

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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FIFTY PENCE

"When a change of rulers happens to a state 'tis but a change of name unto the poor"

Phaedrus
(from *Fables*, c. 25BC)

WORKERS! WAGE-SALARY-SLAVES 'BY HAND OR BRAIN' ORGANISE, UNITE ... OR SINK!

The endorsement (65-35) of Tony Blair's 'New Look' Clause 4 at Central Hall a fortnight ago and the overwhelming defeat of the Tories at the recent local government elections, and a 100,000 increase in Labour Party membership (at what cost in adverts in the media?) these last few months (though it's difficult to imagine who would be joining the Tories in the 'accident prone' period for them) has certainly emboldened our Tony.

He has been reported in *The Sunday Times* as an admirer of Mrs Thatcher because "she was a thoroughly determined person and that is an admirable quality" and added that her eleven years in office did some

good. "Yes, Britain needed a change at the end of the 1970s."

[Perhaps one could apply the same arguments in this month of official celebrations and recognise that Hitler was certainly 'a thoroughly determined person' and a Germany suffering the conditions imposed on it by the Versailles Treaty certainly 'needed change'!]

This will certainly be reassuring news for Middle England when it comes to putting their cross on the ballot paper. But what about the unions? Our Tony and Prescott & Co. have thought about that one too. On the eve of what was once, but is no longer, a massive demonstration by the working wage-slaves throughout the country - 1st May, whether it was a working day or not - Tony Blair in an interview with *The Guardian* (1st May) declared that "there is a revolution going on inside this party and it did not stop on Saturday". Labour had "freed itself from the vanguard of politics of the eighties by taking decisions on a one-member one-vote basis" and so matching 'reforms' were now needed inside the unions when taking decisions on Labour policy. Obviously a hint to the

two biggest unions which opposed the New Look Clause 4 without having first balloted their members.

Fair enough, but as anarchists are always pointing out, the Labour Party was created in 1906 with a group of trade unionists being elected to Parliament with the specific task of supporting organised labour by action in the political field. And though the party is no longer "a mere political expression of trades unionism" the fact remains that the trade unions are still the party's main source of income. And unless Blair can also solve that one, the old capitalist adage that he who pays the piper must surely call the tune, at least most of the time, applies!

Far from defending the unions, in our opinion they are a business just as are the political parties, the legal profession and all the counsellors who have the expertise to tell us how to run our lives.

That wise practical old anarchist Malatesta, who was in favour of organisation for the workers, nevertheless realised what were the shortcomings of organisations such
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Millionaire Lord Young and those 'Greedy Teachers'

David Young is a businessman whose 'talents' were recognised by Keith Joseph and the Iron Lady and he was given various jobs in right-wing 'think tanks' until in 1984 he was made a life peer and brought into the Thatcher cabinet and from 1985 to 1989 was Employment Secretary. He then moved out to financial pastures greener, and is currently chairman of Cable & Wireless for which he gets £1 million a year, apart from all the perks we imagine such an important job provides.

Lord Young had the gall to attack teachers at their annual conferences for asking for more pay and better conditions in the classroom. He said:

"We all saw greed in action last week with the so-called teachers' representatives baying at Blunkett while putting their own interests before any others' - particularly their pupils."

On the other hand, "enterprise is not greed". It was the legitimate desire to better your lot and that of your family. And he added that capitalist enterprise had "transformed the nationalised industries".

It certainly has for top management in the privatised services at the expense of thousands of jobs. When will the Lord Youngs of this world be 'driven out of town' once and for all?

MEDIATION? INSTEAD ... LET'S ABOLISH MARRIAGE!

Surely the idea that marriage is a contract between two people "for better or for worse, till death do us part" is as anachronistic as the idea that politicians are in the business to do good for the electorate! The facts speak for themselves. There are now more than 200,000 divorces a year and as Maureen Freely in *The Guardian* (28th April) points out:

"If Lord Mackay wants to promote the cause of family stability across the board he should also be thinking about the 25 per cent of children whose parents won't have to go near a mediator or a divorce court should they ever decide to split up, *because they are not married in the first place.*" (our italics)

Maureen Freely, one should make clear, nevertheless believes that "no parent should have to untie a knot [she describes divorce in her opening sentence as "the untying of a knot" - to which one could ask why tie a knot,

if that is what marriage is, in the first place] without guidance, support and good legal protection".

The government's Divorce White Paper is more concerned with saving money than saving marriages. *The Guardian* editorial (28th April) which looks upon the proposals as a "major social reform" nevertheless recognises that it "was undoubtedly driven by the need to save money" and in conclusion points out that:
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**MANY NEW
AND FORTHCOMING
FREEDOM PRESS
TITLES**

see inside for details

THE OTHER FISH CRISIS

A part from fishing the sea dry in the long term – and until all large trawlers are scrapped no laws, no inspectors and warships will have any significant effect – two news items suggest that the fish from ‘home waters’ are contaminated!

The first news item from *The Guardian* reveals that:

“The Ministry of Defence has lost records of more than one million tonnes of munitions and details of 24 chemical weapons ships dumped in the sea around the British Isles between 1945 and 1963.

The disclosure follows *The Guardian’s* revelations last month about Operation Sandcastle in 1955, the scuttling in the Irish Sea of three ships containing German nerve gas and arsenic, which

have never been monitored by the ministry.

The ministry says 24 ships containing chemical weapons were sunk between 1945 and 1957. It has lost the names of two ships scuttled in 1956 and 1957. Another 14,000 tonnes of the poisonous gas phosgene were ‘loose dumped’ in Beaufort’s Dyke in the Irish Sea in 1946 and 1947.”

The second news item comes from Liverpool University researchers who point out that the dumping included 300 tons of powdered arsenic and it would provide a clue to “unexpected high levels of arsenic they discovered in plaice caught in Liverpool Bay”. Apparently a report published by the researchers two years ago showed that plaice contained on average twice the level of arsenic one would expect, with one fish containing ten times the level.

WORKERS! ORGANISE, UNITE ... OR SINK!

(continued from page 1)

as the trades unions which had no intention of challenging the capitalist system. He wrote in 1924:

“All movements founded on material and immediate interests (and a mass working class movement cannot be founded on anything else), if the ferment, the drive and the unremitting efforts of men of ideas struggling and making sacrifices for an ideal future are lacking, tend to adapt themselves to circumstances, foster a conservative spirit, and the fear of change in those who manage to improve their conditions, and often end up by creating new privileged classes and serving to support and consolidate the system which one would want to destroy.”

Today in the western world the white-collar worker (employee?) is in the same boat as the blue-collar worker: there are no longer jobs for life, no longer guaranteed promotions and all the mumbo jumbo that made them – especially those employees who didn’t dirty their hands – feel secure till death did them part from the capitalist unjust society.

Anarchists say that, *pace* Will Hutton, nothing will change so long as the great majority of the wage-slaves accept as their lot the capitalist system. It is not enough simply to blame John Major and his bunch or to rest one’s hopes with Tony Blair and his bunch. Even if they are not crooks, they are supporting and furthering a system, a capitalist system, which is crooked. We see examples daily. Any new initiative in the capitalist system automatically produces the crooks determined to make money out of it. After all, capitalism is production (it can mean anything from scratch-cards to brothels) for profit. If there’s no profit then what’s the point of production?

The choice is with the victims of capitalism. You can vote for one of the parties who seek to run your life for you. You can abstain either by indifference or because you want to run your own life.

In the latter case (unless you are a millionaire) it is time that those of us of a like mind, blue-collar or white-collar, must start talking to each other as equals: victims of the capitalist system!

LET’S ABOLISH MARRIAGE!

(continued from page 1)

“Any Party of the Family should be ashamed of spending £330 million on legal aid for divorce – but only £1.6 million on marriage guidance.”

This is all very good liberal ‘common sense’ which does not however face up to the fact that marriage has nothing to do with what we call ‘love’ which attracts members of the opposite* sexes not only to make physical love but also to share their lives. It is obvious that today most liaisons sooner or later end, not necessarily because they failed. For a period they may well have been successful, but one does not live on a desert island. One is meeting people all the time, and what is important is that women nowadays are not tied down to the children and the house. Some don’t want children anyway.

Once again the government is to finance more ‘experts’ to listen to the aggrieved spouses and seek to get them talking again, if only for the sake of the children! But the lawyers will go on doing business where property and life insurances, etc., are involved.

Apart from objections from the church, why not abolish marriage and we can all happily (we hope) live ‘in sin’? We are not suggesting this facetiously. Today marriage has only importance where property is involved. Imagine if Mr W. Churchill MP’s wife who walked out on him last month after thirty years, was not married just when he was about to enjoy all the perks from grandad’s waste-paper? But for most people surely a simple document could cover all the material problems?

This writer, unmarried, still lives with the same companion after more than thirty years (for better or worse, and now until death do us part!) and the joint Will leaves what there is to the surviving partner. Simple!

* Equally of the same sex, but they are not encumbered with the aspects of marriage and divorce, but could well have legal contracts.

The P-word and the Dream Machine

Such a revealing week it has been. Bernard Manning, it appears, delights in telling racist jokes and the police are delighted to pay for his efforts. The government’s more public entertainer of course is Mr Peter Lilley with the same basic material but slightly less outspoken – that’s government for you!

We are told that the Churchills are a greedy and dysfunctional family and that John Major is led by his party, and the Labour Party is being led on by its leader. Best of all is the obvious truism that poverty and ill health have more than a passing acquaintance – poverty contributing to illness and illness, in its turn, perpetuating the state of poverty.

It does not require a wild leap of the imagination to compile a list of the characteristics of poverty which would contribute to ill health. A quick straw poll on Whitechapel High Street, say, might itemise the following:

- Poor nutrition;
- Low quality cramped housing;
- Stress;
- Tendency to smoke and drink;
- Poor access to leisure pursuits and exercise;
- Poor self-esteem;
- No holidays;
- No hope.

It does not require a £100,000 survey to validate what Engels, Dickens, Orwell, Hewetson and numerous reports have been telling us over the years. World War One recruits were often too malnourished to be enlisted and in 1939 it was noted that working class soldiers were a good four inches shorter than their upper class officers.

The well-worn government defence ploy comes into play here whereby it blames poor people for their own ill health. Health promotion campaigns could be accused of worsening the health of the very people they are intended to help. “Being lectured on how to make your family healthier while being denied the resources to do anything about it can only add to the general stress of living on very little money” says the *Poverty and Health: Tools for Change* report on research conducted this year by the Public Health Trust. The report goes on to say that twelve million people in the UK live in poverty and states that there is only a grudging acceptance and reminds us that the government has recently begun to refer euphemistically to ‘disadvantages’ and ‘inequalities’ and even ‘social variations’ in health.

The resurgence of TB in London’s East End is certain proof of the prominence of poor living conditions. This is especially worrying amongst people with mental health problems who are homeless. Health workers have told me of many patients with TB who, whilst forcibly treated for the conditions whilst on mental health sections (legal restraint orders), on discharge (often premature due to health

service cuts) discontinue the medication thus rendering the TB infectious again through sputum particles.

