Rabbi Julia Neuberger opposes atheists contributing to 'Thought for the Day' broadcasts, but would allow humanists to contribute because "humanism has a spiritual content". And there are militant atheists who mistakenly suppose that the humanist movement has nothing to do with them.

A perusal of *Humanist Anthology* would correct this misapprehension. It is a compilation of 137 passages of prose, dating from 500BC to 1992CE, of which only eight

mention the word 'humanist', all published between 1946 and 1968.

Religion has often been associated with persecution and oppression, and the anti-religious have often been angry, but there is little trace of anger here. Nothing of George Holyoake, the last person to be imprisoned in England for atheism, who "fled the bible as a viper and revolted at the touch of a Christian". Nothing either of Bakunin's *God and the State*,** with its grand fulminations against what people are taught "in the full light of the nineteenth century". Both editors seem anxious to show that atheism is polite, gently spoken, carefully argued, reasonable in every sense of the word. The angriest voice in the book is that of Mark Twain, objecting to the notion that the Creator of biting flies is benevolent.

For all that, this is an entertaining book as well as a useful work of reference. There are delightfully lucid writers here, and where the language is obscure and convoluted, the editors have kept the quotations short.

The earliest extract is from the *Analects* of Confucius. Confucianism is often regarded as a religion, but it lays down the rules of honourable behaviour without reference to the supernatural. According to the potted biography, Confucius "replaced religious teachings".

The most recent extract is from Richard Dawkins's ingenious *Viruses of the Mind*. But the arrangement is only approximately chronological, and the last quotation is from David Attenborough's *Life on Earth* about the "awesome responsibility" of humans to protect life and preserve biological diversity.

There could be an argument that although concern for 'the planet' is now widespread among all persuasions, it is inappropriate in those who believe in supernatural goodness, who only took it on after it became fashionable. No such argument is advanced, and putting Attenborough's piece in a prominent place might make it appear that it is the 'humanists' who are followers of ethical fashion. This is unfortunate.

Donald Room

** Bakunin's *God and the State* is 80p post free.

Food for Thought ... and Action!

Recent arrivals at Freedom Press Bookshop.

Undercurrents 2: the alternative news video, Small World. Anyone who's been watching the television series on news gathering, news management and the hidden agendas of the capitalist media moguls, or who has seen *Undercurrents 1*, will know that Small World was formed as a non-profit organisation to provide media support to groups working on social justice and environmental issues. The aim is to bypass the big media monopolies' control of information by distributing videos about events which would otherwise never get a hearing directly to bookshops and individuals. This once covers anti-motorway campaigns - the M11 and Solsbury Hill; the McLibel campaign; a critical look at the IMF, GATT and the World Bank; the rise of the unregulated private security firms as an arm of law enforcement, and many other issues. It includes a small booklet giving background information about the groups in the video, and loads of useful contact addresses. Number 3 is already in the pipeline. Running time 112 minutes, VHS, £8.00.

Set of 11 original surrealist colour postcards, PSIK. These amusing cards, mainly collages, have been designed and produced entirely by an artist and comrade from Barcelona, Tonia Llorens, whom some readers may remember from last year's Anarchist Bookfair or other events during the Anarchy in the UK festival. She has given each card a title so although it's impossible to describe them in brief we can give you a flavour of them by some titles: 'God and Mother Country', 'The Official's Solitude', 'Strawberries à la Romana', 'Freedom of the Market', 'Several Years and Some Days', one whose title in Catalan is 'Sensa Rentaplats' and is translated as 'without vessel machine' but which we all know really means 'No Dishwasher', 'National Defence', and so on. Unusual and so

cheap you can afford an extra set for your friends. You can have the set for £3.30, which represents a 14% discount on the price per card of 35p. What's more, if you order them with other books or pamphlets we'll let you off the postage on the cards.

