

# FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

Vol. 58 No. 2

25th January 1997

50p

## SWEATSHOP BRITAIN

**A**s the General Election approaches, the Prime Minister John Major tells us that the British people have a choice between 'smiles' and continuing prosperity if they elect another Tory government, or 'tears' if they opt for Tony Blair. Many people realise of course, including members of the Labour Party and Conservative Party, that regardless of which of these reprobates wins the next election, the British people will get a conservative government. The choice confronting the British electorate is one of Hobson's choice.

For myself, I often feel like shedding tears when I call into my local Job Centre to see what jobs are on offer: the locals call it the 'Jokeshop'. There is not much evidence of prosperity here or smiles. Take as an example two jobs that I found on my Job Centre noticeboard only recently. One job was for a temporary labourer (on-going) to degrease metal for spraying for five days on a 2pm to 10pm shift. This job offered a basic rate of £60 plus an attendance bonus (unspecified) and overtime, and the advert indicated that the job "could become permanent". Slightly better was the advert for a folder/labourer to inspect bulk container bags. This job paid a basic rate of £80 per week for a 38-hour week. A sign which is displayed in my local Job Centre cautions Job Seekers to "remember that a happy employer means more jobs".

Throughout the North West these kinds of jobs are fairly typical and are becoming increasingly more common. A report recently published by the Centre for Economic Performance suggests that the jobs which were taken by the unemployed during 1995 paid on average £100 per week. The report points out that this represented a fall of 12% in real terms since 1980 and was less than half the pay of the typical job. Furthermore, many of these jobs were temporary and casual. In fact, during 1995 52% of new claims for unemployment benefit were from people who had been off the dole for less than a year before finding themselves out of work again, and 12% were back on the dole after four

weeks in work. A study carried out by the Low Pay Unit into Job Centre vacancies during 1996 showed that the average hourly rate of pay was £3.76 and 40% of these vacancies were part-time. Likewise 30% of jobs paid less than the NI threshold of £61 and 50% of jobs paid less than the married person's tax threshold.

It is widely acknowledged that many of these low-paid jobs which are available in the Tories' flexible labour market, generate no tax revenue for the government and actually cost the government money because they often attract an in-work benefit subsidy - perhaps this is what Blair and Major mean by 'welfare to work'.

Even higher academic qualifications appear to guarantee very little these days. A friend told me recently that her son, who has been signing on since leaving university, had been offered a job as a stacker truck driver at his local dole office, despite having a degree in physics and a master's degree in computational physics. After seventeen years of Tory government, many graduates are now competing for unskilled and semi-skilled work.

Whilst the Tories believe that the way to get the unemployed back to

work lies in taking their unemployment benefits off them and forcing them to work for their dole, Labour also favours a work for dole scheme for the under-25s and now talks of rights being coupled with responsibilities and of giving citizens a 'hand-up' rather than a 'hand-out'. Moreover, both parties now subscribe to 'welfare to work' policies which essentially perceive the benefit system itself as being largely to blame for high unemployment levels because it encourages people to stay on state benefits and discourages work effort.

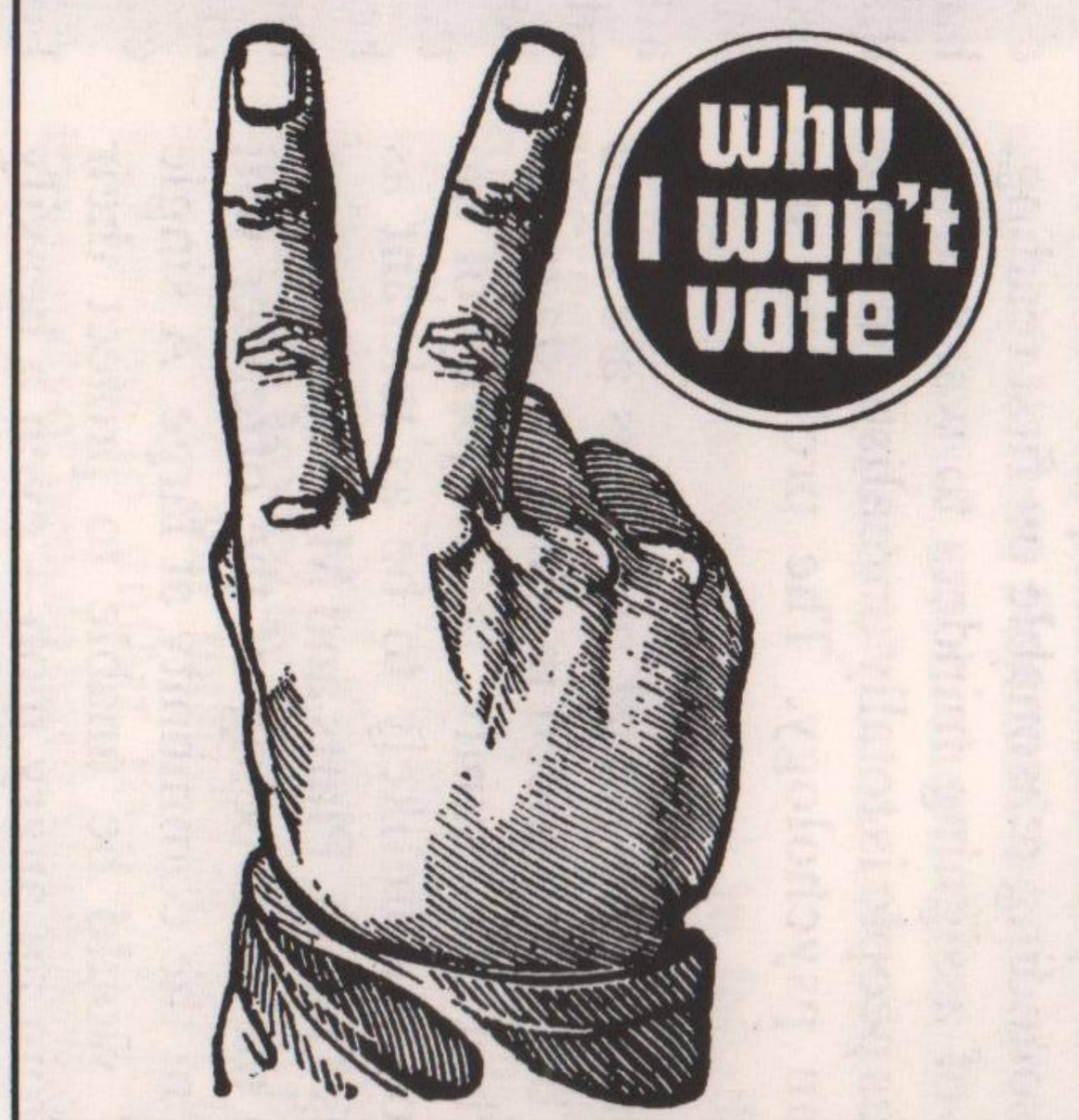
The problem to be tackled is now identified as the benefit system rather than poverty or unemployment, which in the discourse of 'welfare to work' are seen as individual problems which arise from some form of personal deficiency rather than social problems which arise from structural economic factors.