The ancient Greeks believed that illness signified a lack of balance between a person and the universe and it is at once reassuring and distressing that this notion still holds true. Our economic system is unbalanced in that most people, especially poor people, have little control over what is produced, how it is produced and how much of it they can afford. These decisions are based on private profit and ignore health and environmental concerns, causing yet more imbalance. Malnutrition alone has been linked to six of the major causes of death, including cancer and heart disease, and involves the over-consumption of saturated fat, salt and sugar. Anyone noticing the rising price of vegetables (Sainsbury’s cheapest, 39p per pound) might understand that a Mars bar at only 30p ready to eat and instantly gratifying might be the more attractive choice for someone with little money. Even in Marks & Spencer the cakes and biscuits seem comparatively cheap when a small bag of spinach there costs £1.39 and would satisfy only the daintiest of appetites. ‘Cotton-wool’ bread costs 24p, good wholemeal 88p. I shan’t go on lest the ghost of Margaret Thatcher, shopping basket in hand (remember?), interferes with your dreams.

If dreams are your special interest you could escape these brutal facts of life in the UK in 1995 and indulge in the interesting recreational experience of lucid dreams being promoted by Stephen Leberg of the Lucidity Institute (it’s true!) in California. You purchase a dream machine suit which measures rapid eye movement sleep (REM) rouses you at the appropriate moment and allows you to orchestrate your own dream fantasies. Virtual reality, where the only computer is your brain, conscious and unconscious. Meet your dream lover, be superman, rise to fame and fortune (promoter’s suggestions, not mine). Is it time to sing ‘We’re off on the road to Utopia’ or should we murmur the most colloquial ‘Dream On’!

Silvia Edwards

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Private faces in public places

Ken Worpole is a man I seem to have known for longer than I really have. I first came across him 24 years ago when I worked for the Town and Country Planning Association, propagating the exploration of the urban environment by schoolchildren. He was then a teacher at Hackney Downs School who had become involved in a new local venture called Centreprise as he wanted to produce a teaching pack about Hackney and stories to attract slow learners constructed around the local scene and local footballers. He inspired the 'People's Autobiography of Hackney' and the nice widely-emulated device of getting primary school children to interview old residents and record their recollections.

Centreprise was set up by an American, Glenn Thomson, who discovered that Hackney had 208,000 people and no bookshop. He managed to gather the money to set up a bookshop-plus, for it had a coffee bar, meeting rooms and office equipment for community use. I still have an old cutting from the *Municipal Journal* that describes how:

"Literally any community activity that can be encompassed within the walls of Centreprise receives active support and encouragement ... The coffee bar is clean, well-lit and, even more important, warm. Old age pensioners, housewives, children, social derelicts and students can, and do, sit as long as they like over a cup of coffee reading newspapers and magazines, talking, or just sitting. Truant children can drift in, drink coffee or lemonade, talk to one another and, unless they ask for help, not be bothered by anyone at all."

It is a measure of how far we have travelled downhill since then, that this report sounds like a utopian dream. Today's thinking demands that Centreprise should make a profit or die in a slimmer, leaner economy. So, of course, it died. And not only that. The then Secretary of State for Education declared last year that every adult should challenge any unaccompanied child seen in a public place between 9am and 3pm on schooldays and summon a policeman.

But what became of Worpole? We corresponded now and then about various forgotten working-class writers, but he came back into my consciousness through his work in the research body Comedia, with the support of charitable trusts, in exploring the public realm in British towns and cities. This is an aspect of urban life that has been dwindling away before our eyes, often unnoticed, in the glorification of the market as the ultimate value.

With Comedia he has produced a series of explorations firmly based on observable fact and of good and bad local initiatives. One, described in the report *Out of Hours* (Comedia, 1991) and in Worpole's book *Towns for People* (Open University Press, 1992) examines town centres, "shopping and commercial centres by day and nearly deserted ghost towns at night".

Another examined the future of the public library, which, contrary to the assumptions of the affluent (and those of our appalling Minister in the government's so-called

Department of National Heritage) is used by a wider cross-section of the local population than any other element in town centres. This resulted in the report *Borrowed Time? The Future of Public Libraries in the United Kingdom* (Comedia, 1993). A more accessible version is due to appear soon, as *Libraries in an Era of Cultural Change* by Liz Greenhalgh, Charles Landry and Ken Worpole.

By the time you read this, yet another piece of diligent research from this team will have been published. For they have been working for several years with the support of local authorities on an examination of the public park, yet another vital aspect of urban life, taken for granted, but fought for in the last century as a visible symbol of civic values in opposition to the glib assumption that we can all buy our social needs in the private market. I think it will be called *Park Life: Urban Parks and Social Renewal* (Comedia/Demos, 1995).

Now just as readers of poetry and novels have an insatiable curiosity about their authors, some of us wonder about the personal experiences and impressions of the self-effacing writers of all this scrupulous social documentation, which doesn't qualify as 'creative writing'. To my surprise and delight, Ken Worpole has responded to this inquisitiveness with an absorbing book that comes from Lawrence & Wishart, a publisher that in my old-fashioned way I associate with the collected works of V.I. Lenin and J.V. Stalin which have since been useful as stove fuel in many parts of the world. It is called *Staying Close to the River* (£9.99) and consists of letters posted from his postbox at Clissold Park in North London about his travels in the last ten years.

Some were occasioned by sponsored trips to Eastern Europe to talk at cultural conferences about working-class writers, some were the result of endless research journeys to British towns in pursuit of his research on the public

realm, or when a chance invitation took him to Australia, but most are about cycling trips to France, Italy and Spain.

There's a sombre undertone, since his book begins with his father's death and ends with that of the East End doctor David Widgery, but also because of lost illusions about the nature of authoritarian socialism and communism, and the failure of the other varieties to present alternatives that manage to reach ordinary citizens.

But it is an intermittently optimistic book, since Worpole is an appreciative recorder of the swarming bird and plant life of North East London. But of his bicycle life, this gives him an intimate acquaintance with the physical texture of the streets and their users (the same quality that made Nicholas Taylor the best-informed chairman that Lewisham's planning committee ever had). But since he chose to go on organised cycle tours of southern Europe he became familiar with the culture of the bike repair shop, driven out of the High Street by our failure to control site values:

"As so often, it starts in a bike shop ... Where nineteenth century radicalism was supposed to have been promulgated in shoe-makers' work-rooms, in barber's shops and in newspaper composing rooms, then late twentieth century radical politics (including its feminist and ecological strands) seems increasingly to be sited in bicycle shops. That's where the pamphlets are now to be found, the noticeboards and contact lists, and where word is often spread about the next anti-road campaign or civil liberties demonstration. The big retail chains have already appropriated the alternative health food business, and feminist and radical bookselling, but I can't see them ever wanting to sell - and more importantly repair - bikes. (It is not a constituent part of the new retailing imperative to actually repair things ...) And this is where, once a year now, I thumb through the holiday brochures - a handful of rather earnest pamphlets on recycled paper ..."

His book is full of small bits of acute

observation of the styles of urban life which usually escape the members of the council's planning committee, like a touching account of the lives of Irish building workers and a joyous description of the Jewish wedding of an ageing hippy/trotskyist who taught both the Worpole children in their primary school.

The vignettes of urban life as actually lived, whether in Hackney or in Barcelona ("where the people, as 'the people', still live in and territorially control the centre") is an important reason for seeking out and reading this personal book from a writer whose public life is steadfastly devoted to preserving popular and universally accessible space in the city.

It is full of interest for its observations of the immense variety of co-existent life, not only in London but in the range of towns and cities that Worpole visited on the culture circuit around Australia, Ireland and the cities of Eastern Europe both before and after the end of the Communist regimes. For a while he was employed as a part-time researcher for the Labour Party and found that:

"Working in and around Parliament was like holidaying in Beirut ... the phones ring all the time, party hacks and *apparatchiks* scrap speeches, completely re-word press releases, embargo the most innocent of ideas, pull rank, stab in the back, out-manoeuvre, outflank, destroy by rumour and innuendo, and generally ensure that what was a good idea at nine in the morning is completely scribbled all over, trodden underfoot, screwed up and in the waste bin by four in the afternoon. I realised that life is too short to spend time cycling to Westminster and so I quit ..."

And for him the "vacuum left by the collapse of communism and the historic British socialist ideal" is an immediate future of "sporadic riot, sub-cultural retreat and general political alienation". He got a glimpse of the new urban politics at an Anti-Fascist Action pop concert in Hackney Downs on a baking Sunday afternoon in September 1991:

"Hackney has had squatters for years, but I hadn't realised just how large this subculture had become. It now completely dwarfs all others. This ragged army have cut their political teeth in the anti-poll tax riots and fighting the council bailiffs, and they regard the conventional left with disdain and even venom ... Astonishingly there were no papersellers to be seen. Radical organisations had been allowed an area of the field to set up their stalls, and an air of confusion and disarray hung over the various communist or trotskyist stalls, with their thinner than usual papers and manifestos only half-heartedly calling for workers' councils in post-coup Soviet Union, or arming the people to resist the state. Nobody was looking, let alone buying - with two exceptions. The Class War stall seemed pretty busy, but the real action was at the anarchist stall where anarchist and situationist literature seemed to be selling as fast as Big Macs in the Nevsky Prospekt."

Worpole is acutely aware of the generation gap between those who grew up in a climate of optimism and full employment, and those who grow up in a climate of despair and worklessness. Aren't we all?

Colin Ward

Djilas and the New Class

The death of Milovan Djilas in April was followed by admiring obituaries of the most important dissident in Yugoslavia at the time when it was still a united country and had a Communist government, and in particular by references to his thesis of the 'New Class'.

Djilas, who was born in Montenegro in 1911, became a Communist while he was a student, was imprisoned by the royalist regime for three years, became a leading member of the Party before the war, a leading figure in the partisan struggle during the war, and a leading politician in Tito's regime after the war. He had been a fanatical supporter of Stalin, but he supported Tito during the split of 1948, and then he began to oppose the Communist dictatorship in Yugoslavia itself. He was purged from the government and the Party in 1954, spent several years in prison, and never held political office again. He wrote several important books and was able to live in reasonable peace and comfort from his foreign royalties.

Djilas's best-known book was *The New Class* (1957), in which he argued that in Communist countries the Party bureaucracy had become a new class in the Marxist sense. This was taken seriously by many left-wing people in the West, and was frequently taken to be a new idea. The fact is, of course, that it had been anticipated by anarchists several times during the previous century. Bakunin's arguments in the First International included the assertion that the Marxist conception of the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat through a people's state would involve the rule by a tiny minority which would be based on the Communist Party and which, even if it consisted of former workers,

would oppress the working class just as much as the bourgeois state. In exile in Switzerland he produced a *Writing Against Marx* (1872) which specifically prophesied: "There will be a new class ... and the world will be divided into a minority ruling in the name of science and an immense ignorant majority". Thirty years later the Polish Jan Wacław Machajski took up the theme. In exile in Siberia he produced a book, *The Mental Worker* (1904-1905), which prophesied that the socialist revolution would bring not the dictatorship of the proletariat but the dictatorship of a new class of professional intellectuals and administrators. And in the Russian revolution itself, the anarchists within a year of the Bolshevik coup d'état described the new regime as 'Commissarocracy'. An article called 'Paths of Revolution' by 'M. Sergven' (probably Grigori Maksimov) in *Volny Golos Truda* (Free Voice of Labour) on 16th September 1918, specifically reported: "The proletariat is gradually being enslaved by the state. The people are being transformed into slaves over whom there has risen a new class of administrators - a new class born mainly from the womb of the so-called intelligentsia."

