

anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

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FIFTY PENCE

"All voting is a sort of gaming ... a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it."

H.D. Thoreau

SIR JAMES GOLDSMITH: POLITICS AS SPORT

If voting changed anything, goes the anarchist slogan, they'd make it illegal. But to say 'voting changes nothing' is like saying 'football changes nothing'. Football makes no difference to the social system, but it makes a difference to which team wins the cup, comes top of the league, gets promoted or relegated. It is important to those directly involved, and also to the thousands of supporters who take an interest in the fortunes of 'their' teams.

So with voting. Only a change in public attitudes and perceptions can change society in the direction of greater freedom, which is why those political parties which seriously intend to get into power have very similar programmes. Those who really want to change society should spend their energies trying to change

opinions, not waste them on trying to acquire votes. But politics means a lot to those involved in it.

The fact that football and politics cannot change the system does not prevent anarchists from taking an interest in football and politics. At general election times, many anarchists stay up all night watching the results on television, cheering the defeat of politicians like Howard and Widdecombe, and groaning when they win.

It will change nothing, but is of interest that a billionaire, Member of the European Parliament representing a French constituency, resident in Mexico, has started a political party of his own, whose only policy is to have a referendum on the question 'Who rules Britain, Brussels or Westminster?'

Sir James Goldsmith, like every other billionaire, uses his money to generate more money for himself. But unlike many, he also uses some of his money to indulge eccentric whims. His latest wheeze is to put up a candidate for a 'Referendum Party' in every parliamentary constituency, except those where the Conservative candidate declares himself in favour of a referendum on his question (to be stated in legalistic terms). No doubt all Goldsmith's candidates will lose their deposits, costing him some £300,000, but to judge by the amount of media coverage he is getting, he may well have spent half a million already on publicity and is probably prepared to spend up to ten million. He can afford it.

The problem for the Conservative Party is that many of their members, including some MPs, agree with Goldsmith's idea. They favour a highly centralised government, but one centralised in Britain, since they trust neither localities nor foreigners. A recent public opinion poll shows the present standing of the Referendum Party to be negligible, but Goldsmith's propaganda machine may have a year to work before the next election. psephologists calculate that he may eventually get two or three percent of the vote, splitting the Conservative vote so that they lost about ten seats which they would otherwise have won.

All great fun for us who see parliamentary politics as a sport.

(Incidentally, we observe above that changing public opinion is the only way to change society "in the direction of greater freedom". Of course, society can be changed in the other direction by force. There have been attempts this century to impose greater freedom, overthrowing the capitalist system by force, and all have resulted in a reduction of freedom. The classic example is that of Soviet Russia, which Malatesta observed as early as 1920 was "stabilising the most hateful tyranny". And perhaps the worst is that of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, who rejected capitalism to the extent of abolishing money and evacuating the cities, but killed off about one-fifth of the population to prevent the return of capitalism, and still failed.)

'DIPLOMACY' WILL NOT SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN CRISIS

As we write (23rd April) Israel continues its bombardment and destruction in Lebanon, even after the shelling of a United Nations refugee camp where more than a hundred women and children were killed and a lot more maimed, which made adverse headlines in the world press for the Israelis. And also as we write the USA representative is commuting between Lebanon, Syria and Israel in an attempt (a vain attempt, in our opinion) to 'patch up' the present one-sided conflict.

If the Americas really were concerned about peace in Palestine they should *stop financing Israel's military power* and the armaments industry in Israel, which not only contributes to its own armaments but actually exports weapons. But they won't do this, partly because of the powerful US Jewish lobby and votes in the forthcoming presidential elections, but also because the US needs a base in the oil-rich Middle East.

So even before the American 'diplomats' report back to the ever-optimistic President, we confidently

report to our readers that nothing will change for the better in Palestine so long as the Israelis behave as the British and the French did in the 'bad old days' of colonialism.

Most anarchists, we believe, have no sympathy for either nationalistic nor religious bigots and fanatics. But one can understand, and support, the active members of a community occupied by invaders for whatever reason. Southern Lebanon has been 'unlawfully' occupied by the Israeli military since 1982. Not yesterday, yet there are some pro-Israeli correspondents in the so-called serious press who are shocked that more publicity is not given to the impotent salvos launched by the Hizbollah onto Northern Israel.

But to go back a little further. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip (and their Palestinian inhabitants) - which were not part of the state of Israel - have been occupied, dominated, exploited (including the building of Israeli settlements in these territories, as well as the extraction

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'DIPLOMACY' WILL NOT SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN CRISIS

(continued from page 1)

and piping of valuable water supplies denied to the Palestinians) since the six-day war in 1967.

One has to go back even further: namely to the artificial creation of the state of Israel in 1948 by the victorious 'Allies', not at their expense but of that of the Palestinian section of the population driven out by the new occupiers, some of whom had the gall to justify this new colonialism on the grounds that they were there about two thousand years ago.

Needless to say we anarchists have no illusions as to the outcome of activist movements which seek to drive out the intruder, the occupier, but are then replaced by a home-grown authority. Nevertheless, nothing can change for the better for the 'underclass' (the new name given to the 30% in the 'prosperous' western world) unless they react violently (pace, this writer's good pacifist anarchist, comrades).

Governments, the ruling powers, only know the language of violence. The white minority in South Africa were taught a violent lesson by the ANC over the years, even with Mandela in prison (anarchists are watching out where Mandela is going!). And forget about British governments bringing up a solution for the Northern Ireland impasse.

They never take our advice, which is to remove all those twenty thousand occupying troops, pension them off and let the Irish feel they can find a solution - yes, even make mistakes and pay for them, but it's got nothing to do with the other island.

Lastly, one other message from the anarchists. Algeria had been one of the richest French colonies - fruit, vegetables, *et alia* - for eighty years, but in the end, in spite of virtually transferring the French army and material - some hundred thousand men - de Gaulle had to admit "J'ai compris" (in the vernacular, 'I get what you are saying') and the French got out, and not against another hundred thousand military, not at all. The Algerians didn't even have aeroplanes, but what they had was the population opposed to the invader, even after eighty years of occupation. Alas what they hadn't learned was that Algerian politicians are as concerned with running peoples lives, not to mention the capitalist entrepreneurs, as were the French.

So nothing will change until you and I realise that our lives depend on our telling the world what we want from our lives. Work to produce needs? Yes! Employment to produce profits for employers and shareholders? No!

And when enough people will say 'No!' we shall be on the road to anarchism and a world of free, happy people.

POVERTY, WHAT POVERTY?

The number 29 bus passes through four London boroughs, terminating in Haringey, the poorest of the four - or must we now say 'least rich', as Peter Lilley has assured us that poverty does not exist in Britain. On the side of some of these 29 buses is the following message: "Free rides on benefit fraud are numbered". The advertisement, funded by the Department of Social Security, warns fraudulent claimants that investigators are targeting the Haringey area and invites members of the public to report anyone they know who is claiming without entitlement. We have been watching buses as avidly as bird-spotters, but as yet we have not seen any adverts targeting tax dodgers living in, say, Westminster.

Camden residents are being similarly addressed by means of whole-page adverts in the local paper. "Spotlight on benefit cheats" it says, "help us to pick out Camden's benefit cheats" and gives a telephone number for people to call in confidence. When so many people are discontented with the insecurity of their lives, and cling to unsatisfactory jobs just to survive, it is easy for the ministers responsible to deflect criticism away from incompetent policies and towards unscrupulous individuals. It is always easier to scapegoat the poor - the rich have so many resources at their disposal that they can avoid disclosure of their misdemeanours.

When Peter Lilley claimed that most people have television and running water, he omits

the information that many people are without electricity and water for some part of their week. The introduction of power keys and plastic charge cards for water meters has resulted in customers cutting themselves off from power and water because they do not have sufficient funds to charge up the cards at the various outlets. They have no opportunity to call on the old safeguards against disconnection where there are young children or elderly people. For some families it can be a choice between eating in the dark or staying hungry with the light on on the days when the benefit has run out. These electronic timer cards also cost 50p per week more than quarterly accounts. An estimated 1,200 people are cut off from water in Birmingham in any one week.

Not only are poorly paid people being encouraged to despise benefit fraudsters, they are now fearful that Hartley Booth's private member's bill to introduce a free market system to prisons could give better opportunities to prisoners than to people outside. Prisoners will be able to work and earn a wage and subsidise their families. Cheap prison labour could make low-paid jobs even scarcer. No wonder the government won't set a minimum wage. What sort of society has members who might envy those in prison?

The diseases of poverty are returning to this 'land without poverty', just to remind us perhaps of how things once were. Ten thousand more cases of TB were diagnosed between 1987 and 1993 exclusively from the most deprived fifth of the population. The White Plague, as it was once called, is infectious and is passed on through sputum. Those living in crowded and unsanitary conditions are therefore far more at risk. The fact that there is a high incidence of TB among immigrant communities in Britain has been used by racist groups in their activities. Medical officers are eager to stress that it is poverty and not ethnicity that is the cause of the spread of this disease. It was in fact the Victorian travellers and merchants who first introduced TB to other parts of the world.

And what of the homeless on the streets. They too have access to televisions - they can watch twenty televisions simultaneously if they are content to do so through the showroom window, and are very good at lip-reading.

Poverty is relative and it's time Peter Lilley and his cronies woke up - preferably in a shop doorway in the Strand opposite the Savoy.

"Money" said Groucho Marx, "is like my cigars. The bigger it gets, the longer it lasts." Not very profound, you might think, but when we hear that Lord Grade smokes 25 corona cigars a day (at £15 each) it is a small indication of what being rich means. These snippets of information, coupled with the news this week that the effects of Jackie Kennedy Onassis were auctioned for prices beyond all expectations, illustrates more graphically the extremes of wealth and poverty that exist in the world. A triple string of fake pearls (retailing at \$400 in most department stores) were sold for \$211,500 only because they had hung around her famous neck. Instant icons, instant history, and this in a week when a television documentary linked JFK's father with the American Mafia.