Curiously, some 180,000 people aged 16-17 (who are ineligible for unemployment benefit) are currently unemployed and some 43,000 are neither economically active or in training or education. Nevertheless, with 'Earnings Top Up' (ETU), a new in-work benefit for childless claimants on paltry wages which is currently being piloted in eight areas, the Tories are now using the benefits system to stimulate the creation of low-paid jobs in order that British capitalism and British workers can compete in the global economy with the sweatshops of the developing countries. This measure extends the government policy of using in-work benefits alongside a stricter benefit regime such as the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) to encourage the unemployed to take low-paid work, which will undoubtedly lead to lower wages throughout the economy.

In my personal opinion, as an unemployed anti-capitalist, if there is one thing worse than being out of work and having no money, it's being in work and having no money. At least on the dole I can please myself as to what time I want to get out of bed in the morning.

Joe McCarthy

### On Voting



Read *The Raven* anarchist quarterly number 14 on voting, 96 pages, from Freedom Press (£3 post free anywhere).



# Freedom

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## THE ANTI-ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS STARTED!

Inevitably with a General Election at most some four months away, the politicians, old and aspiring, will be selling themselves in their constituencies aided and abetted by the media hacks who will give them the same space as at present is dominated by the football racket. Last but not least, the politically dormant or apathetic electorate will briefly come to life, flattered by all the attention their cross on a piece of paper is attracting. And at the end of the four months in the political market-place, with all the promises, the denunciations of the others parties and the counting of the crosses, the electorate exhausted by the effort and concentration required (perhaps even discussion with your neighbour) will once more slump into apathy and indifference. And the new government – red, blue or brown – will, after the ceremonies and the ‘Queen’s speech’ (not hers), get down to the real business of double-cross.

In our opinion anarchists should take advantage of this quinquennial ‘political’ circus and try to reach as many as possible of the growing number of our fellow citizens

who will not vote for the politicians not through apathy but because they feel isolated in their political views, who are not consciously anarchists but who in fact might realise that they were if they knew about Freedom Press and our journals, books and pamphlets.

This is not just wishful thinking. The ever-growing success of the Anarchist Bookfair is just one example, and the recent feature article by Richard Boston in *The Guardian* 2 about the anarchists which included a paragraph giving details about Freedom Press and our journals has resulted in more than a hundred new subscribers and enquiries for our literature lists.

And *The Guardian*’s Sunday sister *The Observer* (12th January) starts on the front page an article “introducing the Abstention Party” by Dave Hill. No, it’s not an article supporting the anarchists’ abstentionism. Most of the abstainers interviewed were proposing to do so either for very personal reasons or because the political parties were not living up to their expectations. Towards the end he introduces *Observer* readers to “Britain’s most stately anarchist” (today not

even serious hacks can avoid such *jeux de mots*) “a veteran advocate of mutual aid who has only ever voted once”. Mr Hill’s ‘stately anarchist’ Colin Ward points out that:

“That was for my local parish council, which was a very different matter. I wanted to elect people who would provide affordable housing for local people”. Did it make a difference? ‘No.’”

Dave Hill realises that:

Ward’s small deviation confirmed his stance – the traditional anarchist one that voting doesn’t change anything (a famous piece of London graffiti once proclaimed that if it did they’d make it illegal). ‘It’s a means of deceiving people so they don’t take action on their own’, he explains. So is anarchism thriving in the age of lost illusions? Do eco-warriors and travelling communitarians count? ‘Undoubtedly a lot of people involved in those kinds of popular movements and direct action are anarchists, whether they call themselves that or not. And that’s the way to make things change. I want to see those kinds of organisations take the place of the parliamentary system.’”

Unfortunately no free publicity for Freedom Press. Why should they give publicity to ideas which advocate the

abolition of the capitalist system on which all our national press depends.

That same Sunday *every national* Sunday carried a double-page advertisement for James Goldsmith’s Referendum Party, at a cost we estimate at not less than half a million pounds. This has been going on for months, but Sir Goldyballs is a multi-millionaire playing with politics as that other multi-millionaire exhibitionist, Richard Branson, plays with hot air balloons.