After that the pattern was repeated in one Communist country after another, and was exposed by anarchists over and over again, until the whole system began to collapse in the 1980s. What distinguished Milovan Djilas was not that his thesis was original, but that he came from within the phenomenon he described and that he showed such courage in describing it when this might have cost him not just power and liberty but his very life.

MH

out soon

Michael Duane

THE TERRACE

AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIMENT
IN A STATE SCHOOL

ROSLA, Raising Of (the minimum legal) School Leaving Age (from 15 to 16) in 1972/3 dismayed 15-year-olds of all abilities, and was a focus for heart-searching and experiment among educators. One experiment was The Terrace, set up by Northcliffe Comprehensive School in the mining town of Conisbrough, South Yorkshire, to provide non-school education for 15-year-olds to whom school had become meaningless. The venture survived for only two years, not because it failed but because its private sponsors decided they could no longer afford it.

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Colin Ward

TALKING SCHOOLS

Talking Schools gathers together ten lectures given in Britain and the United States at teachers' conferences, meetings of educational progressive groups, and all those occasions when schooling is on the agenda.

The audiences have included teachers, architects and administrators, social workers and people concerned with child welfare and children's play.

Colin Ward is an anarchist author and journalist. His twenty books on the human environment seen from below include *Anarchy in Action*, *Freedom to Go: after the motor age* and *Talking Houses*, all published by Freedom Press.

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THROUGH THE ANARCHIST PRESS

Whenever possible I try to take part in some communal activity which by its very nature has something to do with anarchist principles. The recent land occupation exercise in Surrey was such an occasion. It turned out to be very successful, heartening and more than symbolic event. In many respects it once again proved, if it needs proving at all, that anarchist organisation based on voluntary co-operation achieves wonders. The organisers' main aim was to call for a universal right of access to uncultivated land in the countryside.

Land is now a very big issue. Not only are vast tracts of land 'set-aside' but various government departments, from the military to 'health' departments, have vast land possessions for which they have no use whatsoever. By the dictates of the system of monopoly capitalism these lands are held back, for if they were put up for sale land values could decline sharply and would completely knock out the already shaky property markets.

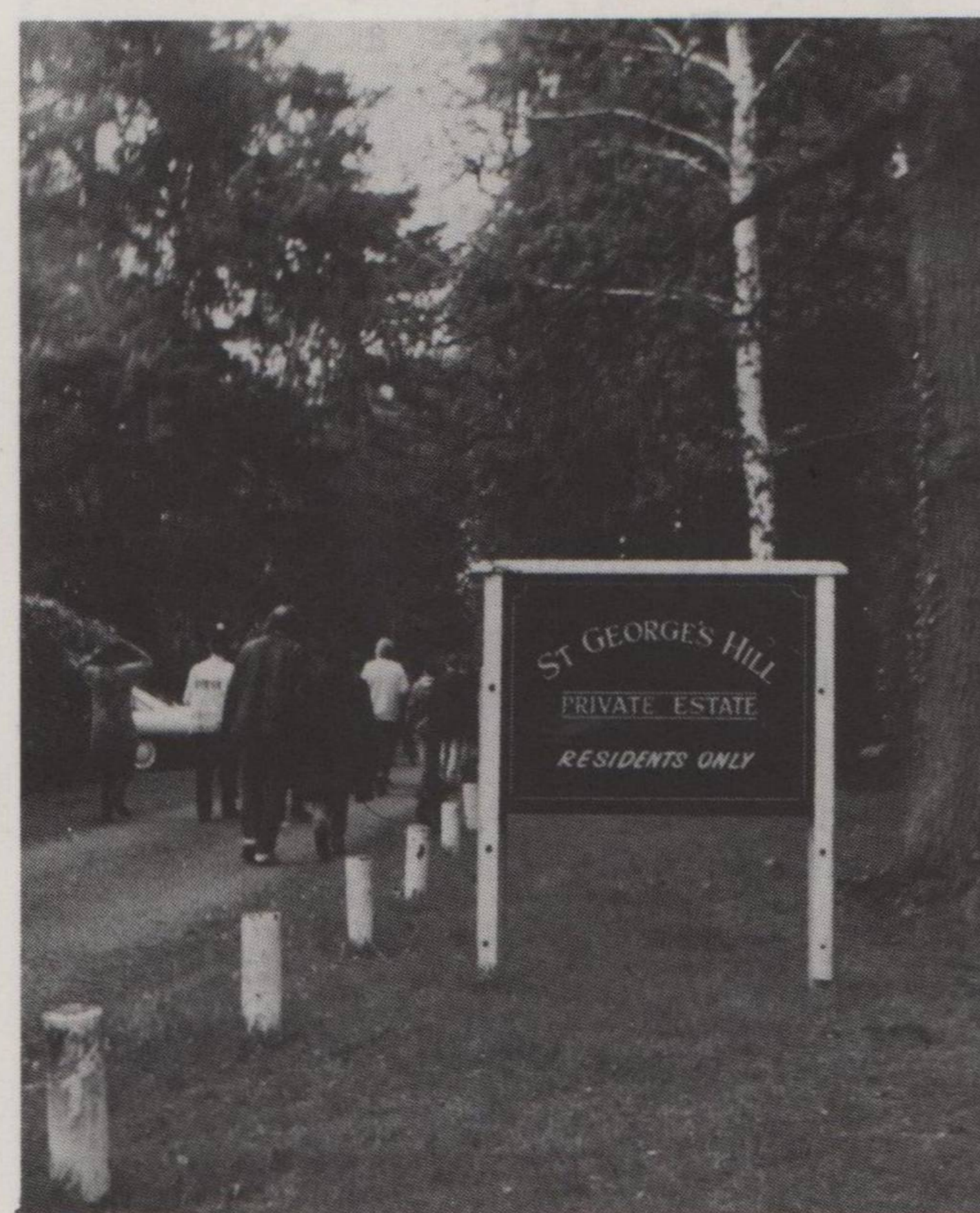
The government, if there is such a thing, is in a quandary. It was their privatisation policy which has created the situation by which the nationalised industries now privatised are in a queue trying to sell off surplus land. A hundred thousand acres here, a million acres there. If all that land is sold at once, even you and I could buy an acre for the odd shilling. This is where monopoly restrictions are the only safeguard for their corrupt system and this is why a 'back to the land' movement has

become such a threat to the establishment.

But this eventual unstoppable disposal of land held by the various government departments and of the military, coupled with the set-aside policy of land by monopoly capitalism, may well pave the way for the greatest distribution of land that will break the power of centuries of enclosures.

For it is the very tenets of privatisation which will hoist them with their own petard, these vast tracts of land which they are unwilling to dispose of yet have no use for whatsoever.

The site which was finally chosen for the



St George's Hill privatised

Land is the big issue

land occupation was a vast and disused airfield at Wisley, a piece of land in present economic terms of little value and which does not seem to have been put to any use whatsoever.

On arrival we could at once see how efficient and successful are the anarchist colonies. The main driving force was the admirable Donga tribe who have refined the art of combining earth skills of the past with whatever is sensible in the new technology.

When we arrived a camp had already been set up showing all the familiar features of the modern anarchist village. Benders galore, tents, wooden lodges, tree-houses and in the middle a circular leafy geodesic dome for communal discussion. Even anarchists march on their stomachs and there was the most amazing kitchen capable of providing free wholesome food, with second helpings, for the 300 people. There was even a sweat lodge and even a hot bath with two taps for cold and hot next to the gently gurgling stream. Other wonders included a sculptural masterpiece of an earth oven for baking bread.

The information lodge was full of leaflets of similar events, occupations, appeals for help from all over the country. The front page of the local Surrey paper was very appreciative of the land occupation, quoting local farmers fully supporting the movement, "after all, why shouldn't the land be put to proper use?"

A patch of land was carefully dug and prepared for planting, and here again there were many local people giving a hand. This

made me understand once again that authority is just another name for people working together and taking for granted their right to do so. There is no doubt whatsoever that anarchism is also a return to the land movement and we are all descendants of dispossessed peasants.

Bela Bartok, dying in poverty and of malnutrition in New York, recalled that the oath a peasant most feared was the old mother cursing her unloving son in these words: "For your callous indifference to me and mine may you be reduced in your old age to the buying of your own bread". Indeed, the bitter bread of exile is nothing compared to the humiliation of always being dependent on other people's charity.

The authorities are unwilling to release the expropriated land for the simple reason that if all land was sold the market would collapse.

The land is the common treasury of all, so sang the Diggers and it was appropriate that we should go to St George's Hill and there see written, performed and enacted a play, compellingly written and acted in faultless rhyme and imagery, the historical pageant of oppression by state and church of the people through the ages who are finally liberated by the natural spirits of anarchy. It was the best open air play I have ever seen, marvellously acted in the best Shakesperian tradition. Idyllic surroundings, even if the historic spot it now a golf course and even if that finale of dance and merriment was drowned out by the noise of Concorde flying right above the hill with all the noise of an outdated technology reminding all the assembled of unfinished business.

John Rety

— SCIENCE NEWS —

We don't know how much we don't know

the claim that the road needed widening at this point. With work due to start on Saturday 1st April the authorities even had a sense of humour.

At around 10am, twenty days late, thirty-odd police and fifty council bailiffs, contractors and engineers appeared complete with cranes and low loaders to remove the caravans and arrest the seven campers, but the attempt to keep secret this messy operation failed. The campers had been tipped-off and had warned the local press who, furious at being kept well away, threatened to make their exclusion a headline story. So the road blocks were removed and pictures and interviews with the peace protesters appeared on local television and in the local press, and they can have their possessions back by paying £1,728.

This was a pathetic attempt to suppress news, a decision made probably at a low level in the hierarchy of authority and its failure hardly a threat to the security of the State, particularly as national coverage was negligible. But how much state activity of importance is successfully kept secret whilst we are overloaded with trivial information? Some news of public interest can be gleaned from satirical radio and television shows and magazines, provided the code can be interpreted, otherwise we have to wait thirty years until most people are no longer interested and even then often only get half the story.

More serious censorship of information often concerns the use of nuclear energy and the consequent risks of radiation injury. There are suspicions that the radiation leaks from Windscale (now known as Sellafield) nuclear power plant during the four years between 1953 and 1957 were much more serious than has ever been admitted and that the cancer risks to the local population are much higher than has been suggested, but information on the kinds of activities that are now being disclosed in the US, forty to fifty years after

the actual events, would here be buried in the state archives for ever. Within the past two years the US Department of Energy has acknowledged that between 1944 and 1961 ten times more experimental work, involving the use of radioactive material, was carried out on unsuspecting people than previously admitted. On 250 occasions radioactive material was released into the atmosphere near Los Alamos just to see how it spread among the unsuspecting population up to 70 miles away. During the same period hundreds of hospital patients were injected with plutonium, without their knowledge, as part of a study to determine its distribution within the body, and not all of them had a limited life expectancy. Other experiments have involved the use of mentally handicapped children and ethnic minorities to test out the effects of high doses of toxic drugs.