THE STATE AND CAPITALISM

"It follows that when government is abolished, wage slavery and capitalism must go with it, because they cannot exist without the support and the protection of government" - Alexander Berkman

Berkman's statement is the classical anarchist position on the state and capitalism. It is directly opposed to the Marxist view of capitalism as a self-produced, organic outgrowth of commodity production. For anarchists, capitalism is the result of the development of the state and therefore all capitalism is in one sense *state capitalism*. This said, how has the state given rise to capitalism and continued to aid its development?

One obvious way is the military. Yeoman farmers and artisans can only be induced to work for someone else if they have their property taken away from them. This was done by the Enclosure Acts and the banning of the guilds and trade unions. Behind these 'laws' stood the army. As well, without the state as their final back-up, capitalists would be forced to compromise with their workers. We see how this occurred in mining towns when the local police sided with the miners and hired thugs proved both inefficient and costly. The military was always called in to crush the workers. The armaments industry (usually owned by the state) was also a major area for technological development in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as it is in the twentieth.

Patents, licenses and charters are monopolies granted by the state which give their holders immense economic power. We need only think of the Hudson's Bay and East India Companies. The licensing of radio stations in the US was the origin of broadcasting monopolies like NBC, ABC and CBS. Patents are supposed to protect inventors, yet this is rarely the case. The patents are bought up by firms from impoverished inventors and then are used as a money-machine. The buying up of patents is also a way of keeping competitive products and processes off the market.

The development of the 'limited liability company' was a gift by the state to the capitalists. Previously investors were responsible for their debts, just as you or me, but with the legal fiction of the corporation they were protected and could then freely gamble with other people's money. Limited liability thus allowed vast corporations to develop and to grow even larger.

If canal, railway, airport and freeway developers were not granted the 'right of eminent domain' by our friend the state, many of these projects would have remained at the blueprint stage. Those completed would have been forced to become cooperative ventures with the communities through which they passed, rather than callously destroying villages and neighbourhoods.

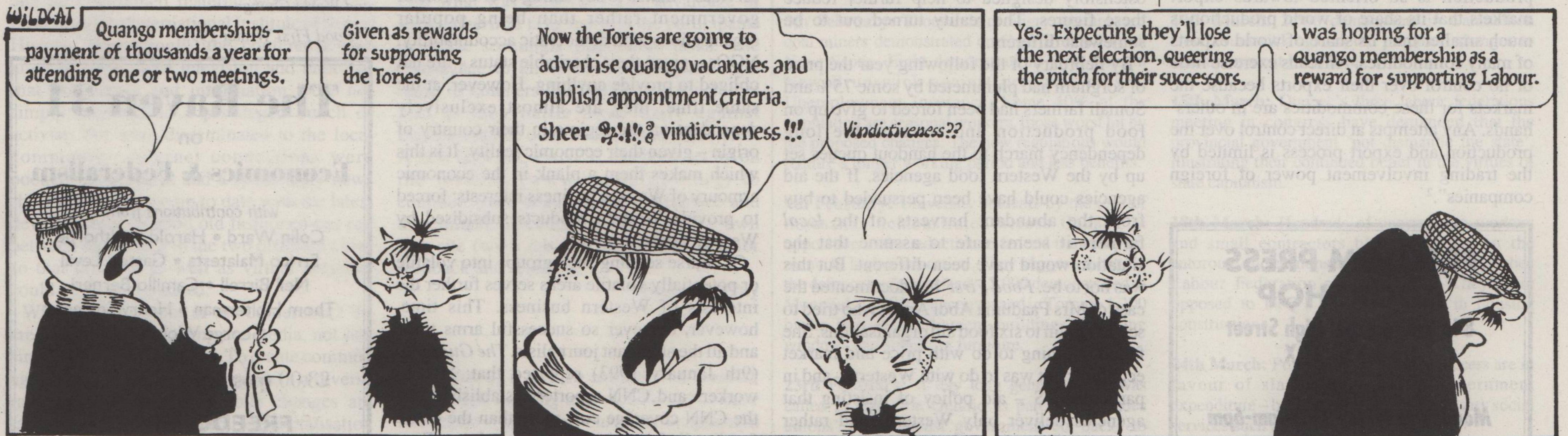
Where developments such as airports and railways are not actually carried out by the state itself, they are funded by government

subsidies, cheap loans and land grants. Few capitalists, if any, had the wherewithal to undertake such massive projects and so had to depend upon the state. Without this aid, only the most necessary of these undertakings would have been constructed and the communities served by them would have been at least part owners. (Also without the state-induced railway boom capitalist industrialisation would most likely not have happened.)

In Canada and the USA gifts of vast tracts of timber, agricultural and mineral lands as well as railway grants were of major importance in the creation of a capitalist class. Had these properties (stolen from the native peoples, of course) been granted on a usufruct basis or even in a more egalitarian manner, such as with the homesteading, the infamous 'robber barons' could have never existed.

Tariff protection helped build up large-scale industry at the expense of the farmers and workers. Without the tariff, international competition would have kept manufacturing small scale. However, by gouging the public with artificially inflated prices, they were able to accumulate enormous amounts of capital. This system also tended to centralise production as small local industries were swallowed up by the big combines.

The old workers' movement, before it was swamped by Marxism and liberalism, sought to abolish monopoly-creating laws such as patents, licences, eminent domain and limited liability. They also sought 'free land', the abolition of standing armies and the state. Contemporary workers should give these ideas some consideration.



FOCUS ON... AFRICA

The total GDP for sub-Saharan Africa excluding South Africa (the only country in the region which the UN does not define as developing) is about \$204.7 billion. This is slightly higher than that of Belgium with a population of ten million. This would make an average Belgian some fifty times richer than an average African to the degree that such averages exist.

But of course this is not a fair picture and whilst it points to Africa's standing in the Old American Disorder it ignores the fact that there are, of course, rich Africans and poor Belgians. The image portrayed in both the media and academic circles is racist: "The current conventional wisdom among Western scholars," claims *Food First*, "is that Africa's poverty and hunger are due to African policy-makers misguided policies, to widespread corruption, to African farmers failure to produce enough food and to African women's success at producing too many babies". The clear sub-text is to attempt to define the problems so many Africans face as endemic and particular to that region. Such a view fails to recognise Africa's achievements, the root causes of poverty and indeed the global nature of poverty.

In fact the majority of Africans are not subject to the droughts and starvation which dominate the Western headlines. The problem in Africa is a universal one: class stratification exacerbated by the disjunction between the rural and the urban. Indeed many Westerners fail to realise that many Africans live in cities like their European counterparts. Given that foreign investment has largely passed by the continent how is this possible? G.M. Meier¹ suggests the reason is the attitude of the urban ruling class which holds political power, "Low prices are fixed for [agriculture's] products and national currencies are over-valued ... thus systematically ensuring cheap food in urban areas and poverty in the rural regions." He points out that "Agriculture is, of course, the most important sector and hence has to be the major source of revenue. However, traditionally it was taxed because peasants were perceived as irrational, lazy and unresponsive to price incentives. The resulting tax practices were inherited by independent governments from colonial administrations".

It is the farmer who is supporting the whole pyramid and when s/he goes it all goes. The same problem besets the NAFTA (Chiapas) and threatens the future of the European Union (Eastern Europe). In Africa the need to pay off debt has forced the farmer to serve the regime by producing commodities for the international exchange-value trading system – the only way to get at the necessary foreign currency to pay off the debt. Ricardian economics impose the one commodity approach although traditionally farmers in the region have not been used to monocropping for an external market. Farming has always been based on the village or extended family. The new regime has resulted in the following outcome: "With very few exceptions, Africans consume hardly any of their own production – mainly staple foods, sugar and some fuel: oil timber and fertiliser. Africa's production is so oriented towards export markets that its share of world production is much smaller than its share of world exports of many commodities. Africans exercise little or no control over their exports because the markets for these commodities are in others' hands. Any attempts at direct control over the production and export process is limited by the trading involvement power of foreign companies".²

HIGHEST GDP		LOWEST GDP	
Switzerland	36,231	Sudan	55
Luxembourg	35,260	Mozambique	62
Japan	28,217	Tanzania	99
Sweden	26,784	Somalia	100
Bermuda	26,600	Cambodia	103
Denmark	25,927	Ethiopia	113
Norway	25,804	Vietnam	130
Iceland	23,667	Nepal	165
United States	23,119	Sierra Leone	167
Finland	22,977	Uganda	169

- One child dies from poverty every 53 minutes
- 1 in 5 children under the age of eighteen and 1 in 4 children under the age of six lives in poverty and faces hunger
- 2,685 babies are born into poverty everyday.
- 30 million people suffer chronic under-consumption of adequate nutrients.
- 1.3 million fell into poverty in 1993 and the number of poor people is increasing three times as fast as the overall population.

GDP is commonly used as an indication of the wealth of a particular country. Indeed it is a useful yardstick to compare overall positions. However, when it is calculated as an average GDP per head, as it is in the above charts, it fails to indicate the differences that can exist within different countries. To highlight this if you thought any of the statistics below the GDP tables referred to those countries with low rates of GDP per head you were wrong. They all refer to the USA.

SOMALIA

There is often anger expressed at the way Western governments are slashing their aid budgets to the underprivileged. However, foreign aid is rarely the humanitarian project it is widely believed to be. The state serves interests other than those of the underprivileged and anarchists need to highlight the military and economic aspects of aid policy.

Back in October 1992 apparently you could get a 110 pound bag of sorghum for about 200,000 shillings in Somalia. A high price but one that made farming a viable trade. An equally important question, of course, was whether the people would get the food or not. A month earlier mortality figures were grim, to say the least, with a death rate of 300 per day. Howsoever a good harvest of rice, sorghum and corn from the agricultural regions of Afgoye and Shebell River Valley had already been collected in and the question now was how to get it to the people.

By December 1992 when the US/N invaded Somalia the number of people dying every day had already more than halved. The invasion, partly at the behest of the relief agencies, was ostensibly designed to help further reduce these figures. The reality turned out to be somewhat different.