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Stealworks: the graphic details of John Yates* by John Yates, Active Distribution / AK Press. A large collection of Yates's subversive artwork, a mix of bold visuals, minimalist to-the-point social commentary and disturbing realism. Describing himself as "visual media mechanic, image manipulator and graphic surgeon", he has for the last five years been the editor and publisher of *Punchline* magazine, and his work has appeared widely in many publications. The collages and 'detourned' advertisement he uses to put his message across are certainly graphic, strong and bold. A full-frontal artistic assault on apathy, prejudice, ignorance, authoritarianism, conformity and zealotry. Large format, 130 pages, £7.95.

2600: the hacker quarterly, 11/3, 2600 Enterprises Inc. In the age of information monopolies and manipulation, this little number comes as a really subversive treat, whether or not you're in a position to do any actual hacking. Many of the contributors' names will be familiar to those who've read *The*

Hacker Crackdown on their nefarious activities, and the notorious editor's pseudonym, Emmanuel Goldstein, is a reference to the character in *1984*. If you want to find out about the workings of the Irish telephone system or the barcodes being printed on all letters delivered by the US postal service, ostensibly for a more efficient service but which can easily be used to monitor mail going to any one of hundreds of thousands of addresses, this is where to look. Some of the information relating to actual hacking is exceedingly technical and serves to show that these people know their stuff, but the news items and the pages of readers' letters, along with the many editorial replies, are a real revelation about this subterranean world. There is also a long, detailed and fascinating article on bugs and bugging, where you can find out the difference between spike, shotgun and tube microphones; the advantages of wafer transmitters, piezo-electric coaxial microphones and infinity transmitters; super miniature tape recorders and a whole variety of telephone tapping systems. Find out what they might be doing to you. A5, approx. 48 pages, £2.95.

Jewish Socialist no. 33. In this issue: fighting Islamic fundamentalism; the role of both straight and lesbian women in the Jewish community; a Polish-Jewish revolutionary; the Glasgow Jewish milieu; opposition to the phoney 'peace process' by a radical left-wing Arab and Jewish group; a piece on Mordecai Vanunu, and much more, including six pages of book reviews. The usual high production standard. A4, 36 pages, £1.50.

KM

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— PART 2 —

THE CRISIS IN CHIAPAS

One of the Mexican government's first moves when the rising in Chiapas began was to close off the border with Guatemala. There is always a fear in such situations that armed groupings may seek a base beyond the immediate reach of the threatened regime, or so the official response goes, but just as importantly there is a fear that the rebellion may spread and people elsewhere may join in the demand for land and liberation. In fact in our view it is perhaps quite likely that Marcos is indeed not holed up in the Lancadun jungle where the Mexicans are seeking him but rather in Guatemala which is also a country with a Mayan population with interests close to those of the people of Chiapas. But it is the second fear, the spreading rot syndrome, which worries those with so much to lose the most.

Guatemala has not been impervious to all this. 1994 saw a dramatic rise in land seizures near the Guatemalan capital and in different regions of the countryside and these activities continue in 1995. Radio Havana reported on March 7th that "a wave of land takeovers in Guatemala threatens to erupt in violence of unforeseeable consequences. Hundreds of indigenous people occupying an estate just north of the capital have armed themselves with clubs and machetes and say they will fight anyone who tries to evict them". The president had promised to use the army to dislodge them in a week that brought more reports of human rights abuses in that country (eight bodies found in the space of one weekend - four with signs of torture) events which come close on the heels of the UNHCR's decision not to condemn Guatemala for human rights abuses.

So there are signs that the 'rot' is spreading. Senator Dole understands the implications. In a speech to the Nixon Centre last month he said: "The Indian rebellion in Mexico coupled with financial uncertainty has resulted in genuine security concerns on our southern border - and make no mistake that illegal immigration is a security threat". Dole is concerned about US interests in Mexico and other areas. In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs* he says: "Radical 'ethno-nationalists', religious militants, terrorists, narcotics traffickers, and international organized crime networks all pose threats to states in regions of the world where America has core interests.

While the collapse of Somalia or Rwanda may not affect those interests, the disintegration of states like Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, or Pakistan would".