Obviously anarchists cannot compete with the billionaires, and the millionaire supporters of both Labour and Tory parties. *But* in our opinion we would be missing an opportunity in the months ahead if we did not make a special effort to reach that minority of thinking people who have no faith in the political parties (and neither, we hope, in the church’s politicians or God’s infallibility) by a modest advertising campaign. For such a campaign to be successful we shall not be employing the notorious Max Clifford to advise us, but you our readers throughout these islands.

This briefly is our suggestion and plan: What we aim to do is to have *Freedom*, *The Raven* and a selection of Freedom Press titles on sale in at least one bookshop or newsagent in all the main towns and cities in the UK and to take out paid advertisements in the local press drawing readers’ attention to our anti-election position, to our literature and to the bookshop/newsagent stocking it.

We haven’t the organisation to carry such a tour. Anyway, even if we could why waste hard-earned money when we have readers and comrades throughout the country who could do the necessary in an hour?

Here’s the challenge. We call on all our comrade readers to:

- 1) contact the bookseller/newsagent they think most sympathetic to our cause and intentions to stock a selection of our titles (on a sale-or-return basis and at a discount of 35% on sales);
- 2) to send us (or get the publishers to send us) a copy of the local newspaper they think most suitable, with advertising rates.

Finally, *money*. We start the fund with £1,000 from a well-wisher. We should aim at raising £10,000 in the next couple of months if we are to make a real success of the project. We can assure you all that it will be money carefully and well spent. We *must* take advantage of the electoral circus to make more and more people aware that the alternative to having a bunch of politicians running our lives is to tell them loud and clear that we are intent on running our own lives and telling the world as much.

## FOR THE BEGGARS AND HOMELESS



‘The Tramp Philosophers’ from *A Weekend Photographer’s Notebook*, containing 170 photographs by Vernon Richards, available from Freedom Press at £6.95 (post free inland, add 15% overseas).

At the same time as one reads in the financial pages that house prices are going up (and therefore presumably rents are too) government and opposition are making aggressive declarations about getting the homeless off the streets, as if these ‘social layabouts’ enjoyed their sorry fate. It is probably true that some prefer living rough than accepting the humiliation experienced in some

doss-houses, but surely in general nobody chooses to live on the streets begging and sleeping in doorways.

No country in the prosperous west has or will ever solve the problem. It is basically a problem of capitalism. For even recognising that we are not responsible for the genes with which we are born (and therefore not always in control or able to

organise our daily lives) surely a civilised society, which our politicians profess that we are, should pay special sympathetic and generous attention to those who are the misfits. Surely if we can afford £23 billion a year to ‘defend’ ourselves from a non-existent enemy then what about the odd £3 billion for housing and caring for the homeless and helpless among us who cannot cope?

They are everywhere in the so-called ‘prosperous’ West. One section of Freedom Press’s title *A Weekend Photographer’s Notebook* includes eight photographs of the ‘homeless and beggars’ in prosperous Europe – in Naples, Paris, London, Rome, Spain – in the past fifty years. Nothing has changed because the capitalist system that creates the gulf between rich and poor, far from having over the years produced a taxation system that helps to produce the so-called ‘trickle-down’ from the rich to the poor has done exactly the opposite.

When will the poor and those of us who are conscious of being a privileged majority (we think the 30:40:30 division between poverty, middle range prosperity and rich including the stinking rich is probably a fair assessment) realise that we owe (including this OAP who enjoyed an extra 25p a week on surviving to his 80th birthday) solidarity to all those homeless and disabled and alzheimer victims to help make their lives more acceptable. And also to make it possible for them to escape from a life of hell or as a ‘vegetable’ with love and without pain.

I write this with passion and conviction and as one who hopes that their (and mine if it comes to the point) struggle will not only be encouraged but physically supported. The politicians are only concerned to drive the problems of homelessness and utter poverty under the carpet. We must ensure that it is brought into the open not only by exposing the system – yes, the capitalist system – that invariably produces it, but by our solidarity with its victims.

VR

**“What is called the rule of the majority in a bourgeois democracy is in reality the rule of those who control the methods of manufacturing opinion, especially in the schools and the press.”**