By February of the following year the price of sorghum had plummeted by some 75% and Somali farmers had been forced to give up on food production and start on the long dependency march to the handout queues set up by the Western food agencies. If the aid agencies could have been persuaded to buy from the abundant harvests of the local farmers it seems safe to assume that the situation would have been different. But this was not to be. *Food First*³ has documented the case of Mrs Faaduma Abdi Arush who tried to sell her grain to six food aid organisations. She failed. Nothing to do with price and market economics. It was to do with Western – and in particular US – aid policy of insisting that agencies deliver only Western food rather than its local variety. Local purchases would contradict the second arm of Western aid

policy: creating new markets – we use the term loosely – for Western agricultural commodities.

Going back to the cold war relief agencies found their hands firmly tied to the task of providing food and nothing else – particularly when operating in 'sensitive' areas. Within such a scenario they were generally responsible to the local regime which had the support of one of the two superpowers. The end of this era has seen the collapse of many host governments – often in sub-Saharan Africa – and internal power vacuums leading to civil war and the like. In order to suit Western interests – distancing themselves where possible from local squabbles – non-governmental organisations began to assume responsibility more and more for relief programmes. Apart from the political advantages this also provided a handy backdrop for cuts in the governmental budgets of those who were beginning to feel the pinch of the end of history somewhat closer to home and were looking for savings in order to meet internationally imposed domestic budgetary considerations.

In Somalia these NGOs were becoming non-governmental only in name having become sole providers of health care and social services – that is to say taking over the role of government rather than being popular organisations with democratic accountability. NGOs – given their charitable status – are not obliged to provide anything. However, at the same time, they are almost exclusively dependent on the regime in their country of origin – given their economic reality. It is this which makes them a plank in the economic armoury of Western business interests: forced to provide Western products subsidised by Western tax payers.

Of course sending such groups into volatile or potentially volatile areas serves further the interests of Western business. This time, however, our ever so successful arms trade and all the attendant journalists. *The Guardian* (9th January 1993) reported that: "Relief workers and CNN reporters established that the CNN coverage cost more than the entire food relief operation mounted by Care International in Baidoa, the town worst-hit by

the famine where 100 people a day are dying of starvation. Meanwhile marines, media, satellites and money have attempted to replace the Somali nightmare with a new array of fantasies to keep reality at bay". We all know from reports which were circulating at the time of the difficulties the Western relief agencies encountered in delivering the food aid. Thus it is not surprising that they led the call for US/UN intervention. Nevertheless, this was a disastrous move for there is nothing humanitarian about the military.

Richard Dowden writing in *The Independent* at the time (11th September 1993) called the US/UN "mission of pacification" a "horrific farce". During a three hour gun battle the previous day UN (not American) troops killed between 60 and 100 people – mainly women and children. Who was to blame? Apparently the victims, "The women and children were a real threat to UN forces," a UN spokesman was quoted as saying. Dowden continued: "The horror lay in the inevitability of it. Falling between UN incompetence and United States ignorance, Somalia is a critically injured patient that was first neglected then tortured with the wrong treatment". He concluded at the time that US policy had undermined not helped the aim of the operation that is to say to secure distribution channels for food aid pointing out that aid agencies were less able to work than they had been the previous year: "The UN presence in Somalia has been hijacked by America's need for a demon and the desire for revenge against General Mohamed Farah Aideed". Instead Aideed became a local hero and the only salvation was that no US blood had been spilled (Pakistani and Nigerian troops had been used).

The relief agencies were now seen not to be apolitical but rather simply another group vying for political control in the country and in reality on behalf of foreign business interests.

The notion – widely held in the West – that chaos and 'anarchy' were the only alternative is only partially true and it depends on what you understand by the terms chaos and anarchy. Clearly the policy of flooding the country with imported foodstuffs at bayonet point had led to further chaos. Yet in one central Somalian town, Galcaio, where there had been no foreign assistance, peace had endured for more than a year by July 1994 and with no help from the US/UN. This information again comes from *Food First* and they continue: "Commerce and trade had resumed, and young men who had been fighters were now trading livestock for food and other goods," all because of a peace accord which had been signed a year earlier. Instead of relying therefore on external aid which threatens the sustainability of local economies there was at least some sign that Somalis were attempting to get to grips with the problems faced by the country themselves. Anarchy? Probably not but certainly not 'anarchy' as it is portrayed by the Western media.

1. *Leading Issues in Economic Development*

2. Michael Barrett Brown *Short Changed African and World Change*

3. *Food First* Winter 1995

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ANTI-JSA CAMPAIGN LATEST

MANCHESTER CLAIMANTS SEIZE JOB CENTRE

On 18th April activists (or PANSIES – Political Activists Not Seeking Employment Satisfactorily – as some call them) of the unemployed central Manchester campaign against the introduction of the Job Seekers Allowance in October, took over Cheetham Hill Job Centre. For two hours business at the Job Centre was disrupted, while two dozen marauding PANSIES circled the employment exchange inciting Cheetham Hill claimants, heckling management and urging staff to block the implementation of the Job Seekers Allowance.

This Job Centre pantomime followed a report in the last issue of *Freedom* about the activities of the manageress, Ms Joan Bainbridge. Ms Bainbridge has been accused of hectoring claimants and boasting that she had “put more people off benefits than any other manager in the North West”. Since our report Ms Bainbridge is said to have taken early retirement.

Mr Geoffrey Davis is the new zoo-keeper of what looks like becoming a Cheetham Hill bear-garden bequeathed to him by Ms Bainbridge. Conversations with claimants at the Cheetham Hill Job Centre seem to confirm the view that it was in danger of becoming a hell-hole. Since the beginning of April this Job Centre has been one of several used by the government to inflict pilot schemes for the coming JSA on unsuspecting claimants, and for this reason it is now being targeted by the local PANSIES.

UNPROFESSIONAL PROFESSIONAL

During the demonstration Mr Davis, the manager, was photographed being cuddled by a class war militant. When a manager asked the unemployed activists inside the Job Centre to move outside, one retorted: “Don’t let these bastards bully you!” This met with mass applause among the claimants present.

The JSA seems to threaten to become a poll tax on the poor and will cut thousands of claimants off benefits. It is as if the government has thrown a stone into a pool, which is fast spreading ripples and igniting discontent.

One middle-aged claimant told an unemployed activist that she had been forced to apply for five jobs a fortnight, and that if she didn’t produce written evidence of her Job Search she would be stopped from signing-on and deprived of benefits.

When later the manager Mr Davis was asked over the telephone if this condition was legitimate, he replied that this condition was not a properly authorised procedure – failure to produce evidence of a Job Search should not prevent a claimant from signing-on. The suspicion is that some functionaries at Job Centres are operating a confidence trick upon claimants by making them believe that they are forced to comply with a system of Job Search, etc., which is not yet backed by law. If this is taking place at Cheetham Hill or elsewhere, then it is seriously unprofessional conduct by staff, and the staff unions – if they have ’owt about them – ought to ensure that both staff and management obey the law.

If there has been any impropriety at Cheetham Hill Job Centre under a previous regime, then it is for Mr Davis to ensure that good and proper practices are enforced in future. The Manchester campaign against the Job Seekers Allowance will, no doubt, be watching his progress with interest.

PUBLIC ORDER IN JOB CENTRES

Since his run-in with the PANSIES during their Job Centre occupation, Mr Davis shows signs of being more than a little nervous. After consulting with his superiors, he did entertain a meeting with some of the activists at which he claimed he was only carrying out his duty.

People present report that he was overwhelmed by the attention his office was getting.

Since then he has had time to recover his composure, and in a telephone conversation with an unemployed activist he proclaimed: “It is illegal to mount a demonstration inside a public office – this is contrary to the Public Order Act”. Clearly Mr Davis and his cronies in the employment service, having been taken by surprise during the take-over of his office last month, are now trying to re-assert their authority. He did refuse to give the reference to what section of the Public Order Act he had in mind. And, as I write, Mr Davis’s office is involved in a public relations stunt by sending a spokesman to explain the working of the JSA to a function organised by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau at Great Ancoats in central Manchester.

Each week now seems to bring with it reports of new groups being formed in the fight against the Job Seekers Allowance. Next month it is expected that Huddersfield will form a group to campaign against the JSA (the projected date of this meeting is 10th May). The Tameside Unemployed Workers Alliance is fielding four candidates in next month’s local elections in a bid to publicise the campaign against the JSA and oppose benefit cuts.*

There seems to be some confusion about which Job Centres are operating the JSA pilot schemes. One report I was given was that the Levenshulme Job Centre on Matthews Lane, Manchester 12, was involved in the project, but when I rang them I was told that this was not the case. When I further asked if they could help me locate which other centres in Manchester were operating the JSA pilot schemes, they demanded my name and which organisation I represented. Then someone with a North Country accent told me that Cheetham Hill office had just finished doing a test scheme, but claimed this had been “nothing special”. It was also said that there were no other JSA pilot projects in progress in the area.

SEVEN MILLION WITHOUT JOBS

Despite the concern about the Job Seekers Allowance, which is becoming widespread, there are those who feel that the unemployed are not angry enough. Perhaps we are just hearing the warning creaks before the whole house collapses.

The government pretends there is no problem. No problem of poverty because many people have cars, video recorders and telephones. But what do you do when the roof leaks? When a wall sags through lack of pointing? Or wet rot threatens through lack of heating? What do the long-term unemployed do, then, on forty-odd pound a week? It hardly covers the cost of a new pair of shoes. Anybody who has been there knows – pawn the car, sell what you can at a car boot sale and wait for the telephone to be cut off, only to be followed, in the worst scenarios, by the electric supply being cut off.

Recently unemployment statistics showed a rise of 6,800 after an apparent two and a half year fall in figures. That’s if you believe the government figures, which some think are fixed.

Neil Merrick, in the journal *People Management*, has asked: “Why, with so many big UK companies downsizing, did it take over two years for official unemployment to increase?” In February the number out of work and claiming benefit rose to 2,213,600. The government does a claimant count, but not everyone signs-on when they are out of work.