Of course such things or similar obscenities don't happen now and never ever happened in the UK, or have they? We really don't know how much we don't know.

HS

Government cancels Mayday!

Mayday, the traditional celebration of working people throughout the world, has been cancelled by the government acting on behalf of UK arms manufacturers, the City, the banks and business and manufacturing corporations. This years VE Day celebrations are supposed to commemorate the slaughter of fifty million people during the course of World War Two.

Remember war begins with patriotism, national divisions and fear of other cultures and peoples. These wars and divisions need not exist. People throughout the world have enough real enemies: disease, famine, poverty, lack of shelter and clothing, prejudice, ignorance, without adding the unnecessary tragedy of mass destruction and slaughter.

East Midlands Anarchists

Report from the Tree People

Tree people build tree houses and live in trees threatened by road builders, developers, the Ministry of Defence, or whoever.

At the time of writing - Friday 5th May - only two trees are still occupied on the anti-M65 road campaign in Lancashire. When work resumes after the bank holiday, on 9th May, some other trees may be occupied, but it will not be long before they are all cut down and resistance will move into the urban area.

Of course the campaign did not succeed in saving the wood, but in some ways it must be counted as successful - the most successful tree occupation so far. Unhindered, the tree-cutting squads expect to destroy 15 kilometres of woodland per day. With our campaign, supported by local people, it has taken them a week to cross a small valley half a mile wide. This hits the road builders where it hurts, in their bank accounts, and may make them think carefully about cutting other trees.

There have been 59 arrests so far. Those arrested were bound over by magistrates not to go within two miles of the site. But those tree people who came down as soon as they were caught, without resistance, were simply released to climb another tree. Local people supported us enthusiastically. On one incident, a tree was having its roots undercut and becoming unstable with three people still in it. Local people protested, and the police inspector came over and told the workmen they were not to endanger tree people's lives in this way, they must be brought down first.

Most of the tree people, numbering some two or three hundred, many of them anarchists, now feel they have done what they could for the trees in Lancashire and are making their way to Exeter. Trees there are standing in the way of another motorway construction, and the tree people will take up residents in them in the hope of saving them, but in the real expectation of delaying their destruction. We have learned a lot in Lancashire, but we still need all the help we can get.

Andrew

Anarchism on Scottish Radio

On Wednesday 26th April the live lunchtime chat show on BBC Radio Scotland included a discussion of utopian politics between Willy Thompson (Marxist), Piers Benn (Liberal) and Nicolas Walter (anarchist). Despite obvious differences of emphasis, there was general agreement that the right-wing and left-wing utopias of the twentieth century had proved equally disastrous and also that the programmes of all actually existing political parties were equally contemptible, especially when the 'new' Labour Party was abandoning what utopian vision it had.

After some rather esoteric exchanges about the theoretical and practical utopias of the past five centuries, the three participants were asked what utopian ideas were appropriate today. Nicolas Walter, arguing that utopia should be realised in daily life in the real world and that there was plenty of opportunity for it there, suggested that a simple utopian programme would be for everyone in our society to have decent housing, education, health and welfare services, but that a more ambitious programme would have to involve the demolition of the City of London and the Houses of Parliament, the destruction of most of the apparatus of Westminster and Whitehall, the devolution of power and wealth from the centre and top, and the rebuilding of society on the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity - the utopia described a century ago in William Morris's *News From Nowhere* and sketched nowadays in Colin Ward's column in the *New Statesman & Society*.

Anarchism and Anarchists

essays by George Woodcock

Quarry Press (Kingston, Ontario), 1992 (distributed in Europe by Freedom Press, post free in UK, please add 15% elsewhere) ISBN 1 55082 018 4, 268 pages, paperback, £9.95

I had been meaning to review this collection of essays for a long time, until the news of George Woodcock's death spurred me into action. Among other things, I wanted to acknowledge my indebtedness. I was partly inspired to write my book on William Godwin by reading a secondhand copy of his *William Godwin* (Porcupine Press, 1946) which I discovered in the Lanes of Brighton in the early '70s with 'Lourdes Convent' printed on the inside page (what, I wondered, did the convent girls think of Godwin, the advocate of anarchy, free love and atheism?) In my research for my own history of anarchism, *Demanding the Impossible*, I naturally drew on Woodcock's book *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1962) as well as his biographies of Kropotkin, Proudhon, Oscar Wilde, Gandhi, Herbert Read and Aldous Huxley. I also enjoyed reading *The Anarchist Reader* (1977), a somewhat idiosyncratic but vivid anthology which regularly sold a couple of thousand copies a year.

Woodcock rightly referred to his own book as "a minor classic" and "the best popular history of anarchism". It has been kept in print for the last three decades and translated into several languages; it has probably introduced more people to anarchism than any other book this century. Despite an obvious conflict of interests, Woodcock, in his review of *Demanding the Impossible*, was generous enough to assert:

"Large, labyrinthine, tentative – for me these are all adjectives of praise when applied to works of history, and *Demanding the Impossible* meets all of them ... I now have a book – a solid 700 pages or more – in my hand to which I can direct readers when they ask me anew how soon I intend to bring my *Anarchism* up to date."

The most controversial aspect of Woodcock's *Anarchism* was the claim that not only had anarchism as a movement clearly failed but there was no likelihood of a renaissance. He ended the work in 1961 on a valedictory note, suggesting that the only future role of anarchism was as an abstract ideal: "a concept of pure liberty can help us to judge our condition and see our aims".

One of my intentions in *Demanding the Impossible* was to correct this false impression. The remarkable renewal of anarchism in the '60s proved Woodcock wrong and he was obliged by the unexpected turn of events to put the record straight. At the height of the student rebellions in Europe and North America, Woodcock admitted in 'Anarchism Revisited' (1968) that he had been 'rash in so officiously burying the historic anarchist movement' and explained that the work was, largely, a reckoning with his own youth. He had been disillusioned at the time with certain English anarchists who resorted to violence and was fearful with George Orwell that "anarchist intolerance might create a moral dictatorship". But he still insisted that the renewal of anarchism did not add up to a movement. He approved of the new radicals' rejection of the state, their stress on direct action, decentralisation and popular participation, but saw it merely as a manifestation of the anarchist 'idea' in new forms. It was still his belief that the anarchists would never create their own world and therefore their aim should be "to preserve as much freedom as possible for men as they are rather than dream a hypothetical total freedom for men as they at present are not".

In a new postscript to *Anarchism* in 1975, Woodcock further acknowledged his rashness and in the introduction to *The Anarchist Reader* in 1977 he described anarchism as a phoenix in an awakening desert. But he continued to insist on the distinction between the 'movement' and the 'idea'. His approach not only underestimated the continuity of the

The Anarchism of George Woodcock (1912-1995)

anarchist movement between the '50s and '60s but turned a useful distinction into a rigid and distorting framework. There is no dialectical recognition that a movement shapes ideas or that ideas shape a movement.

All the essays in *Anarchism and Anarchists* have appeared elsewhere over the past half century, mostly in obscure journals or in the earlier collection *The Rejection of Politics* (1972). Although somewhat uneven and without a unifying theme, *Anarchism and Anarchists* is a fine introduction to Woodcock's writing. Its greatest value perhaps lies as a stepping stone to his longer works in anarchist history and biography. While many of his books are now based on outdated research, his judgements remain invariably thought-provoking and full of insight.

Whether writing about his own views or other anarchists, the essays in this collection are always very readable and show the range and depth of his interests. It contains the excellent essay 'The Tyranny of the Clock' (1944) which made a great impression on me when I first read it in *The Anarchist Reader*. There is also an extract from Woodcock's first book *Anarchy or Chaos* (1944) which he withdrew at one time because he felt it was "as narrowly sectarian as a Trotskyite tract".

Woodcock was primarily a historian and biographer, not a theoretician. This comes through in his disappointing essay on 'Anarchism and Ecology' (1974) which lacks the subtlety and profundity of Murray Bookchin. While acknowledging that anarchists were forerunners of contemporary environmentalists, the work mainly consists

of Kropotkin's arguments for a decentralised and organically integrated society.

The essays on Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, Read and Herzen (though never an anarchist in any doctrinaire sense) are, as one might expect, clear, rounded and sympathetic. His enthusiasm for Thoreau as an anarchist shines through in his admiration of the "clear-eyed humanism and tough existentialism" of his essay 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'. He clearly warms to Paul Goodman, 'The Anarchist as Conservator', and shares his desire to conserve freedom by drawing on existing libertarian traditions. His own wry sense of humour and open-mindedness come through in his personal encounter with a contemporary Doukhobour in Canada. Only Chomsky seems to incur his wrath, who is accused of being a left-wing Marxist, impoverishing anarchism by abandoning its "essential extremities".

In all the essays, there is an impatience with those purist anarchists who look to an apocalyptic revolution to bring about the millennium. Woodcock insists on the need to reject two contemporary illusions: the desirability of material progress and the utopian belief that good is destined to triumph over evil. Anarchism for Woodcock is not a revolutionary doctrine in a millenarian sense of offering a new heaven on earth, but a "restorative doctrine" showing how we can draw on existing manifestations of mutual aid to create a free society. In this, he lines himself up with Goodman and Colin Ward, arguing that we should not wait for the great day of revolution but encourage and nourish those

voluntary and cooperative initiatives in existing society.

In the essay 'Prospects for Anarchism', written in 1990, Woodcock was impressed by the way the people as a whole in the former Communist States of Eastern Europe had thrown off their governments by mass protest and without visible leadership. Their example inspired him to write what might be considered his testament after a lifetime's experience and study of anarchism:

"We can learn that when a whole people crowds in the streets in anger, the powers of the most ruthless government are immediately swept away with no more than accidental violence. We can also learn how watchful the people must be, in the hour of triumph which joy can turn into weakness, to prevent another herd of power-seekers starting the evil process of government going all over again."

Woodcock's style is always elegant, balanced and clear. He admired the "crystal spirit" in Orwell and exemplifies it himself at his best. In his writing, he was primarily interested in conveying other people's thoughts, values and feelings. He was more interested in individuals and history than in philosophising. Apart from his early essays and pamphlets, he was not an original anarchist thinker and became primarily a commentator on other anarchists and the movement. But while he drew upon other people's research and work he always made it his own.

Ironically, the man who slipped away from Britain virtually unknown in 1949 ended up in Canada as one of its most celebrated men of letters, a "national treasure" no less. Some harsher critics have noticed the strange coincidence between the alleged death of the anarchist movement in Britain and Woodcock's quiet departure for the New World! He worked hard to earn his reputation. He was a prolific writer, producing over 140 publications and countless articles.

His interests extended well beyond anarchism to embrace travel, biography, history, poetry and literary criticism. He campaigned long for the indigenous peoples of Canada and was involved in relief work in India and Tibet. His interest in anarchism, Canada, indigenous people, language and the land of his fathers (Wales, where I live) comes through in a letter he wrote to me on 25th February 1992:

"Your book on Africa sounds fascinating. What a fine hunting ground for disastrous nation-states it indeed is! Fortunately our native peoples are going the opposite way, towards decentralisation, local autonomy and consensual decision, and I'm sure their participation in our current constitutional skirmishes will ensure that despite our politicians, we'll never degenerate into a real nation-state. I envy your address. How harmoniously the Cymric syllables sound on one's mental ear. Warmest wishes ..."