**Bertrand Russell (1924)**



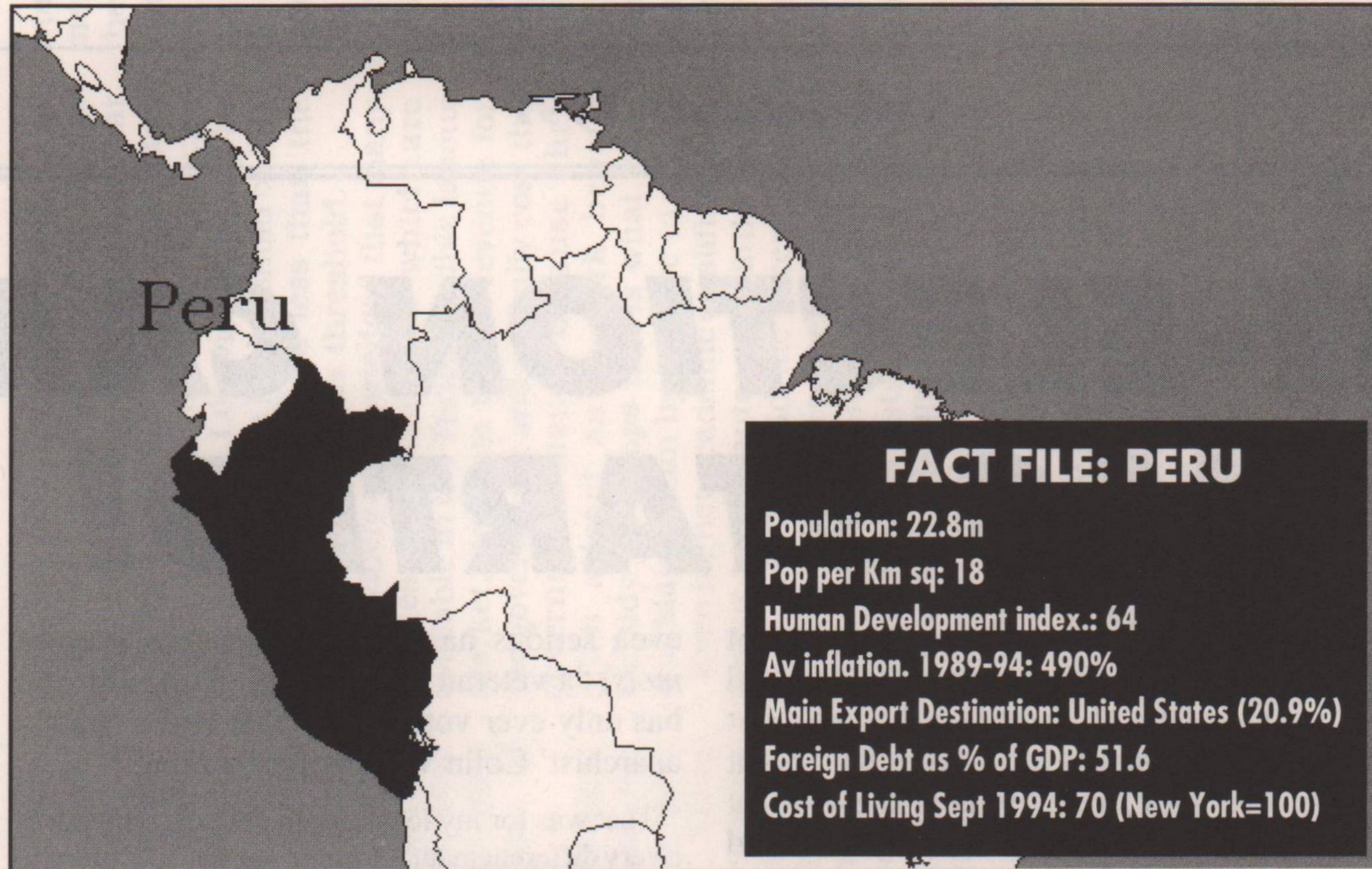
# BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE OCCUPATION OF THE JAPANESE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE IN LIMA, PERU

Live cameras are aimed at the Japanese Ambassador's residence and carry the images all across the world. The occupation action of a commando from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) has cast a spotlight on the social and political conditions which exist in Peru under the elected dictator Alberto Fujimori. While a majority of Peruvians live in poverty and distress, the beneficiaries of neo-liberal policies and martial law celebrate their wealth at events such as the disgusting banquet in honour of the Japanese Emperor.

The MRTA are demanding, in addition to changes in economic policy in order to benefit the majority of the population, the liberation of more than 400 political prisoners. The real danger exists that the Fujimori government, like other regimes in the past, will take revenge against the prisoners. In past years, there have been several massacres, for example in 1986 in the prisons at Lurigancho, El Fronton, and the women's prison at Callao, when over 250 prisoners were murdered. But the presence of international media is no deterrent to the Peruvian government: The 1986 massacre was carried out at the same time as the Socialist International was holding its annual congress in Lima.

Media reports about the seizure of the Japanese ambassador's residence largely overlook the background of this situation. For this reason, we would like to focus attention on the situation of the prisoners and human rights in general. On 16th December 1996, the MRTA prisoners in Miguel Castro Castro prison launched a massive, unlimited hunger strike.

The initiative Libertad was founded to campaign for an international Day of Struggle to call for 'Freedom For All Political Prisoners World-Wide!' Libertad is in solidarity with the struggle of the Peruvian hunger strikers and we support their demands: 1) An end to



isolation detention and the discriminatory treatment handed down against C. Victor Polay and other MRTA leaders, and for these people to be shown in public so that their condition may be seen. We demand that they be transferred to civilian prisons.

2) The immediate repeal of Anti-Terror Law Nr. 25475, which mandates 'faceless' civilian and military judges and super speedy trials with no right to a defence.

3) The immediate repeal of the special detention conditions, which are in violation of recognised national and international fundamental human rights. We especially call for international humanitarian norms to be adhered to.

4) For humane treatment of prisoners, and improved prison conditions (access to defence counsel, better food, health, and jobs).

The list of human rights violations in Peru is a long one. Here are just a few examples:

- In the maximum security prison inside the Callao navy base, cells are 8 meters underground. The prisoners there are detained in cells with no natural light.
- All prisoners are held in total isolation for their first year, thereafter they are allowed only 30 minutes in the yard each day. Only immediate family members may visit them. Prisoners are not allowed books, newspapers, or radios.
- Women prisoners are guarded by men.
- Some maximum security prisons, like the one in Yanamayo, are built in regions whose climates are so harsh that prisoners suffer serious health problems as a result.
- Guards are allowed to mete out punishments as they see fit.
- In extremely short trials, defendants are often sentenced by the military to life in prison. The judges are masked and thereby remain anonymous to the defendants.

Since 1990, the construction of high security prisons has increased dramatically in Peru. Most of these are designed to confine prisoners in isolation conditions. The experiences of Germany in this field have led to several visits by high-ranking Peruvian officials to consult with their German counterparts on this issue.

Isolation detention is part of the 'psycho-social campaign' designed to break the prisoners and force them to abandon their struggle. The maximum security prisons, which President Fujimori once described as 'prison tombs', are, in short: 'The place where they will rot and only come out when they are dead'.