Pamela Meadows, director of the Policy Studies Institute, claims that up to 7,000,000 people of working age have no jobs. This figure of seven million unemployed includes young adults who stay in full-time education until their mid-twenties, and men aged over 50

who, faced with unemployment, retire early rather than face a career change.

Pamela Meadows notes with concern the squeeze of the working population into the 25-50 age group, and the departure of the experienced employees from the national workforce. Since the late 1980s, she claims, it has been seen as a sign of success for employers to announce redundancies. When the bosses force through a redundancy package, she says: “Their share price goes up because it’s seen as management getting a grip on the cost base, but it may mean they have no control over the cost base at all”.

Today, of course, it’s not just blue-collar workers in manufacturing who are being hit. Middle management, the service sector and,

since the turn of the year, large numbers of financial service staff and those in the private utilities, have either been dispatched or told that their jobs are at risk. Banks have declared massive profits to accompany mass redundancies. BIFU, the banking union, claims there have been 120,000 lost jobs since 1990 in the banking sector.

The unemployed action groups are operating in an environment of a shrinking labour force nationally. The government is determined to get benefit costs under control, but this may stir-up uncontrollable forces among the unemployed. No doubt some of the weakest claimants will suffer most. Fortunately for over a year the libertarian left has been in the forefront of the struggle against the JSA. The next six months leading up to the full government implementation of the Job Seekers Allowance in October will be critical. Successful resistance will require full commitment by all sections of the libertarian left.

Mack the Knife

* List of forthcoming meeting of the anti-JSA campaign on back page.

SEX MANIAC’S BALL HIT BY POLICE

On 22nd March Tuppy Owens expected to hold her annual fund-raising event, the Sex Maniac’s Ball, at the Brixton Academy. The Ball raises money for the Integration Trust, a charity promoting the social and sexual integration of the physically and socially disabled through the self-help network Outsiders. This year was to be its tenth anniversary and was for members only.

Problems began to surface on 19th March, when PC Colin Weaving (338LD) wrote a letter to the Brixton Academy implying that the Ball might contravene the Disorderly Houses Act 1751. He also claimed that a previous Sex Maniac’s Ball held in Putney resulted in an outstanding prosecution of the licensee under that Act. Despite the fact that the event has never been held in Putney and the incident referred to related to the Whiplash trial!

Weaving increased the pressure on the Brixton Academy until they pulled out of the event. Last minute attempts were made to find another venue, but they too were pressurised by the police after the local Kentish Town Police Station received a phone call from Scotland Yard. The fact that this occurred even though the location of the alternative venue was known only to the organisers has led some to speculate that phone taps were being used. If true, this would indicate that a sizeable centralised operation was underway.

As a result the Ball was cancelled at a cost of many thousands of pounds – a loss that is said to have wiped out the charity’s entire financial resources.

Subsequently a small private event was held on the 31st at Conway Hall, consisting of the awards ceremony, originally planned for the Ball, and a meeting to decide what action should be taken.

In the Awards segment a lifetime’s achievement award was given to Reverend Chad Varah, the founder of the Samaritans, who said he thought “that if the man I work for was here he would be supporting you”.

Towards the end of the gathering those attending were encouraged to write letters of protest to their MPs. As yet it is unknown if compensation will be sought from the police, but from past example this is likely to be difficult.

Perhaps the most significant occurrence of the meeting was the founding of an organisation calling itself the Sexual Freedom Coalition, formed to oppose the current police action against such events, erotic productions and clubs. This is an umbrella organisation formed under the Honorary Secretaryship of Tim Summers. It comprises of a variety of diverse groups such as Feminists Against

Censorship, Disablement in the City, The Naturist Society, The Society of Swingers, The Spanner Campaign, Lives of Secular Saints and the Rude Food Dining Club. Its individual supporters range from Annie Sprinkle and Betty Dodson to Peter Tatchell and George Melly.

The group has chosen purple as its ‘political colour’ as it claims all other shades have already been appropriated by existing political factions.

The immediate declared aim of the Coalition is to repeal archaic laws that restrict the personal freedom of consenting adults, such as the Disorderly Houses Act and common law offences of Conspiring to Corrupt Public Decency; Conspiring to Corrupt Public Morals; Outraging Public Decency; Exhibiting Indecent Activities, Pictures or Things; Obscenity and the Scottish common law offence of Shameless Indecency.

Its longer term goals are declared as “fighting hypocrisy and puritanism” and the “improving of press reporting of police action and sexual issues”. This would seem to indicate a very long term existence for the group!

On 20th April the Sexual Freedom Coalition organised a demonstration and march in protest at the police action against the Sex Maniac’s Ball. The march rallied in Soho Square at 2.00pm and was surrounded by up to half a dozen van-loads of police. Senior officers informed the organisers that the event could only go ahead if the marchers walked ‘leisurely’ in ones and twos so as not to cause an obstruction. The ‘leisurely walk’ then proceeded through Soho. Tourists and shoppers stood in awe as the motley crew of activists, perverts, exhibitionists and concerned citizens made their way through the busy streets of London. No police harassment was observed, though rumours circulated of stragglers being carried off in police vans.

On arrival at Downing Street speakers addressed the crowd while Tuppy Owens and a representative of the disabled delivered a letter to our grey-tinged leader in number ten. Regrettably John was unable to accept the protest letter personally as he was said to receive so many!

Alleged events occurring during and after this protest included the first recorded public incident of public fellatio in Whitehall and a demonstration of water sports in St James’ Park.

A further meeting of the group is planned in North London at the end of May.

Prometheus Rex

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

WRINKLIES AND CRUMBLIES DISCUSS PUNKS AND JOBLESSNESS

While in Grenoble I inadvertently started an inconclusive argument between two German anarchists, one of whom I met fourteen years ago at the gathering in Venice. A feature there had been the visible presence of very young German anarcho-punks (that was how they described themselves, and they were visually identifiable by dress, body ornaments and hairstyles). I remembered them because we watched in a marquee Paul Avrich's filmed interviews with very old members of the Yiddish-speaking New York anarchist circle, and they slowly gathered that they could make out the things they were saying about a whole culture they had never heard of, once a part of international anarchism.

I had also read recently (*Freedom*, 9th March 1996) a report that at the heart of the anarchist movement in Mexico City today is JAR (Anti-Authoritarian Revolutionary Youth – 80% punk, said the report) but that another group which "seeks to create the conditions for a social anarchism" accuses the JAR "of only having cultural aims – counter-culture and anarcho-punk".

I've noticed that only the young belong to a truly international culture so I asked what had become of the anarcho-punks of 1984, and got two different answers.

The first was the one we continually hear about the earlier '60s generation, which says in effect that they have settled down, picked up the style of self-presentation or paper qualifications that get jobs and are struggling along at the humble end of Germany's no-longer-booming economy, but "they still listen to the music of their youth".

The second was the opposite, saying that once you've dropped out of straight society, it is dreadfully hard to clamber back in, and my informant talked bitterly about drugs, alcohol, death by self-neglect and prison sentences for robbery and violence in pursuit of money once indulgent friends or parents had lost patience. The punk scene, he said, was not a rejection of, but the by-product of, the affluent society and once the community or the state social security system had been milked to the full, it would die out. Anarchism was not in the picture.



Illustration by Keith Mallinson taken from *Gobbing, Pogoing and Gratuitous Bad Language: an anthology of punk short stories*, 160 pages, Spare Change Books. Available from Freedom Press Bookshop at £6.95 (please add postage 10% inland, 20% overseas)

Quite obviously my informants had passionately-held opinions, based on personal experience. They named names and case histories and I ducked out of the issue I had raised. I have been struggling to assess the various efforts in different countries – the efforts made by unofficial bodies, with or without government assistance, to cope with the consequences of the collapse of the productive economy in the rich countries.

Being old I can remember when the young were resented because they could so easily get jobs, so I feel even more sympathetic with them now that they can't. 'Go to the Job Centre', say those who have never had to.

The melancholy stories of assaults on the staff of Job Centres by frustrated clients, of the fact that the staff are subject to demands for performance-related pay, and that the

government is seeking to privatise them, leads to sympathy for those on both sides of the desk. *Of course* the job-seekers are driven to despair by the collapse of employment, and *of course* the centre staff have no option but to recommend clients to whatever part-time, insecure and rock-bottom job is offered in the catering, retailing or hotel trades. It all reduces our totally fraudulent unemployment statistics, where the government has continually changed the method of counting.

And of course, the Job Centre staff are mostly separated by luck from being on the other side of the desk themselves. The Job Centre is the modern equivalent of the Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange, an urban landmark for most of this century. I have only been inside one once in the whole of my working life. It was in the 'Juvenile' department and I was instantly offered half a dozen jobs.

I have always been suspicious of the 'Why Work?' doctrine preached by some anarchists, not because of any disagreement about the ultimate uselessness of most jobs, but because their failure to notice the change in the employment landscape. Fine for the clever, resourceful and adaptable (especially if their parents have an income), but far less enjoyable for the young, enduring the humiliations of 'signing on' if they are eligible and the continual experience of rejection. I would relate this to known facts about not only the crime rate but the suicide rate among young males.

Consequently I have urged – both in and out of the anarchist press – that we should learn something from the economy of northern Italy, growing out of a different tradition of small workshops, family enterprise and cooperation. There are also lessons from France and Germany, where unemployment among the young is far higher than in Britain, simply because for years the British statistics have been rigged by driving the young out of the system.

Job Centres were started in France over a century ago, not as a department of government but by the unions as organs of working class solidarity. They were called *Bourses du Travail*, and the secretary of their national federation was the anarcho-syndicalist Fernand Pelloutier. He saw them not merely as a job information and placement

bureau, but as a mutual-benefit society, a haven for travelling workers and an education and training centre.

Many decades later, out of the same Proudhonian and mutualist approach, emerged another venture, the *Union des Foyers de Jeunes Travailleurs*. It has recently celebrated its 45th anniversary and insists that its task is to develop, among the people renting rooms and seeking help, personal autonomy and the sense of belonging to the community. Since I was in Grenoble, for example, I visited a few of the network called ALJI (and ate in one of its public restaurants). It was stressed to me that "considering the way that society has alienated its young at a terrible social cost, our first task is to help young people learn how to be before helping them learn how to do".