Putting aside his callous disregard of the sufferings of those who do not affect US 'core interests' it is his hunting around for a scapegoat post USSR which, frankly, borders on the amusing. Indeed to a degree herein lies the significance of Chiapas: the first significant uprising after what was called the cold war ...

A disastrous development

It is easy to present a picture of Chiapas as a poor and backward region - over 75% of the population live below the poverty line and nearly one in five has no cash income. This however, fails to take into account the social structure in the area and the way it is being integrated into the global economy at the expense of its underclass. It also ignores the essential richness of the area as was pointed out in the interview with Amando Avendaño that we published last year. The reality is rather a failed development programme that left the people with nothing.

Due to the agrarian reform programmes of the 1930s over half the land is held by *ejidos* or agrarian communities. A recent article by David Barkin says of this period:

"The stimulus of having their own land to work was sufficient ... to encourage most farmers to dramatically improve their productive conditions. Contrary to what many experts predicted, these poor, unschooled peasants were able to increase the poverty of their lands at an average annual rate of more than 3% ... doubling their meager yields to more than 1.2 tonnes per hectare by 1960."

It may have surprised the experts. It would perhaps not surprise those anarchists amongst us who were brought up on a diet of Kropotkin. However, this is the poorest land - the best land is owned by wealthy land owners who are linked to the ruling PRI. But, and it is important to emphasise this, Chiapas is not the exception within the Mexican

economy nor indeed in the region as a whole. This landowning class also controls the export markets and have over the years been given assistance from the Mexican state in the form of financial handouts.

During the 1970s some resources were allocated to the *ejido* sector but the nature of the programme was very top down. It is a widely accepted truth that such developmental programmes don't work not only because they seek to impose solutions but also because of the extensive corruption in government circles which they engender. The programmes failed to empower the people who became more and more dependant on the state. This has been their undoing. What little good they did is now being reversed given the end to the oil boom and the realities of the debt crisis in the region. But even by the 1940s a false developmental programme was being put in place with the

government embarking on a strategy of building dams, irrigation works, roads and electrification projects which, whilst not inherently a bad thing, only addressed the interests of the bigger landowners and their large scale commercial practices targeted towards the international economy. The local people were left with nothing.

The larger landowners have joined in with the army in recent weeks in seeking to attack the people who seemingly have no friends. They are the victims of the class structure, the Mexican State and the global super power to the North. There's nothing new in all of this. What is perhaps new is that with the collapse of the Soviet system there is no chance to get out of the frying pan and into the fire. The people will have to solve their own problems.

The National Democratic Convention and other regional developments

In the vacuum that has been created by the Mexican government's inability/unwillingness to help the impoverished many it has fallen to Mexican civil society to take the lead in laying down new directions for rural development. Some steps have been taken here by the National Democratic Convention which is a forum where alternatives can be debated. Thousands of representatives from *ejido* organisations, syndicalist organisations, NGOs and civic and community groups have come together in an attempt by the people to solve their own problems.

Similar developments are taking place in other countries around the region. Last year we reported on the Indian Organisation of Pastaza and the Provincial Union of Peasant Communes of Canar in Ecuador and the 'mobilisation for life' called for by the Confederation of Ecuadorian Indigenous People (CONAIE) - their call for direct action and the ensuing state of emergency. We have already mentioned Guatemala. Indeed there are rumblings throughout the continent. Can these movements be brought together into a regional movement which could bring about social change? The possibility cannot be ruled out although it will as usual be the military equation which will finally prove the operative one.

The Hamitic Region

Dear Freedom,

Your 'Focus on the Hamitic Region' (11th March 1995) deserves a little clarification and some correction. The 'Berbers' today and for some time have constituted a minority of 20-30% of the populations of Algeria and Morocco. The dominant population would identify itself as Arab even though it may have originally been largely Berber a thousand years ago. The distinction between Berber and Arab is rather blurred, to say the least, and differences between the two were strongly emphasised during the French occupation as part of their divide and rule policy. It may be somewhat ironic that the Berbers have been re-emphasising their distinctiveness which was so stressed by the French for purposes of oppression. But, as your article notes, those who remain Berbers have always been a recalcitrant people. Thus, Morocco traditionally was divided between al Bled al Makhzen, the area under full control by the sultan and inhabited mostly by non-Berbers, and al Bled as Siba, the Land of Insolence, chiefly inhabited by Berbers who were so insolent that they defied the sultan.