The anti-terror laws now in force in Peru were enacted in May 1992. This state of emergency allows for the mass arrest of opposition activists. Mechanisms of protection, codified in international accords against torture and inhumane mistreatment, have been eroded by these laws. All prisoners are tortured and mistreated, and they are subjected to unfair trials. Since 1983, thousands of people have 'disappeared' due to state-sponsored murders or torture. Almost none of these acts of state-sponsored human rights violations have ever been investigated.

On the contrary: On June 16, 1995, President Fujimori issued a general amnesty which quashed all investigations or indictments of human rights violations which occurred after May 1980. The few persons who had been convicted of such crimes before this amnesty had their sentences annulled, and if any happened to be in prison, they were released. This get-out-of-jail-free policy, therefore, freed all state murderers and torturers. This criminalisation of the victims is also in line with Fujimori's economic policies, which have been enacted on the backs of Peru's poorest classes.

The demands of the embassy occupiers and the prison hunger strikers must be fulfilled!

The prisoners must be freed!

**Libertad!**  
c/o '3.Welt' Haus  
Westerbachstrasse 47-H3 60327  
Frankfurt, Germany

Translated by Arm The Spirit

## MERSEYSIDE PORT SHOP STEWARDS SET TO BLOW

What began as a speck on the horizon looked like Typhoon 'Liverpool' as unions spanning the Pacific and Atlantic trade routes took worldwide industrial action against privatisation, casualisation and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company beginning on 20th January. As we go to press, on 19th January, obviously we do not know what happened, but we know some of what was planned.

Ports and unions in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the US West Coast, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Holland, Cyprus and Germany are in motion, and news is expected from France, Belgium, Portugal and the US East Coast.

The tide was already running strong when, on 10th January, the dockers' weekly mass meeting received a fax from the International Transportworkers Federation general secretary David Cockcroft and dockers section secretary Kees Marges had just written requesting all ITF dockworkers affiliates:

- 1) To take whatever steps are open to you, including public demonstrations and, if possible, direct action aimed at ships currently using the port facilities in Liverpool affected by the dispute during the week commencing 20th January;
- 2) To send further messages to the management and to the shop stewards indicating that the action is taken in support of the successful conclusion of the negotiating process already underway."

The day before the ITF move, the TGWU Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP) decided not to impose the secret

ballot demanded by Mersey Docks as a condition of their 'ultimate offer'. The ballot was widely canvassed in the media by TGWU general secretary Bill Morris and Peter Kilfoyle the Labour MP for Bootle (adjoining the north docks area), ever since the offer officially expired on New Year's Eve. And without reference to Liverpool, the *Financial Times* reported (7th January) that the Labour leadership, despite dissension within the Shadow Cabinet, favours compulsory re-balloting in long-running industrial disputes.

But in the event the F&GP evidently accepted that it would not be in the union's best interests to force a secret ballot at this point, given its overwhelming rejection by the dockers themselves.

Whatever manoeuvres lie ahead for the TGWU and ITF, the storm and its far-reaching consequences cannot now be averted. As of 10th January, the stewards had received firm commitments from the following:

**Japan:** The 40,000 strong National Council of Dockworkers' Unions (Zenkoku Rowan) said they would stand "in solidarity with Liverpool while fighting deregulation in Japan", and will hold workshop meetings on 20th January at all fifty ports it organises, release a press statement and write to Mersey Docks and assorted shipping companies.

**Australia:** While the national position is yet to be decided, in Sydney the Maritime Union of Australia were planning a 'big hit' on a ship with Liverpool connections.

**New Zealand:** The New Zealand Seafarers' Union intended action around 20th January.

**US West Coast:** All eighteen ILWU ports have been contacted directly by Liverpool stewards and are indicating support. A mass meeting in Los Angeles, the world's third largest port, has voted for a 24-hour stoppage on 20th January. The San Francisco stewards' council has agreed a 24-hour stoppage; their position was put on the longshoremen on 11th January. Portland will hold their monthly stop-work meeting for 24 hours on 20th January. Seattle, awaiting decisions in the other ports, is now expected to follow suit.

**Sweden:** The Hamnarbetarforbundet has given notice to the employers in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Malmo and Helsingborg of their intention to boycott all ACL and CAST cargo on 21st January.

**Denmark:** Mass meetings were to be held on 20th January in Ahus, Copenhagen and Odense. Last September similar mass meetings decided to go home for the day.

**Holland:** A message of support re 20th January has been received from the OVB, and the FNV has asked Liverpool for a list of ships and shipping companies due in Rotterdam that week.

**Germany:** Unconfirmed reports that the rank and file in Bremerhaven and Hamburg intended a day's stoppage.

A number of other unions were due to meet to discuss possible action around 20th January:

**Canada:** 1,000 Montreal longshoremen organised by the Syndicat des Debardeurs met on 13th January to discuss supportive action.

**Italy:** A mass meeting on 13th January of all dockers in Genoa organised by the MLT and CGIL.

**Spain:** The Coordinadore executive met on 15th January with a view to action probably later than 20th January.

**Portugal:** Lisbon shop stewards met the general secretary of the National Federation of Portworkers Unions.

**Cyprus:** Stewards were awaiting a decision.

Beyond this ever-growing list of unions known to be contemplating action, the Liverpool stewards were hopeful of support from the CGT in Le Havre in the wake of their previous solidarity. They also wrote to Bob Baete, national secretary of the BTB Port Section, requesting industrial action against ACL in Antwerp and CAST in Zeebrugge during the week of 20th January.

Finally, the stewards asked that ILA longshoremen in the US East Coast might choose 20th January, celebrated as Martin Luther King's birthday, as a fitting moment to join dockers around the world in this common fight against injustice.

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## — NEGOTIATING THE DOLE QUEUE —

## ANTI-ELECTION ALLIANCE

The Anti-Election Alliance has been established by several political organisations to campaign against the upcoming electoral farce. We believe that people's time on election day would be far more productively spent in bed, or down the pub, rather than at a polling booth encouraging politicians who only have contempt for us. If they valued us at all, they'd ask our opinions more frequently than once every five years. They only rule while we let them.