In Germany the origins of the equivalent organisations tend to be in religious bodies though, like the YMCA in Britain, they stress that it is not part of their programme to inculcate religious beliefs in the young people they help.

The Jugendorf at Frechen is part of a national network started in 1947 by a protestant clergyman who gathered together homeless and parentless young people at the bombed railway station at Stuttgart and found them food, shelter and job training. In Cologne the Nikolaus-Gross-Haus, named after a Catholic mine-workers' leader murdered by the Nazis, has a similar function. As visitors from England, where the Foyer movement has a continual problem of fund-raising, in both France and Germany we were bowled over by the lavish (by British standards) provision and the extent to which current youth culture was taken into account.

So we misunderstood the remark of one of our hosts when he said that "In these fields Germany is about ten years behind Britain". Thinking of the way in so much of the time of the British equivalents of these activities has to be spent on lobbying for the money to continue the work, we protested that he didn't know how bad the British situation was. But what he meant was what he said. The logic of the market economy would mean that in the next ten years welfare provision in Germany would have fallen to the British scale.

There is every sign that this will turn out to be true. I have an old contact in Cologne who for years campaigned for the homeless by setting up camp in one of the main streets. At the time of the Gulf War he set up his Wailing Wall for Peace outside the Cathedral, which carries anti-war messages from all over the world. The church and city authorities have been arguing for years about who should have the odium of evicting him. But Walter Hermann is now under intense criticism for his support for the young jobless homeless camped nearby in the Cathedral Square, along with their dogs, in a concrete structure labelled *Punkhaus*.

Peace is one issue, his critics say, but punks are something else. Walter Hermann sees both as moral dilemmas facing any responsible society. I find myself totally divided on this issue. On the one hand I am bound to sympathise with the punk rejection of capitalist values. On the other, I fear for their ability to get by in an increasingly hostile society which shows no sign at all of being influenced by alternative values. The people from the various organisations providing rooms and seeking to find employment in a contracting market, saw the rejected young as counters in a game like snakes-and-ladders, slipping out of the real world.

So I asked one of the work-finders and he replied: "We want to grab them before they have despaired of parents, schools and work. If you find them a room and a job it would last a week and then they'd be back on the *Domplatz*. They'd say 'This room is a dump and this boss is an arsehole. I'm not putting up with it.' It's the psychology of rejection reflected by the rejected."

It's another of those issues where I find personal sympathy for the predicament of young people at war with ideological and theoretical positions.

Colin Ward

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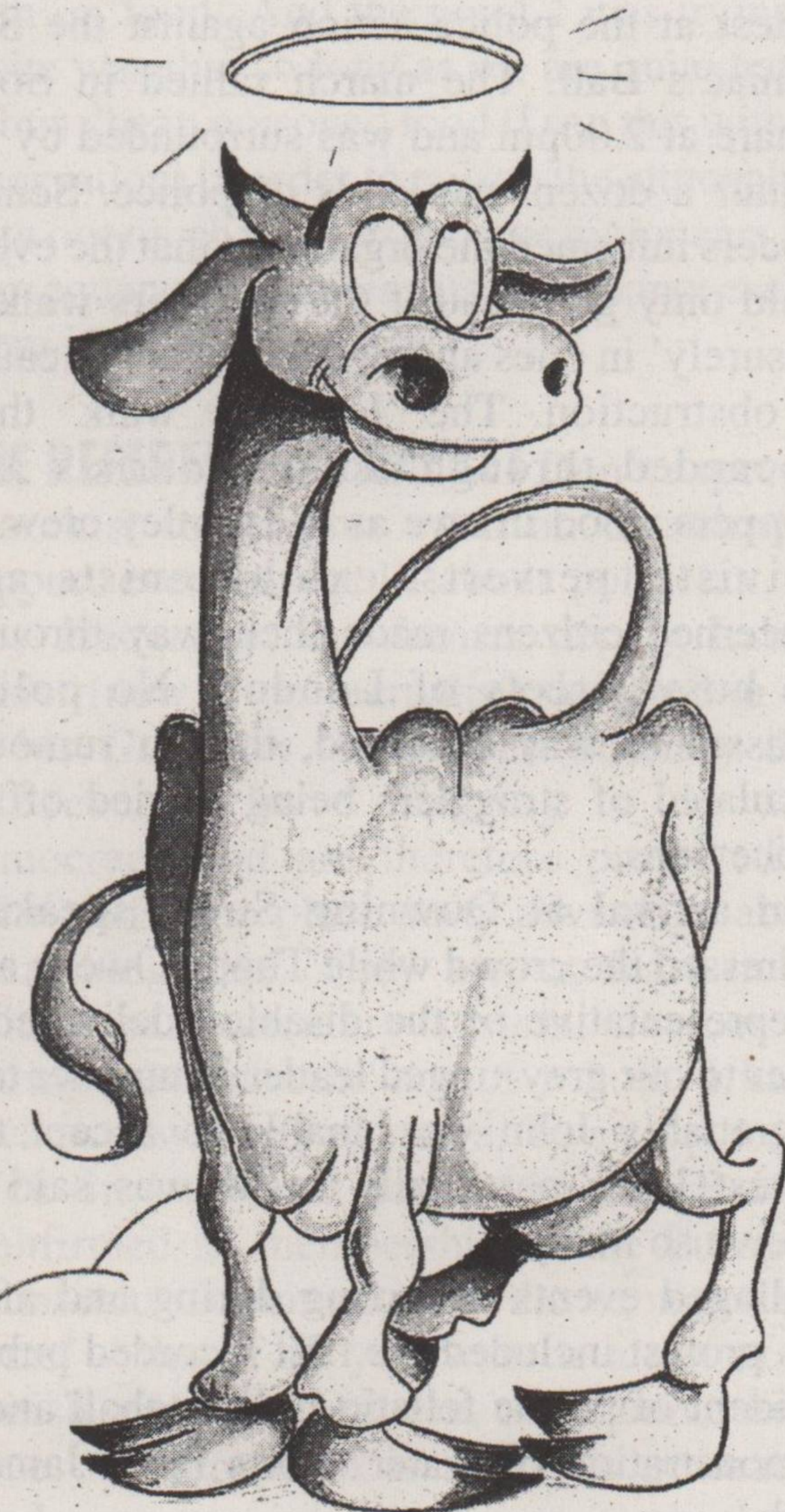
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THE VANISHING INDIVIDUAL

The Vanishing Individual: A Voice From the Dustheap of History, or how to be happy without being hopeful

by Wayne Burns

Special Issue of *Recovering Literature: a journal of contextualist criticism*, Volume 21, ISSN 0300 6425, £5.00 (post free inland)

Wayne Burns writes as a man who, because of his personal make-up and the time and places and circumstances in which he grew up, found himself, some thirty years ago, totally at war with the system and therefore with his culture – over his and others, right not just to be individuals but to be able to live and express themselves as individuals necessarily at odds with the system. And since he believes that he has over the years found a viable way to achieve and maintain this individuality, which he defines as parasitic anarchism, he wants others to know about it too – and perhaps, if they choose, share some version of it.

To clarify where he is coming from, and trying to go, Burns in his opening pages provides a summary statement of his intellectual premises:

"1) That it is no longer possible (if it ever was) to overthrow or modify or significantly ameliorate the system of corporate capitalism that now controls every aspect of our world; 2) that the American state (along with every other democracy in the Western world) exists only to serve the world-wide capitalist system; 3) that this system, via the media and 'manufactured consent', not only controls the minds of good citizens but the choices open to their controlled minds – thereby turning democracy into a farce; 4) that those of us who can, in Kundera's phrase, recognise this 'world for the trap it has become' have no choice but to find ways around or through the trap – ways that ill, in relation to the system, necessarily result from our being, in some measure, parasites on the body social and the body politic; 5) that those who find these ways and share their findings with others will, in effect, be functioning as parasitic anarchists, however they

choose to identify themselves.

My first three points, outlining my understanding of the system, are in no sense new. They are, in capsule form, a restatement of Herbert Marcuse's comprehensive indictment of the system in his *One Dimensional Man*. For Marcuse, however, there is still a faint hope, not that the system can be ameliorated, but that it can, through what he calls the Great Refusal, be overthrown – a hope that I can sympathise with but cannot share. The only possibility I see is for the smallest of refusals, by individuals – a refusal which will not seek to alter the system by political or any other means but will instead seek to escape from it while remaining nominally within it. Hence my points 4) and 5), in which I indicate my anarchist alternative."

Working from these premises and drawing upon his own experience as a professor at the University of Washington, Burns proceeds in Part II to show that the campus revolution of the '60s, for all its outward manifestations of dissent, was not a revolution at all. It was but a violent prelude to abject submission. Nor did it matter to the system that the submissive students insisted on bringing their attitudes and causes and movements with them, since everything they believed in and advocated fitted neatly into everything the system deemed essential to its hegemony.

Burns also recounts a number of his own personal encounters with the student zealots in his classes, including one in which a feminist student drew a pistol and threatened to shoot him for "the greater good of womankind".

Burns argues further (in Part IV 'The Aftermath of the Sixties', and Part V 'The Philistine Roots of Postmodernism') that Postmodernism is likewise reactionary – a rhetorical denial of reality that serves to rationalise and justify every aspect of the system. Burns's argument, in which he takes on Eagleton and Said and numerous other Postmodernists, culminates in his long quote from Jacques Ellul in which Ellul demonstrates how Postmodern theory contributes to "the survival of the system and

the adaptation of individuals to their disindividualisation".

In Part VI, Burns dissects the American Dream, as it is purveyed at the lowest and highest intellectual levels (from television to the most liberal and radical journals) to show that even "an otherwise great thinker like Noam Chomsky fails to realise that the system, the workings of which he has exposed more effectively than anyone else, cannot be humanised ... [or] modified or changed – no matter how much it is exposed".