Berber population prevails in refugee areas - a large section of the Sahara and the entire Atlas Mountain region of Morocco and its extension into Algeria where the main Berber population of Algeria, the so-called Kabyle, reside. Kabyle is a corruption of *qabila*, Arabic for tribe.

Although the word Berber is pejorative, there apparently are some, at least in Morocco, who take pride in the term (this is no doubt similar to those in North America who take a perverse pride in being called by the pejorative term 'redneck'). But most Berbers might think of themselves as *Imazigin*, free men, and would appreciate being so called.

The Berbers are certainly not "essentially nomads". The major fully nomadic Berber speaking people are the Tuaregs, camel herders of

the Sahara, probably most noted because the men are veiled and the women are not. Other Berbers in the Moroccan Atlas are or were semi-nomadic. That is, they have permanent villages but spend part of their time living in tents and tending their stock. But, the great majority of the Berbers are sedentary. They live in permanent villages and engage in agriculture and stock raising. All the Kabyle are sedentary village dwellers.

It should also be pointed out that Hamitic is not a language. At best it is a sub-family of languages within what is now called the Afro-Asiatic family. Hamitic includes the now extinct language of the ancient Egyptians as well as that of the Berbers, and there are three distinct Berber 'dialects'. To call the Berber language a dialect, as apparently the Moroccan government does, is incorrect. A dialect is mutually intelligible with some other dialect within a language and Berber is not understood by speakers of any other language. Indeed, even the different Berber dialects are sufficiently different from each other that speakers have difficulty understanding one another. (Incidentally, most Berber men are bilingual, speaking Arabic as well as Berber.)

A good brief source on the Kabyle is Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerians* (1962). On Berber social organisation, see Henry Munson, 'On the Irrelevance of the Segmentary Lineage Model in the Moroccan Rif' in *American Anthropologist* (1989). Also, in my book *People Without Government: An Anthropology of Anarchy*, I have tried to show the extent to which Berbers, including Kabyle, have anarchic forms of social organisation (pages 96-99). Kropotkin, too, was interested in the Kabyle in *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* (pages 141-145). In the last twenty to thirty years a rather substantial amount of published research in English has appeared on the Berbers, mostly those in Morocco.

Harold Barclay

DRAWING ATTENTION TO CHIAPAS

Here in the west it is an uphill task simply to make people aware of the situation. It is hoped that, in a small way, disseminating the kind of information we are writing about here can help. But elsewhere anarchists are involved in more direct action. Here are some example of activities that have taken place over the last few weeks:

- **Early February:** President Zedillo's fax machine is broken/turned off as messages of protest jam up the works
- **13th February:** Demonstration in Paris outside the Mexican embassy draws attention to the tragedy in Chiapas.
- **13th February:** Elsewhere in France (Lyon) the Mexican consulate is occupied.
- **22nd February:** 1,500 demonstrate in a CNT supported march in Zaragoza. 300 entered the Mexican consulate's offices to protest.
- **3rd March:** A protest March in Santander took place with 150 marchers after some 24 hours notice. Further actions took place during the week.
- **6th March:** Anarchists occupied the Mexican embassy in Wellington Aotearoa. They were denied access to the ambassador and had to make do with 'educating' the staff who seemed largely unaware of the situation in Chiapas.

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News from the International Section

The latest international bulletin (March 1995) has just gone out to our contacts abroad. The list of recipients is growing (we expect to hit a three figure number by the end of the year) but it is becoming hard to know exactly how many people are reading it now as it is being published in other anarchist journals and is also going out over the Internet.

We continue to put it out in three languages and are now successfully developing more direct contacts with other publications (particularly in the USA, Mexico, Canada, Australia and France) who are using the material or have plans to do so in the near future, and who send us information in reply. *Freedom* readers will already be aware that we bring translated articles from a growing number of anarchist publications from around the world.