I never knew Woodcock personally, but as an anarchist writer he has undoubtedly had the widest influence since the war and he has gone a long way to make anarchism acceptable and attractive to thousands beyond anarchist circles. He may be attacked by some of his former comrades for his lapses of vanity and forgetfulness, but he never lost his vision of a free society without government. A conscientious objector during the Second World War, he remained a lifelong pacifist, boldly condemning the folly of revolutionary violence. Having been excluded from the United States in 1955, four years after he had abandoned any kind of connection with organised anarchism, he refused to enter on principle the colossus to the South. And while he was feted by the Canadian literary establishment, he refused, unlike Sir Herbert Read, any award or honour offered by governments.

Throughout his long life, George Woodcock stressed the primacy of the moral over the political and steadfastly defended the natural human tendency to rebel against artificial restraints. He never doubted Kropotkin's confidence in mutual aid and the great maxims of Proudhon continued to guide him until the end: "Anarchy is Order" but "Property is Theft".

Peter Marshall

CHRISTIAN ANARCHY: MYSTICAL ANARCHISM, OR JUST PLAIN MYSTICISM?

Christianarchy: a Primer in Christian Anarchism

by Wayne John

Black Cat Publications, Brighton, 1995, £1.00 (plus postage)

This is a bizarre pamphlet. It advocates eschatological christianity as a form of anarchism, but the second-coming is to be in the here and now, although there is little sign yet of any representative of the anarchic 'holy spirit' appearing among us, apart from David Icke. Wayne John is surely a pseudonym, but whereas the original John Wayne was on the side of raw hide (matter) his opposite number is on the side of the spirit. His conception of God (always in capitals) however is of the pantheist variety, that is of a god that is both transcendental (pan, all) and immanent (en, in). He also believes that Jesus is the messenger – the message being 'communal individuality' – the 'physical reincarnation' of this divine being. But Wayne John, rather eclectically, is also able to discern 'mystical anarchism' in Taoism (a naturalistic mysticism), Buddhism (which repudiates theism), Sufism (which is a theistic mysticism) and paganism, as well as in atheism, for the 'holy spirit', Wayne tells us, is a truly universal spirit "so what is atheism but that which sings God's praises whilst calling Him by another name" (page 9). I trust you are able to follow his logic, and have noted that the holy spirit is a 'Him' with capitals. This advocate of new-age spiritualism, however, never really informs us who or what constitutes the 'holy spirit' – although presumably it has some ontological reality?

In suggesting that the initial source of 'anarchism' was spiritual, the creation of religious mystics, Wayne John of course completely ignores the organic and secular traditions that pre-date and are distinct from both Enlightenment rationalism and spiritualism (mystical Christianity), and he completely oblates the fact that this spiritualism intrinsically implies divine or charismatic

authority, as well as being fundamentally opposed to an ecological perspective. And it is absurd to suggest, as does Wayne, that secular anarchism implies the deification of humans.

Wayne quotes liberally from Nicolas Berdyaev, whose eschatological Christianity is clearly a source of inspiration. Now, there is much that is valid and much to admire in Berdyaev's writings, but in his advocacy of aristocratic culture, in his strident anti-materialism (for him, sex was a form of slavery, and all 'necessary' aspects of human existence of little value), and in his extreme individualism (of a spiritual variety) Berdyaev was essentially a religious mystic not an anarchist. In fact Berdyaev, as Wayne John ought to be aware, emphatically repudiated anarchism. As he wrote in *Slavery and Freedom*, the anarchist notion of a stateless society – where communal individuality thrives? – is utopian, and based on a "lie and a seductive delusion" (1943, page 150). Like Ayn Rand, Berdyaev held a Hobbesian conception of human nature, and thus advocated the neo-liberal doctrine of the state, for the state is conceived of as an unfortunate necessity. For Berdyaev the state has an "organic function", it is the 'servant' of the people, protecting and defending human rights.

Given his individualism and Hobbesian conception of human nature it was natural that Berdyaev should completely misunderstand Bakunin (a Russian aristocrat like himself) and other social anarchists, in thinking that an emphasis on the community, and on the social nature of humans, necessarily implied a form of 'totalitarianism'. Yet Berdyaev's notion that the state was a "co-operative association" that would use its power to guarantee human freedom, was Berdyaev's own 'delusion', one which, unlike his mentor Tolstoy, he was never able to shed. The natural home of Berdyaev's kind of spiritualism, like that of another of Wayne's favourites, Joachim of Fiore, is not a stateless society but the monastery.

Brian Morris

A few weeks ago we were in the middle of the great atrocity sensation. The newspapers published photographs of dead and dying prisoners in the concentration camps. The newsreels filmed the horrors and showed them at every cinema in the country. People read the newspapers, went to the pictures, and were suitably shocked or sceptical according to their state of political disillusionment.

This in itself was of no great significance, for the exposure at this particular time of something which they had condoned for ten years before was obviously a tactical move on the part of the government. What seems to me of much greater social significance is that today, a month after the atrocity scandal, people are still attending the exhibition of horror photographs in Regent Street in such numbers that queues of hundreds stand outside the doors all day and every day – including Sunday. They go, not because they are shocked by the deeds of the SS men, but to satisfy a morbid curiosity in looking at these macabre records of human degradation and misery.

The Destruction of Values

It seems to me that these people who stand and wait outside the horror exhibition are themselves the victims of a subtle psychological process not unlike that which is inflicted physically on the inmate of a concentration camp. They are the victims of a gradual breaking down of ethical standards, analogous to the breaking down of individual human pride and the actual killing of the incurable recalcitrant, which was the object of Nazi practice. They, like many millions of others in Europe, while thinking they were fighting the Nazis, have suffered that brutalisation of feelings and atrophy of values in conduct which were once considered the characteristics of the Nazi alone.

I need only quote a few instances to show how people who described themselves as anti-Nazis have acted with a needless brutality as great as that of the Nazis. There was the great sadistic exhibition of the public trial of German officers and soldiers in Kharkov, and, following their inevitable condemnation, the

The Triumph of Brutality

public execution and the films showing the details of slow strangling. There was the treatment by members of the French Resistance of women who had consorted with German soldiers. These women had their heads shaved and were paraded through the streets in the same way as Nazis paraded women who had relations with Jews. There has been the continual clamour for victims and more victims on the part of the Communists and other sections of the resistance movements in various continental countries.

There was the exhibition of Mussolini and his colleagues following their death, when their bodies were left in the public square for days while people spat on them and fired revolver shots into them. There have been the incidents of elderly Germans, with no Nazi connections, being forced to bury the decayed bodies from the concentration camps, under the muzzles of American guns, in just the same way as the Jews were made to perform revolting tasks at the bidding of the Nazis.

Some of these acts have been performed by

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Food for Thought ... and Action!

Recent arrivals at the Freedom Press Bookshop.

Which Way for the Ecology Movement? Essays by Murray Bookchin.* AK Press. This is a collection of important essays written at various times and in various publications between 1982 and 1991. In lambasting ecocentrism, biocentrism, 'deep ecology' and misanthropy, they serve as a showcase for some of Bookchin's essential concerns, and the inevitable repetition of certain points in some articles does not detract from the overall thrust of his arguments. For sheer bite and lively debate this book is not as exciting as Freedom Press's own *Deep Ecology and Anarchism** (76 pages, £2.50), more recent essays by Bookchin and others wherein Bookchin defends himself against the latest attacks on him from various quarters, notably certain anarcho-syndicalists and 'deep ecologists'. You can almost hear the snarls and see them shaking each other by the throat. Nevertheless, *Which Way for the Ecology Movement?* firmly nails a lot of the nonsense that passes for 'environmentalism'. At a point in the development of the general green movement which is seeing an unprecedented boom in weird, mystical cults and 'therapies', nutty religions and vague, New Age romanticism, the re-publication of these pieces is timely. 75 pages, £4.50.

The Match!* an anarchist journal No. 89, Fred Woodworth (editor/publisher/printer). Probably the only one-man-band still in existence on an anarchist publishing circuit, Fred's occasional journal – this one, from last summer, is the latest we have – is very much a labour of love. Apart from performing all the above functions he also writes a good deal of it, in his own inimitable individualist style. The first page proclaims: "The Match! was hit in 1969 and now throws off light and heat as often as possible, ranging from one to three times a year", and this it certainly does; sometimes more

heat than light, to be sure. It is sometimes uplifting, sometimes provocative, sometimes infuriating, but rarely dull. There is no contents page – it's just the sort of thing you pick up and read from cover to cover, including short stories, book extracts, rants against authoritarianism and religion (not to mention ISBN numbers), and letters, including all the editor's replies. It is a highly original and creative production, nicely illustrated throughout and with hand-coloured drawings on the cover. Even the format is unconventional, hovering somewhere between A4 and A5, and all this plus 88 pages to get through for £3.00.

In the Strongbox by Robert Maudsley, London ABC. A very short pamphlet on the use of 'strongbox' cells in Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight; cells designed to pacify the most dangerous and violent prisoners when they get out of control, in theory, but in practice they are often used "to isolate, demoralise and break the spirit of prisoners who question or resist the brutal, dehumanising system that is prison life; who refuse to submit and play by the rules. Often they succeed in destroying the spirit, leading to depression, submission or suicide." The author has spent long periods in the strongbox, and is still held in isolation. My reaction whilst reading his description of the conditions in the strongbox swung between disbelief and anger. I will spare you the disgusting and gruesome details of each stage of this system, which amounts to sensory deprivation – recognised by the European Court of Human Rights as a form of torture. Rather, you can help the Anarchist Black Cross in their support for such prisoners by buying the pamphlet and reading it for yourself. A5, 10 pages, 50p.

Mechanical Restraints: the medieval legacy, by Patricia Ford and Paul D. Ross, London ABC. While you're in the mood I thought I'd also

mention this little number, just in case any of you thought we were living in an age of 'enlightenment', 'liberal democracy' or any other such meaningless terms. This pamphlet comes in the wake of the recent case of a woman who was arrested as an illegal immigrant by police and immigration officials, who forced her into a 'body-belt' and other 'restraining devices' and managed to kill her in the process. There are accounts here from prisoners in various institutions who were subjected to such instruments of torture, often in strongboxes or similar cells. Usual routine: pinned to the floor by six warders in full riot gear while their clothes are removed – often literally cut off – one limb at a time, before being forced into body-belts with arms locked to their sides using ratchet handcuffs attached by rings to the 'belt'. A counter-report on the effects of such treatment (from the *Prison Service Journal*) is also included. A5, 6 pages, 30p.

Anarchism and other essays, by Emma Goldman, Dover Publications. For all those long-suffering subscribers and others who've been writing repeatedly for this title, we have finally after many months been able to sort out the problem which led to it being unavailable for so long, and it is now back on our shelves. It was not, in fact, out of print but you would not believe the boring and ridiculous quagmires of procedure that some commercial distribution companies have instigated. It's getting so bad we could almost write a book about it ... Anyway, welcome back Emma. Same good value, 271 pages for £5.95.