Confronted with such an impregnable, all powerful, all devouring system, individuals have no choice but to take evasive measures. And if they choose some version of parasitic anarchism they can, Burns maintains, find all kinds of encouragement and help in books – more particularly in the great novels of the past and near past. In Parts III, V and VII, Burns demonstrates how great or near-great novels have always been anarchistic, in the sense that they have been at pains to show that no society, no morality, has ever been equal to the needs of any individual. Part III, in which Burns presents his own theory of fiction and relates it to parasitic anarchism, is no doubt the most revolutionary part of the book. But if it proves to be heavy going for readers not that much interested in fictional criticism Burns offers further and more direct clarification of his critical arguments in Part VII 'The Panzaic Parasitic Anarchist Alternative'.

This is a highly unusual book, possibly a great book. Burns has put himself as well as his ideas directly on the line, without any attempt at literary camouflage, in a way few writers have been willing to do in recent years. In his closing pages, after recalling Alex Comfort's words concerning the need to "see everyone naked and be as naked ourselves", Burns goes on to say: "I have been trying to write this way from the beginning". And that, I believe, is how he has written.

John Doheny

PLAYING WITH PLUTONIUM

Ground Zero

by Adam Kimmel

Southwark Playhouse, 62 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1

This is a very well written, produced and acted play based on the death of Louis Slotin, a researcher and scientist who was a member of the group which assembled the first atomic bombs which were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Louis Slotin died from an overdose of radiation in 1946 when, during the continuing experiments, he brought two parts of plutonium together in too close an interacting range which resulted in a massive dose which practically "re-wired all

the cells in his body" and killed him in nine days.

The author, Adam Kimmel, constructed a very dramatic play out of this accident, with a wide-ranging dialogue that, for a change in contemporary theatre, is discussing important questions of ethics.

Louis is presented as an essential part of a dedicated team who was recruited partly as a competent physicist but also because he was an anti-fascist who was prepared to construct the ultimate weapon for the defeat of the ultimate foe. The chain reaction was taken out of the laboratory with effects that are within the realm of science, that is to say provable by calculation and experiment, but also outside its boundaries for its effects are irreversible.

Nevertheless, the anti-fascist argument may have been adequate for the gathering and calming of initial consciences, but the bombs were used against the civilian population of Japan and this is also a debating point in the play. The usual *non sequitur* offered by the army is that otherwise the Japanese would have fought to defend the last stone. As for the bombs themselves, once a procedure is established it is easy to follow the text-book and it has been said that the construction of this type of weaponry has become a technically simple task and routine operation. That nuclear weapons have made the world a safer place to live in is, of course, palpably untrue, but it is always trotted out by government propagandists.

That part of the governments' duty is the dissemination of lies is well documented in the play. A pathologist (a marvellous cameo performance by Michael Brophy) is sent hurriedly from Washington to sit it out at the

dying man's bedside and to wait until he can study the change of tissues in the irradiated corpse. Here is a man who has become a walking text-book from which all traces of emotion have been censored.

The news of such a death by radiation and its circumstances remained a closely guarded secret. Even as late as 1960, the American government managed to suppress a film by David O. Selznick where the part of Louis Slotin was to be played by Humphrey Bogart. In one of the scenes of the play it is also suggested that the authorities hired a team of publicists to issue official lies about radiation to the people of Hiroshima who were visibly affected.

The story remains to be horrifying in all its implications. The human being is trapped in a system which has abandoned ethical caution and consideration.

Nuclear weapon research has not stopped with Louis Slotin's death. Researchers and experimenters are available in their thousands who are prepared to work for the war industry. Nuclear tests continue despite worldwide protests. The genetic effects are incalculable, and so are the changes of communal mental stability.

Certainly I felt pity at the unfolding of this story of this modern angel/devil, but especially because of the outstanding performance by Jonathan Finlay, a young actor of great promise, who was ably assisted by an excellent ensemble.

I hope this important play will have a chance to 'transfer' for a longer run to some other theatre, but you still have another week to see it at the Southwark Playhouse, which is well worth visiting for its own sake.

John Rety

— OBITUARY —

KALIM SIDDIQUI

He had, by the time he became famous, become known as a Muslim Fundamentalist as such, an opponent of free speech and a sexist; but if this were true of Kalim Siddiqui (the chair of the Muslim Parliament, who died on 18th April) then he was the bigot created by liberal society. He was a sub-editor on the *Guardian* when I was a copy-taker there.

In those days he was if anything too eager to conform to the White Liberal dream. More than anything else, he saw himself as becoming a *Guardian* writer. Certainly he had encountered racial prejudice and his anti-racist militancy would have marked him out from journalists, and, as an anti-racist, he was also happy to listen to socialists on the *Guardian* staff, but in no sense was he a natural revolutionary nor even rebel.

Perhaps unusually for a Muslim, he was in those days a Gandhian (as a strict vegan his furniture was all stuffed with man-made foam and covered in artificial fibres – he'd just survived a fire in his flat in the week I first joined the paper). He was certainly not then in any way a male chauvinist nor an observant Muslim (or at least had no objection to joining other workers on the paper for a supper break in the pub – he was never accepted by the reporters but joined the copy-takers frequently).

Whereas on the *Guardian* it was usual for journalists off-duty to act as sub-editors and journalists on other papers came in to sub-edit, also the copy-takers were in theory supposed to double as sub-editors (though none of us did in my day) so it was fairly rare for someone to be listed as a sub-editor, rather than as something else. As far as I can remember, Kalim was the only one so listed.

In the four years I knew him he was constantly trying to get the paper to take him on as a journalist. Besides his work subbing, he did in fact report on South London and race-related stories and he contributed to the *Guardian* teams reporting anti-war stories. All this time he was working on his PhD (which by all accounts he got in record time).

But this Liberal paper didn't have room for a highly intelligent immigrant. I don't know how Kalim changed from being a Liberal to becoming a Fundamentalist. I do know that it would probably have been different had he not been thwarted in his ambition to be a *Guardian* reporter.

One small personal addendum. The only article of mine I've ever managed to get the *Guardian* to publish went in signed Siddiqui; and John Rety, when he was doing the day-to-day work of *Freedom* (I forget whether knowingly or not) published two of Kalim's articles under my name.

LO

DON'T LICK THIS

Bird's Eye Wall's, motto 'Working together for the best', have received a number of complaints relating to their Spiderman ice lolly. There were others who could not complain verbally as the lolly froze to their lips or tongue and caused injury to their vocal organs.

Bird's Eye are withdrawing their latest scientific wonder, which has caused the young suckers of their product peeling skin and burns.

In commercial jargon at its best, the makers of this wonder product "have conducted and immediate and thorough investigation which has identified (*sic*) that the problem was due to excessive surface ice".

Oh, the pleasures of commercial Britain.

A.N. Reader

[Kalim Siddiqui, who died aged 62 on 18th April, was the best known Muslim fundamentalist in Britain. He photocopied the passages he found offensive in Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses' and distributed the photocopies to Muslim governments. All ignored him except Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, who issued the famous fatwah sentencing Rushdie to death. Shortly before his own death, Siddiqui issued a press release stating that the sentence on Rushdie should be carried out. His influence on British Muslims was slight, but he managed single-handedly to give British Muslims a baleful reputation.

— *Freedom* Editors, mainly for the benefit of overseas readers who may not have heard of Siddiqui.]

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

TAX THE WELL-OFF I SAY, WITH CLARE!

Yes, anarchists want to abolish the capitalist system, but Clare Short as a politician who is involved in wanting to run the capitalist system, presumably for its benefits to the poor, thinks that the likes of her as an MP should pay more. Quite right. And even more so since a so-called 'independent' revenue body thinks that these 'overworked' and 'underpaid' Members of Parliament should have their £33,000 annual salaries increased by a mere 30%. In other words, £11,000 a year – that is more than £200 a week extra. As an OAP about to receive an extra £1.70 on my £59 a week (to which I contributed for at least forty years) I declare 'there ain't no justice'. Who thought there was in a capitalist system anyway?

OF COURSE CLARE SHORT IS RIGHT! But her political critics are rightly arguing that these 'outbursts' don't win elections. What the Labour politicians don't realise is that it is the poorest – the ones living in the cardboard boxes or the Salvation Army hostels and in other well-meaning God-fearing institutions – who just don't vote since they just cannot see any future with the political parties. They are right to feel so. Anarchists and socialists (not of the new vote-catching elite) must accept responsibility for not inspiring this new 'underclass' with their passion and objectives. How can we reach them? Not to get them to go and vote, but surely to make them aware that our capitalist society is only prepared to keep them from starvation in order to keep them neutral and subservient. Anarchists are wanting them not to rely on the political parties, or capitalism, but on the power of solidarity, of cooperation among the victims of capitalism. All those of us who depend on an employer, whether we use our hands or our hands and brains, to buy our food or pay our rent, are *slaves of the capitalist system*. Anarchists today repeat the old slogan of long ago: *Ni Dieu ni Maître (Neither God nor Master)* – and I say how right this slogan is, and how necessary is it for the victims both of church and capitalism to do something about putting it into practice!

NOT AN ORGANIC BANDWAGON An unfortunate misprint in the last issue made me say that families spend *less* on running their motor cars than on food. It made nonsense of my argument, which is that people are quite prepared to spend *more* on their motor cars than on food! And the point I was trying to make was that so long as we are quite happy to buy cheap poisoned food (I say this without reservation) in order to poison the atmosphere with our much more expensive motor cars, the consequences are facing us. We cannot escape them if we let them ride.

THE REFERENDUM RACKET Don't expect an anarchist to support even an anarchist to support even an aged Labour politician, but Roy Hattersley, the former deputy Labour leader (now a top journalist) declared in one of his *Guardian* 'Endpieces' recently that: "Referenda have nothing to do with democracy and are therefore promoted by politicians who place party advantage above everything else. They are, at least in the British parliamentary system, devices for getting governments out of a hole. I know because, twenty years ago, I was up to my neck in one and learned – as Britain 'confirmed its membership of the European Economic Community on the re-negotiated terms' – that if all you want is a test of the British people's opinion on a contentious issue, a referendum is about as accurate a guide as a quick glance at a chicken's entrails."