It's a popular saying that an honest politician is a contradiction in terms. Here in Cheshire, for example, we have a politician who proves that. Neil Hamilton is one of the best examples of that miserable breed, the corrupt politician. Let's face it, would you buy a used car from him? But why did he get his free trip to the Ritz, his cash for questions, his fat salary, his free train travel, and his big house in the country? Because people voted for him, and the 650 like him in the House of Commons. Once he was safely installed there, Neil Hamilton got his nose well and truly into the trough, which his rich friends filled up with back-handers. Our message is clear: no votes, no more gravy train for the likes of Neil Hamilton.

Not that the so-called 'opposition' parties offer any alternative. New Labour, New Bullshit, is all we can say about smarmy Tony Blair — and you only have to look at Manchester City Council to see what Labour are like in power. Generations of working class people have voted for Labour, and where has it got them? Nowhere. If Blair gets into Number 10 he'll find new friends in the City, and it will just be different faces getting bungs from their rich mates.

It's not worth wasting time on either the Liberal Democrat or Green parties. Both are largely made up of middle class cranks who wouldn't know a day's work if it came up and smacked them in the kisser.

We want a world where there are no politicians, no rulers and no corruption. Every political party told the people to pay their poll tax, but fourteen million people did not and the poll tax was abolished. Quite simply, ignoring politicians gets the goods.

From now until the election, the Anti-Election Alliance will be issuing stickers, leaflets and press releases putting our point of view across — no holds barred. We are calling for everybody who sympathises with us to get on board — after all, it can't be worse than Neil Hamilton, can it?

For more information contact: Anti-Election Alliance, BM Box 357, London WC1N 3XX.

## ANARCHIST DISCUSSION FORUM

Since 1992 I've been responsible for co-ordinating the occasional series of discussion papers which has become known as the Anarchist Discussion Forum. Originally conceived by David Goodway and myself as an offshoot of the London-based Anarchist Research Group, the approximately quarterly meetings have generated a wide range of interest on a variety of contemporary themes, and forged good links throughout the north and with anarchists in the East Midlands. Other initiatives have sprung out of these meetings, such as the *Yorkshire Anarchist* newsletter and the forthcoming book *Twenty-First Century Anarchism: unorthodox ideas for a new millennium*, edited by James Bowen and myself (published by Cassell).

I am no longer able to keep the ADF going, but am in possession of a mailing list and sympathetic venue contacts if anyone is able to pick up the torch. For more information call Jon Purkiss on 01484 847366.

## BOUNTS OF BURNLEY BRUTALISM

Burnley in East Lancashire is the divorce capital of Great Britain, and the town whose Labour Council issues the most prosecutions against poll tax defaulters. Now it is being tarnished by the Job Seeker's Act, a benefit clamp-down, activities by the benefit fraud squad, loan sharks, and a suicide earlier this year of a claimant.

Owen Stott, a 20-year-old unemployed claimant, died last February after being taken off benefits amid allegations he was being threatened by loan sharks. At an inquest in March, PC Pat Sutton said the unemployed salesman was hanged by a rope of which one end was attached to a banister, and he assumed that Mr Stott had sat on the stairs and eased himself down until the tension was taken up on his neck.

The man's sister told the Coroner: "He wouldn't tell me how much he owed, or who these people were ... but he was very, very scared. We've always been very close and I've never seen him so scared."

## TOWN TARGETED?

More recently there has been activity by the benefit fraud squad in Burnley. It was one of the towns chosen for intensive fraud squad action in October/November 1996, as reported by Sheffield delegates at the last Groundswell conference.

In October last year a blue transit van was parked outside Burnley Job Centre. It was disguised as a plumber's van, registration H 794 TDT. We are informed it was the fraud squad.

## EXCESS AND OFFICIALDOM!

Last month, in a town known for its anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups, solicitors began to examine a decision by Burnley Job Centre to penalise a claimant by withdrawing

benefits for two weeks. This is far from the first case of its kind under the JSA, but it is the first case of an anarchist being taken off benefits under a new regime.

Mr Reg Hall failed to comply fully with the paper-chase of the new Job Seekers Act. He mislaid his job search record form.

The manager, Mrs D.A. Duffy, told him in a letter: "As you did not take sufficient and appropriate steps to find work the adjudication officer has decided that you were not actively seeking work".

Reg Hall, in his defence, says he has been visiting the Job Centre, checking vacancies in newspapers and asking friends if they know where there are jobs. He has made several job applications, and says that he considers that "apparent 'failure' to secure a position is due to the state of the labour market and not any lack of active steps on my part".

This latest apparent excess by Burnley officialdom is now under investigation by the North West Against the JSA, as well as local solicitors.

Unemployed Worker

## ANTI-WORKING CLASS PRESS

Yet again the combined bureaucracies of the trade union movement have let down the British working man. UTRA, T&GWU and the other unions with driver members have allowed the media to spread their own ideas of how the French transport strike was affecting their jobs (see 'French Lesson: Truckers Trash the Bosses' in *Freedom*, 14th December 1996).

Yet it is obvious that whether the present Tory government enter into a federal government or not, the fact that French drivers retire at 55 and whether they get a wage rise or not must affect working conditions in this country also.

The 48-hour week must also affect the unemployed numbers of this country.

All of the press and media take the same anti-working person view. This is because most of them are self-employed and need to sell their views. What's become of good old fashioned press freedom?

It is surely necessary that we should fight side by side with all of our fellow workers in all countries and not allow the media to play the race card.