Using the Internet is now exposing us to total overkill in the way of information. We will be reporting more fully on this in *Freedom* some time in the near future, but suffice it to say that for the moment we are receiving some five to ten thousand words on a daily basis (much of it in Spanish about the developing situation in Chiapas) and clearly there is much work to be done (editing, analysis and translation). It will be a while before we manage to get this information into a more manageable form but we're getting there slowly. As I write we are receiving requests for the stuff we are sending out to be included in a pot of anarchist material which, it is planned, will be put out on CD-ROM. As I say, a full report will appear in *Freedom* in the near future.

Any information for the next international bulletin should be with us by 1st May, and for this edition we are particularly keen to receive brief reports (approximately 500 words) on issues anarchist are involved in here in Britain - squatting, Criminal Justice Bill, travellers, industrial news ... over to you.

Chomsky & Third Worldism

Dear Freedom,

Re: Chomsky – the vision anarchism, the reality permanent protest (25th February 1995), I feel I must write to counter this misleading and ultimately depressing article which you published from the Australian *Anarchist Age Weekly Review*. Constructive criticism of anyone's ideas is invaluable (and I am in no way saying that Chomsky is above evaluation/criticism) in the continual dialogue needed to form a practical theory of social change. But uninformed criticism of Chomsky is damaging to the debate and undermines the considerable work which he has carried out.

Firstly, to say that he has not acknowledged the influence of anarchism and its theorists and the insinuation that he has borrowed anarchist ideas in an underhand way to flesh out his analysis without due reference is simply not true. In his work there is continual discussion of Rocker/Bakunin/Guerin, etc., and the influence of the Spanish Civil War when he was still at school. In fact he has stated in many interviews: "I'm basically a sort of anarchist and have been all my life". Further, he has described anarchist ideas as "exactly the appropriate ideas for an advanced industrial society".

Also in the article there is the myth of his advocacy of "a permanent protest trail". Chomsky has replied to this point in interviews and he is of the view that although protest is vital, continual political action does not appeal to him and that enjoyment of other areas of life are very important. Pursue your visions of freedom but also utilise your energy effectively and pinpoint political action.

As for his continual support of national struggles and the idea that he has a naive

attitude to nationalism/the state. He describes the existence of states as the "European sickness" and as unnatural. We in the so-called developed countries face for the most part economic/psychological repression – not physical violence (although I acknowledge that this does occur but not on the genocidal scale of places like East Timor). We as anarchists must protest against grave incidents like this. Surely these peoples' struggles are for human 'human freedom and equality'. And why is Chomsky taking up a large part of his Australian talks/conferences on Timor? As John Pilger has shown, the Australian government colluded in the seizure of Timor and continues to support the Jakarta regime in the interest of stability of a local client state and the enormous oil and gas reserves in Timorese territory. The Australian people are in a unique geo-political position to effectively protest.

Lastly, I must comment on this idea that Chomsky should be showing a way to make the vision a reality. That he has not come up with a step-by-step guide for us should not be a criticism. No great thinker is going to come along and lead us through a revolutionary change in society. It is going to come from all of us working at a very mediocre everyday level. Chomsky has sketched his idea of where we should be heading: "... now is the time to try to rebuild real popular structures ... that really grow out of living communities that will continue and that have a very great need to overcome repressive structures". Radical egalitarian social change today probably is impossible as we do not have the structures in place to facilitate this, but it should come as a surprise to no one. I think Chomsky sums up far more

succinctly than I could what lies ahead: "... the struggle against oppression and injustice will never end, but will continually take new forms and impose new demands. This is not a reason for pessimism, but for honesty, commitment and forthright efforts in defence of freedom and justice".

Martyn Quinn

Apology called for ...