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individuals, others by the authorities with the tacit approval of large numbers of individuals. Individual Germans have been blamed for not protesting against the atrocities in the concentration camps. But there has been an alarming number of people in England today who have seen nothing very wrong in atrocities committed against the Germans. It would seem that many who thought they were attacking Nazism had developed an attitude not unlike that inculcated by the Nazis. I think it is probable that a great many Germans were not very much moved by what they knew about concentration camps. But I also know that many Englishmen are callous to what they have heard of the Indian famines, that many otherwise decent Americans are supporters of discrimination against negroes, and that millions of Russians choose to forget the people who disappear into the forced labour camps of the Arctic Circle.

The Root of Brutalisation

The root of this brutalisation, which at best is a callousness towards human suffering and at worst an active interest in such suffering, lies in the lack of any real feeling of the integrity of the individual human being. If we regard men as individuals each with the same feelings as ourselves, but each with his own individual nature and needs, then we shall accept and respect their personal rights. We shall treat them with consideration and shall not harm them in any avoidable manner.

If, on the other hand, we regard men as names, as clothed bodies without personal needs and virtues, then we shall lose sight of their rights to freedom, to justice and, finally, even to pity. We shall treat them merely as objects, whose destruction is nothing in comparison with the supposed good of the collective, the herd.

The difference between these two attitudes is similar to the difference between libertarian and authoritarian philosophies and social systems. If we are given freedom to develop our own personalities, then we shall respect those of other people. If we are compelled to regard ourselves as ciphers to be used for any foul purpose of the collective, to be turned into serfs or cannon fodder at the will of the ruling class, then we shall tend to regard other people also as nameless units without rights or importance.

The Myth of Original Sin

The story of original sin has been invented by theologians to explain the cruelties that exist among men. Yet these evils are not born, but are acquired in a society that denies the dignity of the individual and degrades human values below the false values of political abstractions. When men have learnt that the state and the nation are only the phantoms that mask the intention of privileged classes, when they realise fully that mutual respect between individuals is the only basis on which a peaceful society can be built, they will gain a sufficient sense of the value of human happiness to abandon the brutality that is bred in a regimented world.

Before we can live in a society where brutality will be eliminated, it is necessary that we should destroy utterly those institutions of authority that have been its principal cause. But we should be careful in the process not ourselves to become brutal. We should destroy where it is necessary, but only because it is necessary, and we should do it without any feelings of revenge towards what we destroy. The revolution that develops ruthless and brutal methods is already on the way to becoming another tyranny, for it is through this diminution of our feelings for others that lack of respect for individual liberty comes in, and thence the acceptance of authority. We must learn from the ironic triumph which the Nazis have achieved in their hour of destruction, the triumph of seeing their enemies adopting the brutal Nazi rule of conduct.

George Woodcock
16th June 1945

from *World War - Cold War*

Private Militias in the United States

The recent bombing of a US government building in Oklahoma City has directed attention to the so-called militia movement in the United States. This movement should be of interest to anarchists because many of the things their supporters say ring true for anarchists and, also, because these groups have been erroneously called anarchic and anarchist.

The militia movements apparently had a beginning in the 1970s in the Rocky Mountain area, especially Montana and Idaho. They had some amorphous connection with white supremacy, anti-semitic conspiracy theory groups, although it seems that among militias today racism is not the paramount issue. Militias have proliferated in the last three years because of two or three well publicised instances of stand-offs between the US government military forces and privately armed individuals. In at least one case the armed individuals were tax refusers, but the most notorious example was the US government siege and destruction of the Branch Davidian sect in Waco, Texas, in 1993. In addition, there has been the vigorous attempt of the federal government to place further controls on privately owned firearms. All of these activities have sparked a fear that the US government will eventually seek to deprive all Americans of their firearms and, thus, to revoke the second amendment to the US constitution which guarantees the right to bear arms and is held by the militias to be the most important bastion of individual freedom. Further, there has arisen the widespread belief that these activities are all part of a major

conspiracy by the US government to establish a despotic police state, which will invade your home if you do not conform. The ever-expanding power of the US government bureaucracy is taken as further evidence of this conspiracy. Another conspiracy theory in vogue among some militias is that the United Nations is going to move in and take over the US government and rule the country.

Militias are local organisations of men and a few women, based on the idea of the independent militia companies of 1774. They institute military ranks and insignias, have uniforms and engage in armed military-style exercises (sometimes with live ammunition). All members swear allegiance to the US constitution and to the constitution of their respective states. Militia members include a goodly number of Korean and Vietnam war veterans; they are usually middle-aged, lower middle class, generally rural and mostly Westerners and Southerners. Small businessmen, farmers and others who are particularly frustrated by bureaucratic governmental paperwork and taxes seem to be important elements in these organisations. Militias, which usually have less than one hundred members, are organised in all states but two, and I have heard reports of total national membership ranging from 15,000 to 150,000.

Militias are all autonomous; there is no central national headquarters, no supreme Fuhrer. There are, of course, dozens of petty Fuhrers and in some states (e.g. Michigan) there appears to be some degree of state centralisation. In any case all militias are held together by computer internet.

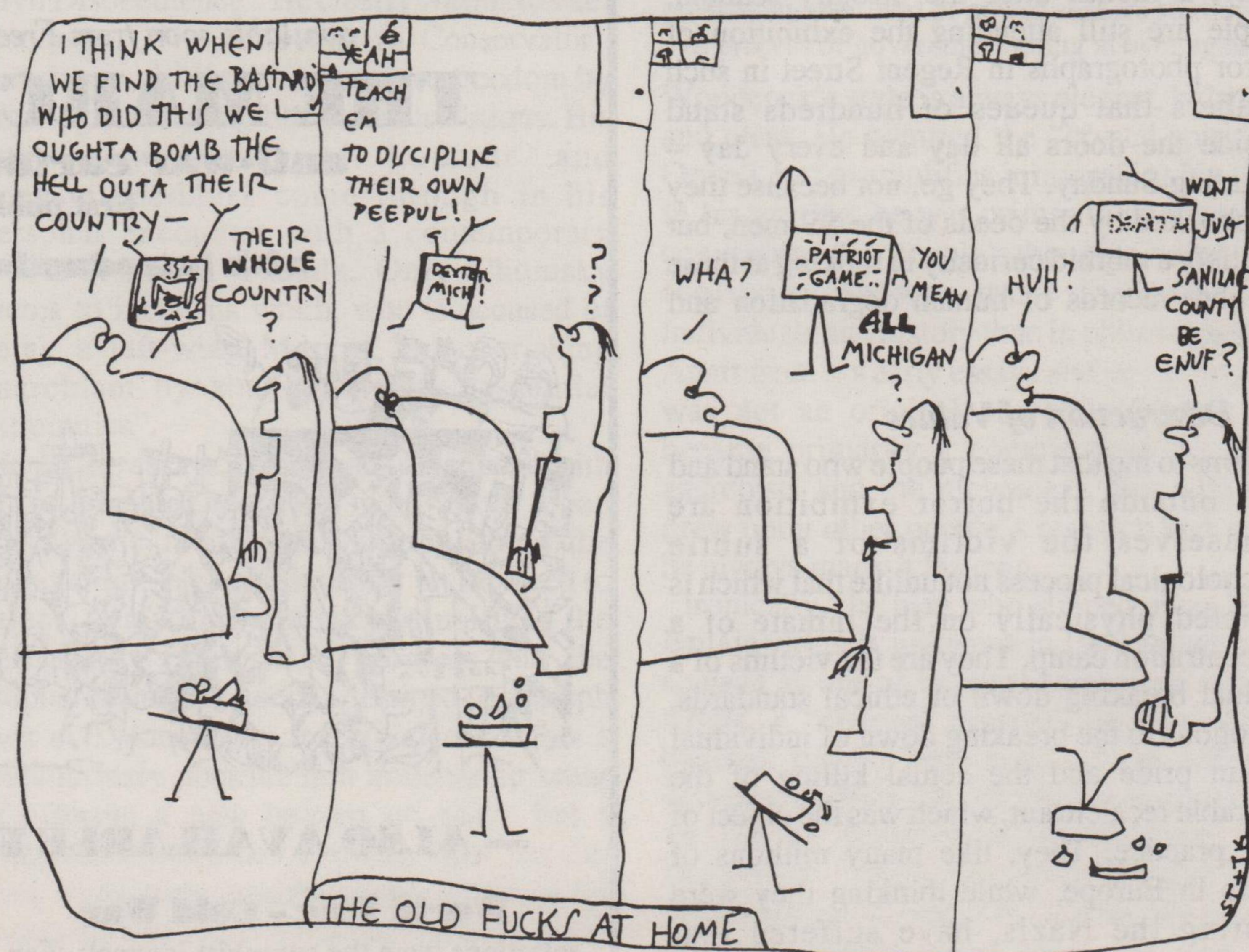
Among militias there is variation concerning programme and ideology, more precisely in the extent to which one believes in some kind of conspiracy theory and in the extent to which one is willing to resort to terror and violence to attain the movement's ends. On these ends there is general agreement. They all profess a dedication to the constitution of the United States and a patriotic devotion to the country. They see themselves as defenders of the constitution against the federal government which they bitterly oppose as attempting to destroy the constitution. In their castigation of the government they can readily be confused with anarchists. Like anarchists they are sick and tired of governmental bureaucracy and its continual demanding that individuals register for this, get a licence for that, fill out a form for something else, and pay, pay, pay fees and taxes. Above all they are opposed to any regulation and attempts to control their ownership and use of firearms. They oppose almost any kind of governmental controls and stand against income taxes, the federal reserve banking system, social security, all attempts to restrict farmers in what they can do with their property. They bitterly oppose the United Nations and any international alliances. Apparently, their ideal is the minimal government in the United States of 1787 – one whose almost exclusive concern was the protection of the sovereign borders of the US from foreign aggressors. For the militias everything else should be a matter for local control. Here again, with the emphasis on the local community, one gets the flavour of anarchism. But what the militia people most resemble is the Libertarian Party which proposes to achieve most of what the militias want by electoral means and is opposed to conspiracy theories and the use of terror and violence. Apparently, not a few militia members are supporters of the Libertarian Party, while a number of others are associated with the smaller Populist Party, an ultra-right, racist leaping party formed in the 1980s

(David Duke, ex Ku Klux Klanner, was their presidential candidate in 1988).

Militias are a very typically American phenomenon. They combine the right of every American to bear arms and defend his home with an individualism which demands each one to stand on his own two feet and make something by himself, and an egalitarianism which looks with disdain on all 'authorities'. It is the old frontier spirit, the ideas and values

expressed in Hollywood cowboy movies. As an all-American brew, it combines violence, individualism, nationalism (with a taint of racism), male macho, egalitarianism and the resentment of authority. One must, however, be careful with those statements about freedom and rights made by militia members for they may speak loudly of these things and at the same time they proclaim for 'God, family and country', military conscription, censorship of books and punishment for those who desecrate the American flag. Usually, freedom and rights refers to heterosexual white patriotic Christians – others need not apply.

Harold Barclay



cartoon by Tuli Kupferberg, New York

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT FINDS A NEW BLIND ALLEY

Until around twenty years ago, the women's movement was straightforwardly feminist, opposing the unfair laws and gender stereotypes which kept women from the best jobs, and from enjoying the same sexual choices as men. It succeeded (or it seemed like a success at the time) in getting Women's Studies programmes accepted in colleges across the United States. Their purpose was to show students that male hegemony, and male chauvinism, had no rational justification.