Jack Bunyan

## INTIMATE SERVICES

Late last year a middle-aged woman was sent by her Job Centre for a job in an escort agency. Owing to the questionable nature of some of the occupational vacancies now finding their way into the Employment Services offices and the fact that staff, cutting corners to make up their incentive bonuses, are sending claimants on all kinds of bizarre errands to get them off the register, government ministers are being asked about the propriety of job vacancies for escort agencies and massage parlours.

Gillian Shepherd has announced that these job vacancies will have to be monitored more vigorously. Among the 'written answers' given in Parliament last month was one on the 'Personal Services Industry'. Mr Ian McCartney asked the Secretary of State for Education and Employment:

1) What is her policy in respect of the continuing payment of jobseeker's allowance to people who have refused to take a job in the personal services industry.

2) If she will include in the next set of jobseeker's regulations an explicit provision that no jobseeker should have his or her benefit refused or reduced for refusing to take a job in the personal services industry.

Mr Forth answered: "I am satisfied that the legislation on refusal of employment already contains adequate safeguards. First a sanction can be imposed only when the opportunity of employment was notified to the jobseeker by a Job Centre adviser. Advisers will not suggest that people should apply for jobs that are obviously inappropriate, and Employment Service guidance is currently being strengthened to ensure that jobseekers are not submitted to undesirable or inappropriate vacancies. Secondly, no sanction is imposed if a jobseeker had good cause for refusing or failing to apply for an opportunity ... Where appropriate, this must include the fact that the jobseeker refused the opportunity because of a sincerely-held conscientious objection to the work concerned."

Oldham Anti-JSA





— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# THE CHILD IN THE CITY RECONSIDERED

(a lecture given in Turin)

It is always flattering for writers to be asked to talk about their books, so I am grateful for your kind invitation to me to talk around my book *The Child in the City*.

I did not initiate this book. It was commissioned by a publisher, because I had written a book, intended for teachers, on the use of the urban environment as an educational resource, and had edited a book intended for architects and sociologists on vandalism. The publisher thought that a book about children's relationship with the city was the next book I should write.

The book appeared in 1978, and was reprinted as a paperback by Penguin, and in New York by Pantheon in 1979, and in German in 1980. Another English publisher issued a new edition in 1990, now sold at £1.75 by Freedom Bookshop.

As a result of this book I was promoted to the status of an authority on childhood and was frequently asked to address meetings of teachers or social workers. I, of course, reject any such status, except to the extent that we are all experts in childhood since we have all been children and most of us become parents.

But the gratifyingly enthusiastic reception for that book did bring some surprises for me.

I have an optimistic nature, and to me the book was an attempt to convey the intensity, variety and ingenuity of the experience of urban childhood. It was a celebration of the ways in which the resourceful girl or boy used the adapted artefacts of the built environment for their own purposes and needs. For example, in an Italian context, I cited the observation from the 1950s from the famous Danish architect Steen Eiler Rasmussen, of the way in which playing with a ball gives the child an insight into the nature of a building: its weight, solidity and texture, and the way its shape gives an entrancing randomness to the angle at which the ball bounces back. Rasmussen observed that:

"The enormous church of S. Maria Maggiore stands on one of Rome's seven famous hills. Originally the site was very unkempt, as can be seen in an old fresco painting in the Vatican. Later, the

slopes were smoothed and articulated with a flight of steps up the apse of the basilica. The many tourists who are brought to the church on sightseeing tours hardly notice the unique character of the surroundings. They do not experience the place in the way some boys I saw there a few years ago did. I imagine they were pupils from a nearby monastery school. They had a recess at eleven o'clock and employed the time playing a very special kind of ball game on the broad terrace at the top of the stairs. It was apparently a kind of football but they also utilised the wall in the game, as in squash – a curved wall which they played against with great virtuosity. When the ball was out, it was most decidedly out, bouncing down all the steps and rolling several hundred feet further on with an eager boy rushing after it, in and out among the motor cars and Vespas down near the great obelisk. I do not claim that these Italian youngsters learned more about architecture than the tourist did. But quite unconsciously they experienced certain basic elements of architecture: the horizontal planes and vertical walls above the slopes. And they learned to play on these elements. As I sat in the shade watching them, I sensed the whole three-dimensional composition as never before. At a quarter past eleven the boys dashed off, shouting and laughing."

To my mind, my book *The Child in the City* was an expansion of this kind of tribute to the way in which children find methods of adapting the city to their own needs, paying careful attention to the differences in the experiences open to boys and girls. But the surprise to me was that reviewers and readers saw it as one more catalogue of urban deprivations. I frequently met people who assumed that it was the city itself, the 'concrete jungle' as they usually called it, that

was responsible for the attrition of childhood experience.

Undoubtedly the phrase *The Child in the City* carries with it the message in code, that we are speaking of the deprivations of poor children. We are not talking of the children of the rich, who are quarantined from direct contact with their surroundings, nor of the children of families affluent enough to use the facilities that the urban environment offers and sophisticated enough to know about opportunities for children, but of children who live in the particular social and political isolation of the poor, and who have no choice but to become predators on the city of the rich.

But by far the most serious of the deprivations suffered by the modern city child, regardless of the family income, results from the fact that the motorist has, over decades, stolen personal mobility from the city child. In my book I discussed this in relation to the work of a British researcher, Mayer Hillman, in 1971. He found that the contemporary urban child has far less unaccompanied access to public space in the modern environment than was taken for granted by earlier generations.

This deferment of independent access to anywhere outside the home can be verified in conversation with different generations of any family, in Britain as much as in Italy. If you ask a grandparent, a parent and a child the age at which they were first allowed to play in the street, to go on an errand to the local shop, or to the local park, or to ride a bicycle unaccompanied, you will learn that the age of independence has risen in every generation.