Dear Freedom,

I am astonished by Pat Murtagh's suggestion (letters, 25th March) that Noam Chomsky mounted "an elaborate attempt to deny Khmer Rouge atrocities". Murtagh's letter, like the earlier report from Australia, had some questionable interpretations of Chomsky's ideas and activities. Fair enough, everyone is entitled to their interpretations. What is not acceptable is falsehood. There are two pieces of writing that Chomsky – and his co-author, Edward Herman – wrote about the Khmer Rouge atrocities. The first was a review-article in the *Nation*, a US equivalent to the *New Statesman & Society*, on 25 June 1977. The second was a chapter in their book, *After the Cataclysm*.

In the first piece, we find the following statement: "We do not pretend to know where the truth lies amidst these sharply conflicting assessments" of the death toll under the Khmer Rouge. The total might be in the millions, as some alleged, or it might be in the tens of thousands, as was suggested by others. In *After the Cataclysm*, (page 293 in my copy), Chomsky and Herman write: "When the facts are in, it may turn out that the more extreme condemnations were in fact correct."

There is much more that could be said about these matters, but the basic point is surely this: it is hard to believe that Chomsky and Herman were "denying Khmer Rouge atrocities" when they accepted the possibility that the Khmer Rouge might have killed over two million people. Consider the following analogy. Suppose that in 1944 there had been wildly differing estimates of the number of Jews killed by the Nazis, ranging from 20 million to 200,000. Going by Murtagh's reasoning, someone who had said then that they did not know which figures were correct but who accepted the possibility that 20 million Jews might have been killed could be accused of 'denying the Holocaust'. I hope that Murtagh will have the grace to apologise publicly.

Milan Rai

Mitterand and Bongo in Context

Dear Freedom

I was very surprised to find a quote from Omar Bongo in the top right hand box of the front page of the last issue of *Freedom* (25th March 1995). Bongo is the archetypal African dictator. The aptest target of the quote is himself: "You take advantage of Africa and when your belly is full you tell Africa not to be awkward".

I quote from my recent book *Around Africa* an account of my circumnavigation of the continent:

"President Albert-Bernard Bongo of Gabon was only five feet tall but he liked to play big. The loss of a palace in Port Gentil was no great deal: he had many more throughout the mainland. His country had probably undergone more dramatic change than any other country on the continent. The discovery of oil and minerals, especially manganese and uranium, made it the richest country in black Africa.

Bongo was the archetypal African leader who creamed off all the power and wealth of his people. Every seven years on his birthday, he had elections in which he ran unopposed. Apart from being the president, he served as minister of defence, information, telecommunications, planning, national guidance and women's advancement. Because of his readiness to do business – both commercial and military business – with France, they propped up his one-party rule as long as the country remained reasonably stable. Uncertain of his own people, he employed Moroccan and French mercenaries as a presidential guard. Despite his love of pin-striped suits designed in Paris, he had converted to Islam and now called himself El Hadj Omar Bongo.

'You know', the chief engineer recounted with delight, 'throughout the period of sanctions against South Africa, Bongo operated Air Bidoche (Meat Airline) between Libreville and Johannesburg. When the African heads of state came to call for sanctions, they would tuck into tender steaks flown in specially from the hated race regime!'"

By the way, the same issue of *Freedom* mentions that my *Nature's Web* is out of stock. A new edition is being published by Cassell in September this year.

Peter Marshall

Dear Editors,

In the latest *Freedom* (25th March 1995) you quote Mitterand who is apparently against naked capitalism with its jungle rules. I do not think we ought to have any illusions about this chameleon. He is quite a nasty character who makes it appear that capitalism could be a sensible system. The *Guardian* fell for it. The good hearts who read that paper avidly need to be reassured that capitalism could be human after all. Do they know that Ecover (the alternative washing-up liquid) is owned by Group 4? One thing is for sure, Mitterand has fooled many people over a long period of time. Recently in an interview he said he did not know that Jewish people were being hunted down by the Nazis, around 1941. During that time Mitterand was a junior minister in the Vichy government!

As for his sins, I leave it to the *Freedom* contributor who wrote that article to mull over that religious concept. Mitterand goes to confession every week!