It couldn't have been put more persuasively in the present political climate. What

Hattersley is also saying, as I do, is that the people of this country are completely *uninformed* about the issues on which they may be invited to decide. In an *anarchist society* the referendum both at local, regional and 'national' levels would be a *normal method of deciding on major issues*. But in a completely unequal society, in an uninformed society, in a society where competition as opposed to cooperation is the norm, what could a referendum produce – and about *what?* Their referendums will be just a 'Yes' or 'No', a 'do you agree or don't you'. This is not the anarchist referendum in a population that knows what it wants and can express it for the benefit of all in a society organised for everybody and not for the profit of a few.

Libertarian



ARTHUR MOYSE

"That's where we demolished the hospital."

"What did you do with the bricks?"

"We used them to build another prison."

Malatesta on Anarchist Revisionism

We no longer live at a time or in a country when a family could be content with a piece of land, a spade, a handful of seeds, a cow and a few hens. Today our needs have multiplied and become enormously complex. The unequal natural distribution of raw materials forces any agglomeration of men and women to have international relations. The very density of the human population makes it not only a miserable thing but utterly impossible to live a hermit's life – supposing there are many so inclined.

We need to import from all over the world; we want schools, railways, postal and telegraph services, theatres, public sanitation, books, newspapers, etc.

All this, the achievement of civilisation, may work well or badly; it works mainly for the benefit of the privileged classes. But it works and its benefits can, relatively easily, be extended to all, once the monopoly of wealth and power were to be abolished.

Do we want to destroy it?

Or are we in a position to organise it from the outset in a better way?

Especially at an economic level, social life does not permit of interruption. We need to eat every day; every day we must feed the children, the sick, the helpless; and there are

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN GREECE?

Greeks come in as many political flavours as you can name, including theocrats, anarchists, Stalinists, social democrats and fascists. But Greeks expect people to be political. It is a sign of interest in one's community, city, nation or the world, and the great majority of them will gladly will enter into an interminable 'kuvénda' with you about any subject political.

Anarchist books are easy to find. Books and pamphlets from the historical canon of anarchist writers (Kropotkin, Berkman, Malatesta, *et al*) are hawked by street vendors of some of the myriad presses in Greece. (Greeks print and read a tremendous amount, both home-grown literature and translation, the latter seeming to appear in Greek bookstores as soon as the original is published.)

Historically, Greek anarchists had their heyday during the resistance to the German occupation of World War Two. Anarchists were members of the left-wing coalition EAM-ELAS (National Liberation Front-National Popular Liberation Army), which was based mainly around cities and larger towns, and to a lesser extent in the more generally Republican EDES (National Republican Greek League). The Germans never really were able to control inland Greece, content simply to keep the supply line open to troops in North Africa. EAM-ELAS had some notable military successes in disrupting this, the most famous of which is the blowing up of the railway viaduct at Gorgopotamos.

These groups put too much trust in the British for help against the fascist occupiers. When they discovered that EAM-ELAS and EDES not only opposed the Germans, but also wanted to set up a republic and put the restoration of the monarchy (with a king who was German) to a plebiscite, the British did everyone thing they could to suppress them. They ignored their appeals, locked them out of important negotiations, played factions against one another, and immediately after the war, with the help of the Americans, imprisoned, exiled, shot and napalmed them. (Greece was a proving ground for napalm.)

Currently, there is no coherent anarchist 'movement' in Greece (not that there necessarily should be any single front), but there is a lot of anarchist activity and

organising, mainly in Athens, Thessaloniki, Patra and Iraklio. Much of it is centred around the universities and polytechnical schools. Anarchism has a strong appeal to younger people, who are fed up with the establishment left, the tired strategies of the more militant factions of the KKE (Greek Communist Party – not to mention the sectarianism within the KKE), the rampant corruption among all parties and sectors of the state, and the political establishment's consent to neo-liberal economic policies as enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty and the World Trade Organisation (formerly the GATT). Anarchists orchestrate, or help orchestrate, various events: rallies, marches, study groups and conferences. Topics range from support for political prisoners, both domestic and foreign, to anti-authoritarian education.

There is a vital and militant squatters' movement in the two biggest cities of Greece, Athens and Thessaloniki. 'Movement' is an appropriate term here, since there is powerful solidarity between squats and between cities, and the squatters advance the cause of housing rights, and support and promote the formation and growth of new squats – all this despite squatting being completely illegal in Greece. The squats are organised like most of those in the rest of Europe: info-shops/libraries, recording studios, cafés/bars, spaces for public events, stages, darkrooms and, of course, places to crash. The population is generally young: men and women in their twenties and thirties. They have considerable support in the communities in which they're based, squatters and non-squatters, and on the few occasions that the police have shown up to throw them out, they have been confronted by several hundred angry people. The state has avoided confrontation by and large, to the extent of judges ritually postponing cases indefinitely. However, there is tension, since the state also wants to put an end to the violent street protests, in which many squatters participate, by scapegoating the '200' supposed provocateur 'kukulofóri' (hood-wearers), who are reputed denizens of the squats. The police are notoriously violent and corrupt, and many of them served the Junta in the 1960s and 1970s, and some of the more left-leaning dailies sympathised with the squatters' plight.

Finally, there are a number of anarchist and quasi-anarchist publications. I'll list only a few. *Exéyersi* (Insurrection) is a monthly, anarcho-syndicalist tending, tabloid published in Athens. *Ektós Nómu* (Outside the Law) is a more heterogeneous anarchist monthly from Thessaloniki. *I Pirate's tis Imiselinu* (The Pirates of the Half Moon) is a situationist-influenced monthly magazine. The writings of the situationists, especially of Guy Debord, are quite popular in socialist and anarchist circles in Greece. After he killed himself in December of 1994 "Adio, Guy Debord" was inscribed in spray paint all over Athens.

Best known internationally of the 'libertarian socialist' publications from Greece is *Kinonia ke Fisi* (Society and Nature), which is subtitled 'a journal of political ecology'. Its International Advisory Committee includes many of the usual suspects: Janet Biehl, Murray Bookchin, Cornelius Castoriadis, Noam Chomsky, Andre Gunder Frank. Issues in English (and subscriptions) can be had from Society and Nature, Aigis Publications Ltd., PO Box 637, Littleton, CO 80160-0637, USA.

Gus Barrenador

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fax: (33) 67 64 77 23

From *The Anarchist Revolution: polemical articles 1924-1931*, Freedom Press, £3.50 (post free inland, add 15% overseas)

Science and the Irresponsibility of Scientists

Dear Editors,
Your self-declared scientist anarchist correspondent, Patrick Nicholson, ('Science, Responsibility and the Atom Bomb', *Freedom*, 20th April) wants it all ways. Half of his long letter argues that scientists should be responsible for the kind of research they are prepared to undertake – which is my argument! But then he excuses the atomic scientists such as Joseph Rotblat on the grounds that there was a fear that the Nazis would produce an atom bomb. Nicholson obviously didn't understand my *ironical, rhetorical* question to a previous correspondent (*Freedom*, 23rd March) who used the same argument as Nicholson.

"Who in Nazi Germany was developing the bomb?" and I answered "Hitler, Goering, Himmler or perhaps *scientists*". If comrade Nicholson considers this "a rather puzzling question" surely even a non-scientific reader of *Freedom* will have understood that the point I was making is that it was *scientists* in Germany, not Hitler, who were engaged on this ghastly research. And innocently, naively, scientist Nicholson confirms my point when he adds "Well, it was not Hitler nor Goering nor Himmler, but indeed scientists – some of the best physicists, including Werner Heisenberg, remained in Germany". So why was my question "puzzling"? The trouble with scientists who consider themselves as superior beings is that in all other

respects they are either naive, pretentious or just stupid!

Before I'm attacked let me remind you of his comments about the Manhattan Project about which he says he could not understand why the scientists continued with their work. But then he offers "some possible explanations". Listen to this: "These scientists were working on problems that posed tremendous technical and intellectual challenges, and many became totally immersed in the work. Under such conditions, ethical considerations moved into the background, in an atmosphere of a kind of collective myopia ... There would also have been the peer pressure to stick with the project, and the social and financial problems of leaving. In this concrete example of the need for scientists to act responsibly, why did so few follow Rotblat's example and leave when it became clear that the German atomic threat was a myth? The overwhelming truth is that it's very easy to follow your conscience when it involves no personal risk or loss to yourself, quite a different matter when your conscience tells you to disobey your political masters, those who feed and clothe you, to ostracise yourself from that community around which all of your adult life has revolved."

And this so-called anarchist scientist also has the nerve to express his concern about the likes of this writer: "What worries me about the attitudes of 'Libertarian', and others

of similar opinions, is their willingness to seize upon simplistic explanations and stop the process of enquiry there." Nonsense! What I was saying, and will go on repeating: scientists are not superior beings, Gods of knowledge. They are also citizens and, *assuming* they are also intelligent, they should know better than the politicians, the businessmen and the armaments barons what they should and should not undertake in the interests of mankind.

One final reflection: the poor scientists afraid of losing their jobs. And if so, how can we persuade the low-paid workers in the armaments industry and in the naval ship-yards to refuse to produce these weapons of destruction. As I write these lines, the *land-mines*, some of which have been produced and exported from this country, are killing worldwide some ten thousand innocent children and peasants and maiming many more (as television presents us with the stark facts). Scientists, technologists, workers, bosses are all involved. The scientists have the major responsibility not only for the original atom bomb but for testing it out, not on Germany but Hiroshima and Nagasaki (with hundreds of thousands of innocent victims) and for its development to the H-bomb. The excuse this time was not Nazi Germany but Soviet Russia. Now presumably the excuse is Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Libertarian

The Class Struggle?

Dear *Freedom*,

It is with some regret that I note the criteria for joining the Manchester Class Struggle Group (Letters, 20th April). Whilst I agree with their first aim of a society without classes, the state or money, I do not agree with their way of doing this through "the struggle of the working class people organising themselves, not following leaders or parties".