Ten or twelve years ago a largish part of the women's movement was hijacked by prudes and side-tracked away from feminism into campaigns for censorship. Many Women's Studies programmes went with the flow. Individual feminists resisted but it took time to organise, and the struggle to reclaim the women's movement for feminism is only beginning to succeed.

Now comes a new distraction, in the form of the anti-science movement currently sweeping America. Two academics, Noretta Koertge and Daphne Patai, have been interviewing staff and students on Women's Studies programmes, and Koertge writes in *Skeptical Inquirer* that "there emerged a complex picture of what we would call negative education – a systematic undermining of the intellectual values of liberal education".

Time was when Women's Studies included accounts of people like Marie Curie and Kathleen Lonsdale, who overcame the prejudices of their time to be universally recognised as great scientists. Rational thinkers now have no place in most of the courses. So-styled 'feminist' accounts of the history of science emphasise instead the contributions of village midwives and the allegedly forgotten healing arts of herbalists and witches. Young women are no longer exhorted to study science, logic and mathematics in preparation for jobs which men have reserved to themselves. Instead, they are told that quantitative reasoning is a tool of male domination, incompatible with "women's ways of knowing".

Prejudiced men have always held that with very few exceptions women have no aptitude or respect for systematic thought, therefore it is a consequence of nature and not of injustice that there are so few women in the thinking professions. When Women's Studies programmes embrace that same prejudice it becomes ever more difficult for feminists to argue that the prejudice is wrong.

We find ourselves fighting on three fronts: against male chauvinism, against the anti-sex movement and against this new fad of anti-rationality.

Andrea Kinty

Terror in the Heartland

We need no longer feel superior. The brutal crimes of Hezbollah and Hamas have found their bloody equal in Oklahoma City. Hate and fanaticism truly know no boundaries. While hate may be unbounded, this atrocity will undoubtedly have a deep and very negative effect upon the political and social life of the United States.

In the past decade a movement opposed to the centralised state has arisen in America, one that is inchoate and fragmented into innumerable tendencies and groups – individualists, free market libertarians, constitutionalists, self-styled populists and the now infamous militias. All in all, they have more in common than their differences might suggest and this mass of discontent could best be described as a modern populist movement.

Radicalisation has occurred numerous times in the USA, from the original Populists of the 1880s to 1960s student activism. Anarchism was influential prior to the Haymarket bombing and the assassination of President McKinley made anarchy forever equated with terrorism. The Wall Street bombing of 1919 gave the pretext for the Palmer Raids and Weatherman did more to destroy the student movement than the FBI could dream of doing. In all these cases (and that of Oklahoma City) crimes were committed by fringe elements and then blamed upon the mass movement. The usual result is a witch-hunt for radicals.

Oklahoma City is giving Clinton the pretext for new police and governmental powers. Isn't that wonderful! The mass media are having a field day with stories of gun-toting right-wing fanatics. It is easy to see what is going to happen. Anyone who wants to reduce the role of illegitimate authority is going to be branded a terrorist and a fascist. Leviathan must be laughing heartily at his good fortune.

A word on the militias. I have been reading their literature and listening to short-wave broadcasts by their sympathisers for the past six months. As a pacifist I am hardly in favour of guns and the idea of forming militias must strike the average European as the height of extremism. However, it must be remembered that Americans do have the constitutional right to both bear arms and form companies of militia.

Militia members believe that the US government is Satanic, a conspiracy of monopoly capitalists, politicians and bureaucrats. The CIA and FBI are regarded as the American Gestapo and they believe the bombing to be a kind of Reichstag Fire. They

are opposed to NAFTA and GATT and fear the New World Order (a future world state, which they say is monopoly capital's ultimate goal). They are also isolationists, opposed to imperialist adventures. The militias believe that America is going to become a totalitarian state and they regard themselves as the future resistance. Their positive goal is a return to a Jeffersonian republic – a very weak federal government with political power decentralised to the state and county level.

No doubt the militias and the populist movement have been infiltrated by neo-nazis, Aryan nations, holocaust-deniers and numerous other crackpots and hate-mongers. But this does not mean the movement is fascist any more than Leninist penetration of the Peace Movement meant it was Communist. Few people in the world are less inclined to fascism than Americans, a nation stridently individualist and bitterly hostile to collectivism, statism and the *fuhrer-princip* in any form.

Populism is being blamed for the greatest crime in American history and as one of their spokesmen stated on the day of the tragedy: "This act has set us back thirty years". What can be learned from this? Most protest movements have the tendency to engage in conspiracy theories and at some point in their development come to believe in the necessity of taking up arms. These two aspects open the way for psychopaths and terrorist fringe groups.

People like conspiracy theories out of laziness. It is easier to blame the evils of the world on capitalists, Jews, white devils or males than to take the effort to understand the structural and ideological reasons for the present mess, not to mention the ever-present accidents of history. Conspiracy theories attract unstable personalities like flies to dung, for it assuages their paranoia and gives them a rationale for their hates and fantasies.

If you ever whisper to a friend the thought that just maybe we should stockpile arms, antenna-like every psycho within a thousand miles picks up on it and comes running. As well, within any group there will be individuals who practice a kind of macho one-upmanship. Whatever the group does it isn't radical enough and the discontented minority leaves to commit some foolish act or atrocity.

There is a way to make sure that movements do not attract potential terrorists. This is to never cease emphasising non-violence and the need for cool heads and clear thinking.

Larry Gambone

See 'Necessary to the Security of a Free State ...' by Mike Williams in *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, April 1995, vol. 20, no. 4, pages 48ff.

Third Worldism: Chomsky and his critics

Dear Freedom,

A letter by Pat Murtagh (*Freedom*, 25th March) has been brought to my attention, referring to a visit of mine to Australia at the invitation of Timorese refugees (among others).

According to Murtagh, I should "be accused of Third Worldism" (Maoism, mindless support of third world liberation movements, etc.), tendencies I have always sharply condemned. The fragment of truth in Murtagh's conclusion is that I do try to contribute to popular efforts within the great powers, my own country particularly, to terminate their murderous, oppressive and brutal acts. That was the case in Australia, where I said nothing about the East Timorese nationalist movement – except that they have the right of self-determination – but spoke extensively about the policies of Australia (and the US, UK and others) in support of Indonesia's near-genocidal assault and the cynical robbery of East Timor's petroleum resources by those who are backing the atrocities.

Among jingoist extremists, this stand can only be interpreted as 'Third Worldism' – support for the victims. The reason is that it is inconceivable that one might criticise the Holy State, let alone try to end its depredations. And it is of course irrelevant to fanatic ideologues that I constantly condemn nationalist movements and their leaders in harsh

terms. I'm a little surprised to see this sort of thing here, however.

Murtagh's prime evidence is my "elaborate attempt to deny Khmer Rouge atrocities", which surely exists in the patriotic literature on which he apparently relies. In the real world, my co-author Edward Herman and I compared Pol Pot's Cambodia to East Timor, demonstrating that in this and other cases of atrocities of roughly the same scale, the reactions of the ideological managers in the media, journals and intellectual community were dramatically different, reflecting the locus of responsibility, a conclusion particularly grotesque when we consider ability to mitigate or terminate the crimes. These facts are impossible to miss, from the introductory chapter of our *Political Economy of Human Rights*, with its section headed 'Cambodia: Why the Media Find it More Newsworthy than Indonesia and East Timor'. My only other mention of Cambodia at the time was in a 1979 article on East Timor (making the same comparison), and a 1977 review with Herman of coverage of Indochina, in which we (accurately) compared the Pol Pot atrocities of 1975-76 to those of the preceding years for which the US bore primary responsibility, and the reaction to them, drawing the same conclusions. Throughout, we of course condemned the 'brutal' and 'gruesome' atrocities of

the Khmer Rouge, without equivocation. We suggested that it would be worthwhile to pay attention to the conclusions of the most knowledgeable source, US intelligence, which have proven generally accurate, and were ignored then and since by Murtagh's sources because they did not satisfy doctrinal requirements.

All of this is clear and unambiguous. And perfectly well known, so much so that a recent film based mainly on talks of mine in the late 1980s (*Manufacturing Consent*) focuses primarily on the East Timor-Cambodia comparison.

Again, it is not surprising that more abject servants of power should interpret our comparison of Pol Pot's atrocities to the most horrendous slaughters since the Holocaust, for which the state they serve is responsible, as apologetics for Pol Pot. And naturally they are no less outraged by our suggestion that people tell the truth about all of these atrocities instead of lying in the service of the state, and our even more criminal suggestion that people act to terminate atrocities as best they can – most effectively, of course, when their own states are crucially involved. Again, it is a little odd to read such reactions in *Freedom*.

The remainder of Murtagh's letter refers to views apparently attributed to me elsewhere, which I do not recognise, have never expressed and do not hold.

Noam Chomsky

Dear Freedom,

As the author of the article 'Chomsky: the vision anarchism, the reality permanent protest' (25th February 1995), I would like to briefly respond to some points that have been raised in the letters (25th March and 8th April) that this article has generated.

I'm surprised that many anarchists still seem to believe that support for people's struggle against oppression extends to support for political organisations and groups that claim to represent that struggle, even when these groups' political programmes reflect authoritarian visions that have nothing to do with the struggle for human freedom and equality. Support for people's struggles against oppression should not and does not necessarily imply support for those organisations that claim to represent this struggle.

As far as Chomsky is concerned, he is one of a handful of post World War Two intellectuals that has dragged anarchism (albeit kicking and screaming) into the last decade of the twentieth century. Unfortunately although he has chosen to use anarchist ideas and thinkers to flesh out his analysis, the reality he has chosen to follow is one which acknowledges that radical egalitarian social change is impossible and that the permanent protest path is the most sensible way to resist the status quo. As an intellectual

and activist Chomsky is at liberty to follow any path he wishes.

At the same time as someone who would like to see anarchism become a reality in my lifetime (not in two thousand years time), I am at liberty to encourage people to reject the permanent protest path that Chomsky has chosen to follow. I don't think that the permanent protest path will contribute to the current struggle for egalitarian social change and in many ways following such a path reinforces the power of the state and the status quo.

In all human societies, today and in the past, there is and there has been constant friction between authoritarian and libertarian elements within society. Whether libertarian elements come to the fore as they have in other cultures and times (not just in the Western World in the past two hundred years) depends to a large degree on the visions of freedom people hold and the methods of organisation and actions people carry out to make these visions a reality. Discussions and debates about how to make an anarchist society a reality are not the preserve of this or that individual or group. They are the responsibility of all of us who want to live in an egalitarian society where each individual has equal access to society's power and wealth.

Joseph Toscano

Dear Freedom,

It is unfortunate that some of our readers see the need to defend Noam Chomsky against the mild criticisms of Pat Murtagh and the Australian comrades. As an upholder of Third Worldist ideology, Chomsky is at best a rather strange sort of anarchist. Third Worldism is antithetical to anarchism because it is Stalinist demagoguery tarted up as a theory of underdevelopment. The reasons why a country has not 'advanced' are quite complex and cannot be reduced to demonology about the rich nations. Furthermore, his overall viewpoint of the working of government and the media have a definite vulgar Marxist tinge – a tendency to reduce everything to conspiracies by corporate interests. Anarchism with its understanding of power and the importance of such factors as ideology, psychology and the fortuitous, is far more sophisticated in its analysis (or rather it should be). Chomsky is also not above distorting the truth to serve his ends. I recall he once stated that the US has never supported reform in Latin America. This is simply not true and American support for social democracy and populism during the 1950s and '60s is a documented fact. The Yanks realised these reformers were the best bulwark against the Communist Party who they saw in geo-political terms as agents of Russian imperialism.