Your reviewer of Mark Twain's *Some Thoughts on the Science of Onanism* was right to point out that there is one typographical error in our edition. It will be corrected in a forthcoming reprint. In the latest *Freedom* there is a mistake on page 1. Omar Bonga should read Omar Bongo, a character who is a real swindler who, unlike Mitterand, really believes in naked capitalism. Gabon has been laid waste by his 'policy'. (cf. Pierre Péan's book *Affaires Africaines* [Fayard, 1983], Bongo had motorways built but not one car used these roads. The savannah has reclaimed the miles of tarmac. Bongo had first class factories built but nothing came out of these firms. The latest machinery is still there, rusting. Millions of francs were squandered. Many farms made a killing out of Bongo's folly. And Bongo pocketed a fine commission. His declaration at the Copenhagen Summit in March 1995 is thus one-sided, it is tailored to appeal to the politically correct who need to hear such statements because they feel guilty – which brings us to the cross, the nails and the rest of the Christian paraphernalia ...)

Michel Prigent

Please keep sending in your letters and donations

The death of modernism, and syndicalism?

Dear Editors,

Jeff Stein (*Freedom*, 25th March) puts up a good defence for anarcho-syndicalism, while trying to rubbish my proposition that syndicalism, as a feature of modernism, may have had a corrupting degenerative effect upon anarchism. Really as a trade unionist and former shop steward, I must confess to a mis-spent youth in the International Workers' Association. Indeed some of my best friends are not policemen but syndicalists. Regarding my record of "basking in the glow of the Spanish Revolution", I did work with the FIJL (anarchist youth federation) in the 1960s and was a member of the short-lived anarcho-syndicalist trade union the Gibraltar Labour Trade Union.

My reasons for writing the piece 'Modernism in the New Middle Ages' was not to present myself as some kind of sanctimonious prig, and much less the anarchists as a superior race with regard to the syndicalists, but rather to step back and consider the problems as they seem to have evolved in the late twentieth century. What disturbs me about Mr Stein's account is his tendency to brush aside certain problems. He seems to see the entry of the CNT into the Spanish Republican Government in 1936 as, in retrospect, a tactical mistake, and not a gross violation of anarchist principles.

I quite agree with Mr Stein that syndicalism is an attempt to deal with the problems of modern life. It is not so much that it supports 'modernism' but that it has been a part of the modern movement. It has represented as much a characteristic of modernity as, say, 'managerialism', indeed it has become the trulent twin of managerialism in modern mass industrial societies.

But I did say anarcho-syndicalism has represented an anarchist concession to modernity, as a way of coping with urban mass society. I am not denying syndicalism's historical task, though I am questioning if it measured up to the job it

set itself. The more vital question is does syndicalism have a job to do now in a post-Fordian, post-modern, perhaps more pluralistic and diverse western society?

Perhaps Jeff Stein is right to say: "The anarchist movement is not going to be rebuilt by extolling the bucolic virtues of a golden age of agrarianism". But the anarcho-syndicalist historian José Peirats did have an answer to him in the context of the Spanish Civil War: "The Spanish anarchists suffered from an excessively urban orientation in their revolutionary, or rather insurrectionary, plans. If the insurrection was lost in the cities, the villages were written off." Or "The anarchist agrarian revolution of the CNT, in spite of its imperfections and errors, was the only solid and constructive achievement of this dramatic episode in Spanish history".

In this country, since the defeat of the miners in 1984-5, there seems to have been a decline in the aspirations of syndicalism and trade unionism. About that time, as if they sensed a certain lack to classical syndicalism, the then anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement started flirting with feminism and anti-racism. Now I think I can detect that the Solidarity Federation (IWA affiliated) is using a model of what they call "community control and direct democracy" based on the working model of Puerto Real in the province of Cadiz in southern Spain. While Puerto Real is an urban town with a declining industrial base of shipbuilding, it is surrounded by sierra and has the feel of a village almost as strong as the pueblos blancos up in the mountains.