The class labels are artificial and unhelpful and their continuing use narrows the issue of the struggle against government and perpetuates the capitalist system by condoning its classifications. History shows that organisation of any group which is defined by capitalism merely gives different leaders, but does not give an anarchist society. If statistics are to be believed, it is the 'working class' vote which has upheld the Tory government. As Emma Goldman said, "the people, the people: they conspire with their masters to forge their own chains and crucify their Christs".

People, whoever they are, need to be aware of the illusion and corruption of any control of them. Any classification should be between the controllers and the controlled, and within the latter there are degrees of abuse and deprivation: it just so happens that some chains happen to be gold-plated and cushioned. *Everyone* needs to be educated: the system has been internalised and accepted for too long by people living twilight lives.

As a result government and its acolytes, the multinationals, continue to erode individuality and community. This is leading to an increasing severance of people from one another, living in tabloid-induced fear of their neighbours and retreating further into the illusion of the nuclear family, fed by a diet of McDonalds and soaps. Mutual aid and co-operation look ever more distant and, as people become increasingly dependent on government as the arbiter of human life, then they become willing to sanction without question all its brutalities. Unless we aim the struggle at everyone (and yes, some will be more receptive than others) then we remain merely pockets of radicals and revolutionaries reacting accordingly to the excesses of the leaders of the day.

So, Manchester, if you want to change 'the working class people' to 'all human beings', then count me in. Otherwise, if we waited for the 'working class' to bring about an anarchist society, we would wait forever – and I wouldn't be writing to a paper founded by a member of the highest rank of Russian aristocracy.

Jean Pollard

please keep sending in your letters and donations ...

THE NEXT 5 MINUTES TACTICAL MEDIA CONFERENCE

The Next 5 Minutes Conference held in Amsterdam and Rotterdam on 21st to 24th January 1996 brought together a mix of political activists, on the edge practitioners and just pure nutters from all over the planet for three days of debate, planning, exhibition and anarchy. In attempting to pitch at a point where art meets politics, access meets excess, activism meets academia and community media meets television land madness, it managed to hit a nerve.

The structure of the conference took into account the speed of the media. There were two projection spaces which participants could book at very short notice to present papers, screenings or just rant. A videotheque and media archive were available for individual research throughout the weekend and all contributed material was stored for posterity at the International Institute of Social History. Interestingly, the conference was aired on local cable television and radio, so that the events and information were not simply confined to a privileged bunch of activists but were disseminated to the local community. Internet connections were booked all weekend and a twice daily news sheet kept everyone up to date with the latest developments. A good old fashioned bus ran between the venues in the two different cities so that physical as well as virtual presence could be accommodated.

What was the point of the conference? To create new ways of using the media, not just simply celebrating the old. To create common agendas and a shared strategy from a diverse range of communities. Subtle changes are taking place in the cultural democratisation movement. Terms are shifting from public

access to community access. The question is no longer access to whom but access to what. The threats are obvious. As communication infrastructures pass from public to private hands the universal state of television seems to be the more you watch the less you know. The move from top down to bottom up communication is now further away than ever, despite the great leaps forward in technology. Many to many instead of few to many is the goal and the Internet is the darling of the decentralised community networks. Communication as opposed to broadcast. The N5M conference was the platform for the debate as to whether change can be effected through existing structures or whether new (and sometimes illegal) alternatives should be utilised.

So what was achieved? The advantage of such gatherings is to energise the participants to tackle seemingly impossible tasks. The confidence to know you're doing the right thing. It counters the isolation that activists feel as they battle away daily against insurmountable odds and dinosaur structures. A new network, PANET, has been set up on the internet (www.mediafilter.org) to continue work begun at the conference and disseminate information. The N5M's own web-site (www.dds.nl/n5m) is still open for feedback and research.

Enda Murray

Enda Murray is a video cowboy from Ireland, who's been working at a video access centre in Coventry, UK. He's currently in Australia videoing a women's Gaelic football doco.

FREEDOM INTERNATIONAL REPORT CANADA: SPRING 1996

During the month of February so many demonstrations, strikes and protests over government cut-backs occurred that only the most important can be mentioned.

28th January: The Ontario Tories' Bill 26 taking power away from the municipalities has passed in the legislature and many Ontarians fear the worst.

1st February: Inuit and Cree re-affirm their right of self-determination and their willingness to leave Quebec should it declare independence. Their territories make up two-thirds of the area of the province and include the multi-billion dollar revenue-generating hydro-electric dams. As well, 800 people met in Alymer, Quebec, to discuss secessions should Quebec declare independence. An umbrella group, the 'Quebec Committee for Canada', took out full page adverts in newspapers endorsing partition of Quebec. The idea of secession among non-nationalists in Quebec has become a mass movement.

8th February: Thousands of angry unemployed coal miners demonstrated on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Eight demonstrations were held in New Brunswick against proposed cuts to Unemployment Insurance. Some 40% of the population are seasonal workers, those worst hit by the proposed changes. The new regulations would require a longer working period and less benefits.

9th February: University students by the tens of thousands demonstrated across Canada in opposition to the reduction in federal transfer payments to higher education. They suggested cutting the defence budget instead. 12,000 demonstrated in Montréal, 6,000 in Vancouver and in Toronto 1,200 broke into the parliament buildings, breaking windows and smashing furniture.

23rd February: A day long general strike was called in Hamilton Ontario as part of the trades unions' fight against government cut-backs to social services. 20,000 people marched in support

of the protest. The Federal government has agreed in principle to allow Native People their own system of laws and courts. They will be allowed to introduce their own traditional system of justice, which is based upon reconciliation rather than punishment.

26th February: Government employees in Ontario went on a general strike for an indefinite period over privatisation and compensation for lay-offs. Some 54,000 workers are involved.

1st March: The Quebec Labour Federation's venture capital fund which protects high paying jobs in Quebec has reached \$1.6 billion in assets, a growth of over \$300 million from last year and a record in its 14 year history.

9th March: 2,000 people in Vancouver protest against China's military threats against Taiwan. Demonstrations also occurred in Montréal and Ottawa.

10th March: 2,500 demonstrate in Cambellton New Brunswick against the proposed changes to Unemployment Insurance.

15th March: Quebec's three labour federations meeting in congress have demanded that the provincial government 'not dismantle the state', illustrating their continued belief in the virtues of state capitalism.

18th March: Hundreds of construction workers and small contractors blocked traffic on the autoroute and demonstrated in front of the Quebec Labour Federation's headquarters. They were opposed to FTQ's call for a strike in housing construction.

24th March: Polls show 85% of Quebecers are in favour of slashing provincial government expenditure – but not at the cost of necessary social services such as health and education.

Larry Gambone

GROUNDSWELL 5

(Groundswell is a network of workers and claimants fighting against the introduction of the Job Seekers Allowance)

National Conference

Saturday 25th May
12.00 - 6.00pm

at

Sheffield Coordinating Centre
Against Unemployment,
73 West Street, Sheffield

For further details contact:
PO Box 446, Sheffield S1 1NY

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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.

- 1996 PROGRAMME -

3rd May Anarchism as Social Policy
(symposium)

Monday 6th May May Day Picnic (any offers?)

10th May Anarchism and Sport (speaker Peter
Neville)

17th May General discussion

24th May Probably a talk on Stirner - details
later

31st May General discussion

7th June The Difference Between Anarchism
and Socialism (speaker Mark Osborne)

14th June General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a
discussion, please contact Peter Neville at the
meetings, or at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham
Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (tel:
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.

Peter Neville

London Anarchist Forum

Glasgow Anarchist Summer School 24th August 1996

All enquiries to:
R. Lynn, 151 Gallowgate,
Glasgow G1 5AX

more details nearer the event

Hackney Anarchy Week

A celebration of subversion in East London

25th May - 2nd June 1996

A week-long festival is being organised. If
you are interested in getting involved,
contact: Hackney Anarchy Week,
BM Active, London WC1N 3XX
e mail: anarchy@phreak.intermedia.co.uk

Red Rambles

A programme of free guided walks in the
Midlands for Greens, Socialists,
Libertarians and Anarchists. All walks are
on a Sunday unless otherwise stated. Bring
walking boots, waterproofs, food and drink.

May 5th: Walk leader Mike. Meet 11am at
Whatstandwell railway station car park,
Whatstandwell, Derbyshire. Circular walk,
length 5-6 miles.

June 9th: Walk leader Jon. Meet 11am at
picnic site car park below Derwent Reservoir
Dam (map reference SK173893), Derwent
Valley, Derbyshire. Circular walk, length
8-9 miles over mountainous terrain.

Telephone for further details
01773-827513

Dales Red Rambles

A series of free guided walks in the Yorkshire
Dales. All walks are on a Sunday unless
otherwise stated. Bring walking boots,
waterproofs, food and drink.

May 19th - Airedale: Farnhill and Sutton
Pinnacles. Meet outside Bay Horse Pub at
Sutton (near Keighley) at 10.45am. Length
approx 8 miles.

Telephone for further details
01756-799002

Anarchist Communist Federation

The Anarchist Communist Federation is an
organisation of class struggle anarchists.
For contacts:

Across Britain, London and surrounding
region: ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High
Street, London E1 7QX

Scotland (for contacts in Aberdeen, Elgin
and Glasgow): PO Box 5754 (no other
mention), Elgin, Scotland IV30 2ZD

For Merseyside and region: Merseyside
ACF, PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP

For Brighton (and contacts in Bognor and
Hastings): Brighton ACF, c/o Unemployed
Centre, Tilbury Place, East Sussex

SOLIDARITY FEDERATION MANCHESTER GROUP PO BOX 29 SWPDO, MANCHESTER M15 5HW

presents an open meeting on the
**JOB SEEKERS
ALLOWANCE**

with guest speaker

Tuesday 7th May 1996
starting at 8pm

at

The Brow House
1 Mabfield Road, Manchester M14
(off Wilmslow Road, opposite Owens Park,
north of the Queen of Hearts)

Anti-JSA Campaign in Manchester

— NEXT MEETING —

8th May at 8pm

The Vine Inn, Kennedy Street
(off Fountain Street),
Manchester

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