Larry Gambone

Libertarian Archaeology and History Society

I have a suggestion to make for an activity aimed initially at those with libertarian or anarchistic views in the south-east of England, and that is that we form a Libertarian Archaeology and History Society.

We could go off together to places of archaeological or historical interest – henge sites, hill forts, castles, monastic sites and the like, attractive places where we can have a picnic and the more energetic can go off for a ramble while the less mobile potter around the locality.

I have detailed a much longer set of suggestions, including a list of places we might go to, and will send this to anyone who sends a stamped addressed envelope.

Peter Neville
4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road,
Isleworth, Middx TW7 4AW

Irish Peace Train

Dear Freedom,

I am somewhat puzzled by John de Courcy Ireland's letter (29th April). He condemns me for my 'insinuation' that the Peace Train Organisation is funded by the British government. He then concedes in the following paragraph that the Northern Ireland branch of the organisation (which I was clearly referring to in my earlier piece) has in fact received government aid – but claims that there is no reason "except malice" for "accusing" them of this.

I find this language somewhat confusing. I did not 'insinuate' that the Northern Ireland Peace Train had been government-funded: I made a statement of fact. I also did not 'accuse' the group of taking money. You only 'accuse' when you don't have proof. I did have proof. Check *Hansard*, 19th July 1991: Mr Brian Mawhinney, then a Northern Ireland Office minister, announces that the Peace Train has been given £8,500 by the government, and promises that more will be forthcoming.

I do not think that one needs to be motivated by 'malice' to point out that a supposedly independent 'peace group' is receiving funds from one of the warring parties in a conflict. Interestingly, the Peace Train has concentrated its efforts almost entirely on the IRA. It campaigned against the IRA disruption of the rail link between North and South, but said nothing about the British Army disruption of road links between North and South. (I am not suggesting that the funding affected the campaigning, rather that this kind of politics is congenial to the government.)

As for 'Families against Intimidation and Terror' (which I believe received £4,000 from the government in July 1991), FAIT has concentrated its efforts on IRA punishment beatings of and threats against civilians. There have been

occasional protests against Loyalist beatings, but the prime focus has been the IRA. So far as I know, there has been almost total silence from FAIT regarding Army and RUC beatings of and threats against civilians. (Again, I am not suggesting that funding led the group to pursue this policy, just that the government is likely to fund this kind of selective campaigning.)

The crucial and simple point is this: these organizations cannot claim to be independent peace groups if they are receiving funds from one of the warring parties. If, for example, the Peace People were openly receiving funds from the IRA (instead of from the Government), I am sure some eyebrows would be raised.

If there was an anti-arms trade group in Britain which received funds from British Aerospace and the Indonesian government I think that we would hesitate to call it an independent peace group.

If there was a peace and reconciliation group in Chechnya which was partially funded by the Russian government I think we would hesitate to call it an independent peace group.

If there was a human rights group in the Gaza Strip which was partially funded by the Israeli government I think we would hesitate to call it an independent peace group.

Finally, there is no comparison between the funding of peace groups in Northern Ireland and the funding of Gaelic language schools or community groups. These latter organisations provide social services and have a right to claim resources from society. They are not political groups whose whole purpose can be compromised by the sources of their sponsorship. There is a clear difference I believe.

Milan Rai

On Avant-Gardes

Dear Freedom,

Your reviewer refers to F.T. Marinetti's "short lived attraction to fascism" in a review of *The Futurist Cookbook* (*Freedom*, 11th February 1995). Marinetti was more than attracted to fascism and there was nothing short-lived about it. He was the founder and leading light of the Italian Futurist movement (and not its "second wave", as your reviewer writes); a movement whose whole philosophy can almost be summarised in the following lines from the first Futurist manifesto: "We will glorify war – the world's only hygiene – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the freedom bringers, beautiful ideals worth dying for, and scorn for women". Marinetti and the Italian Futurists were much more than 'sympathetic' to fascism, as they – especially Marinetti – played a leading role in the nascent fascist movement following World War One. Unlike his artistic contemporaries Luigi Pirandello and Gabrielle D'Annunzio, Marinetti remained faithful to Mussolini and fascism until the very end, becoming an enthusiastic supporter of the Salo Republic. Indeed, during 1942, when well into his middle age, he volunteered for active service on the Russian Front.

So much for the first of this century's avant-gardes and its leader. On to the last of the avant-gardes and its (thankfully late) leader: the Situationist International and Guy Debord. Michel Prigent, defender of the Holy Grail of specto-situationism, whines in typical pro-situ fashion about someone having the temerity to get a few details wrong concerning the glistening object of his religious devotion (*Freedom*, 11th February 1995), in an article concerning the long overdue suicide of that pompous imbecile Guy Debord. Prigent informs us that the miserable Pope of specto-situationist ideology was suffering from alcoholic polyneuritis, i.e. he was an

alkie. This hardly explains why "the freaked out father of situationism" chose to do the decent thing now.

Debord, after decades of condemning "the society of the spectacle", ended his days cooperating in the production of a television documentary about his (non-) life and times. His pompous vanity overcoming in practice his (incoherent) ideological posturing. Everything that was once lived has moved away into representation.

Prigent informs us that "... a few people have tried to write the history of the Situationist International, but all have failed ... To write such a history it is necessary to have been involved in such an undertaking ..." Prigent no doubt has himself in mind, as a one-time lap-dog and general sycophant to the High Priest of Nothingness. Too bad he can't even write a coherent leaflet, let alone a history. He also concedes the essentially mystical nature of situationism with such a comment. Why is it that "those who have been involved in such an undertaking" have written nothing but incoherent, self-serving and self-indulgent clap-trap and have never offered a reasoned response to those who have developed a critique of the Debordist theology?

Let the dead bury the dead!

K. Eliot

Joan Currie remembered

Dear Freedom,

Many who will remember Joan Currie (previously Joan Sculthorpe) who died on 20th April, will be happy to hear that on 1st May a very large gathering of her family, friends and admirers celebrated her life on the traditional May Day bank holiday which the, what is laughingly called, government has attempted to hijack by moving it from the 1st to the 8th to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of VE Day. Joan would have relished the coincidence.

John Noble

An Apology

Dear Freedom,

After reading your piece on 'Late Sleaze Extra' (25th March 1995) I feel I have to write and apologise.

I confess to being one of the people who has "recently latched on to the anarchist movement" and someone whom you yourselves have described as a puritan, in an earlier edition. I am so sorry that you have had to label, assess and effectively put me in my place when you had quite clearly given me no authority to freely express an individually held view which differed from your own. Are you by any chance related to that brand of British anarchism which some chap called Kropotkin (I've latched on to reading him) described as "anarchie de salon – epicurian, a little Nietzschean, very snobbish"?

Anyway, I'm sorry to have bothered you and hope your salon rules don't preclude the likes of me from continuing

to subscribe to your publication which (dare I venture a further unsolicited opinion?) I have by and large enjoyed reading?

I must further confess (and seek your absolution) that I am new to the anarchist movement, only because I haven't been aware of it. It was when a new friend recognised my views and opinions as anarchist and bought me a Freedom Press book on William Godwin that the floodgates opened. Please forgive my intrusion, as I hope you will also forgive those other anarchists who have contacted a "primitive puritan" and "sad character" like myself and have welcomed me into the movement.

Jean Pollard

please keep sending in
your letters and
donations ...

London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Admission is free but a collection is made to cover the cost of the room.

- 1995 PROGRAMME -

- 12th May General discussion
- 19th May Just Talking (speaker Don Howard)
- 26th May General discussion
- 2nd June Manufacturing Consent: the ideas of Noam Chomsky (discussion led by Peter Lumsden)
- 9th June General discussion
- 16th June The Forum's programme for 1995/96
- 23rd June General discussion
- 30th June Anarchism and Sociology: the ideas of Norbert Elias (speaker Peter Neville)

It has been suggested we continue meetings over August, a time we know many international comrades come to London and want to meet 'the British anarchists'. Anyone interested in coming, especially those interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion, please contact either Dave Dane or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (telephone number 0181-847 0203, not too early in the day please) giving subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate. A collection is made to pay for the £15 cost of the room. Donations are accepted from those who cannot attend regularly but wish to see the continuation of these meetings. August continuation will depend upon demand.

FREEDOM fortnightly

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Anarchist Platform at

Speakers' Corner
Marble Arch, Hyde Park

Sundays 12 - 4pm

First meeting 21st May

Speakers: Silvie Edwards and John Rety

MANCHESTER ANARCHIST GROUP

Current Affairs and Business Meeting

Thursday 18th May 1995, 8pm

at

'The Vine'
Kennedy Street
off Fountain Street
MANCHESTER 2

ANARCHIST DISCUSSION FORUM

— NEXT MEETING —

Saturday 17th June 1995, 2 - 5 pm

'Relevance of Syndicalism to Anarchism in Contemporary Society'

with

Bryan Bamford & Derek Pattison

Arts at the Turret
Valley Road, Hebden Bridge
West Yorkshire

For further details call
01422 842 558

Red Rambles

A programme of free guided walks in the White Peak for Greens, Socialists, Libertarians and Anarchists.

— 1995 —

Sunday 4th June: Ladybower Reservoir and Lost Lad walk. Meet 11.00am at Ladybower picnic site car park. Map reference 173 894. Bring strong boots, etc. Length 8 miles.

Bring walking boots, waterproofs and food on all walks.

Telephone for further details
01773-827513

Dales Red Rambles

A new series of free guided walks in the Yorkshire Dales for Anarchists, Greens, Socialists and Libertarians.

Sunday 20th May: Gargrave to Flasby. Meet at car park opposite Gargrave Village Hall at 10.45am. Length approx 7 miles.

Sunday 11th June: Kettlewell to Starbottom. Meet at car park at Kettlewell at 11.00am. Length approx 6 miles.

On all walks bring walking boots, waterproofs, food and drink.

Telephone for further details
01756-799002

ACF

OPEN DISCUSSION MEETINGS

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

- 1st June - Pornography Exposed
- 6th July - Labour Party 'Socialism'

Whitsun in Holland

If there is anyone who wishes to meet anarchists in a non-stressed way, they may come to the annual (since 1933) anarchist gathering at the Whitsun weekend (arrive Friday 26th May).

Discussions, introductions, lectures, open podium for poetry and music, theatre. It's a camp, so the price for the weekend is f.15 per person. Veganistic/biolog. food is being prepared by the Axiom Food Cook Group. Before and after the weekend one can stay with tent for f.2.50 per person per night. It's a simple camping site, with hot showers for a payment.

Place: Aeckingaweg 2a, Appelscha, a village at the mid-Eastern part of Frisia province, halfway between Assen and Heerenveen.

Sure, everything is in Dutch, but some speak Flemish (Belgian) dialect and a few speak the Frisian language.

Karl, Netherlands

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