I think this represents a shift from traditional syndicalism based on the industrial unit to an emphasis focused upon the community. How significant it is we will have to argue about. But it may mean a move away from modernism and mass movements to the re-emergence of another form of anarchism.

Brian Bamford

Are Wars Avoidable?

Dear Editors,

"Governments and wars inevitably go together" you rightly say (editorial, 25th February); and wars end when the protagonists realise that it is in their interests to stop fighting, a correspondent points out (11th March). But how can we get rid of governments, so that wars never begin? "Create a civilisation without bosses" the editorial suggests. How?

Bosses exist even in animal societies. Chimpanzees (as shown in a recent BBC2 documentary) actually have politicians, who compete for power in much the same way as human ones do. A chimp politician, for example, in order to create a power base, will go round kissing baby chimps. Appealing to such facts, people argue that we have inherited the urge to be bossy, to dominate and control, from our animal ancestors, and that competition and war are therefore unavoidable. Our education, our politics, our economy – our whole civilisation, if one looks at it – is based on the assumption that war, which is organised murder, is perfectly natural, normal and right. What does one say to that?

I should agree that a human politician is often hard to distinguish from a bossy chimpanzee; but there is, I think, one important difference. Human beings have the capacity, which animals lack, to become aware of their conditioning; and

through awareness of it they can rise above it. That, surely, is what humanity means. The mature human being is something more than a clever, conditioned animal.

By heredity and environment, by our entire culture since prehistoric times, we have all been conditioned to be competitive, ambitious and domineering. Most of us, like the animals, are simply out for as much pleasure as we can get. When pleasure is denied we become violent, which is also part of the animal in us. Our conditioning is nothing to be ashamed of, it is not our fault, but it leads us inevitably to war, chaos and misery; and the mature human being is one who realises that this conditioning, however traditional and respectable, is absolutely deadly. That very realisation is a tremendous revolution. The moment we realise that something is dangerous, our action with regard to it radically changes.

We shall always have wars, then, until we enquire into ourselves, understand our conditioning and its consequences, and thereby – grow up.

Unfortunately, in order to grow up, we think that we have to make an effort. Part of our conditioning is the feeling that we are separate individuals, having separate minds and wills; and that therefore, if we are to become better people and put the

world to rights, an effort of will is necessary. But maturity comes unconsciously, without effort. It actually consists in seeing the insanity of effort. Effort of will is insane because self-awareness reveals that the whole sense of being a separate individual, endowed with 'free-will', is an illusion.

Even the scientists, I believe, are now coming to think that the universe is one single thing, in which there is no separation. A few serious people, here and there, have for centuries been saying just that. Each one of us is merely a part of the whole movement of life, like an eddy in a stream, separable in thought but not in reality. We have no independent control over our feelings, thoughts and actions, any more than a cloud in the sky can independently decide to change its size, shape or direction. To grasp that fully, we need to be vitally interested in finding it out for ourselves, through observation and enquiry; and either we have that vital interest or we have not, there is nothing we can do about it. Life paints the entire picture; and the clear understanding of that fact, paradoxically enough, is freedom. It is also humility and love. With that understanding, which is supreme intelligence, we should indeed create – or rather find ourselves creating – a totally different world.

Francis Ellingham

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7th April Libertarian Education - is it possible? (open discussion)

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21st April The Anarchist Barometer (speaker John Rety)

28th April General discussion

5th May Pro-Sex Feminism and Sexual Freedom For All (speaker Tuppy Owens)

12th May General discussion

19th May Just Talking (speaker Don Howard)

Dales Rambles

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

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FREEDOM fortnightly

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LIBERTARIAN SOCIALIST DISCUSSION GROUP

(affiliated to the Northern Anarchist Network)

— MEETING —

Thursday 20th April 1995, 8pm

'What is Anarchism?'

at

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Kennedy Street
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MANCHESTER 2

ACF

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Held on first Thursday of every month at 8pm, Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, London WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square).

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- 4th May - Animal Riots
- 1st June - Pornography Exposed
- 6th July - Labour Party 'Socialism'

ALSO

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**Monday 1st May
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Conway Hall

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