Mayer Hillman, whose research I noted in my book, was one of a team who made a comparative survey in 1990, replicated by a study in Germany. The conclusion of these studies was that children aged nine-and-a-half in 1990 had the freedom of movement that children aged seven had in 1971, and that this change had happened "unremarked and unresisted" and that "children have lost, without society apparently noticing". Perhaps you can tell me of similar research in Italy. It is worth quoting their findings in detail:

"While nearly three-quarters of the children in 1971 were allowed to cross roads on their own, by 1990 the proportion had fallen to a half. There was an even more marked decline in the proportion allowed to use buses on their own: half were allowed to do so in 1971 in contrast to only one in seven in 1990. In comparing the proportion of children allowed to cycle on the roads, it should be noted that while two-thirds owned a bicycle in 1971, ownership had increased to nine in ten by 1990. However, two-thirds of the cycle owners in 1971 said that they were allowed to use them on the roads: by 1990 this proposition had fallen to only a quarter. Perhaps, most disturbingly, very few children are allowed out after dark by their parents – effectively a curfew for them. Younger children are most affected, with the difference, as would be expected, declining with age: few 11 or 12 year olds now or indeed then would accept such restrictions on their independence. Although more journeys are made for social and recreational purposes than for school, only about half the 7 to 10 year olds who were allowed to go to these places on their own in 1971 were allowed to do so in 1990. And no parents of the 7 year olds allow their children to go out alone after dark, a restriction that is removed only for six per cent of the 11 year olds."

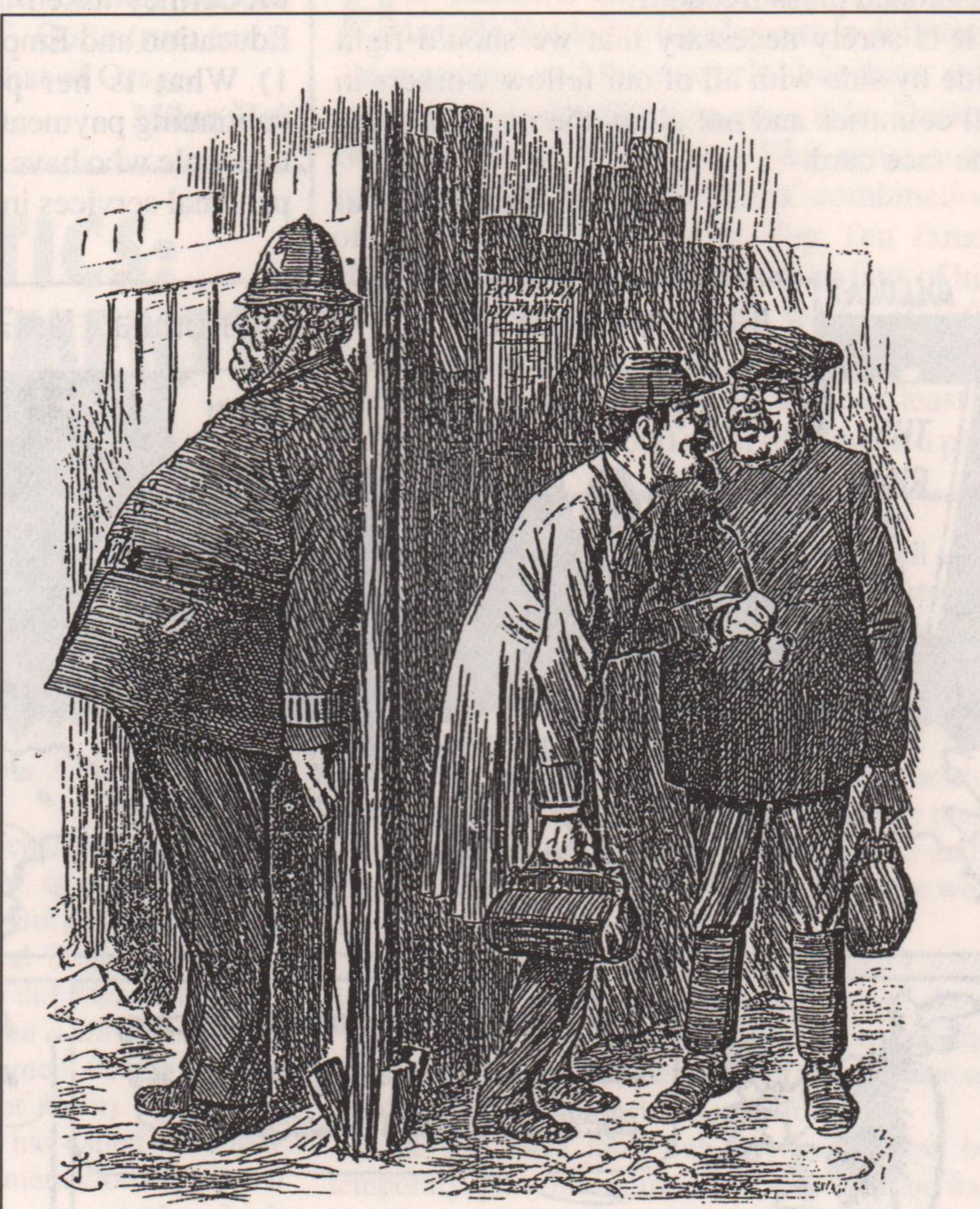
I should add that the comparable German children had much greater freedom, and that the gender distinctions that in England allowed far more independence to boys than to girls, were far less evident in Germany, apart from that of being allowed out after dark. Parents in England tended to give the unreliability of their children or the fear of their being assaulted or molested by an adult as the reason for restriction of their independent mobility, but traffic dangers were

## FREEDOM BOOKSHOP READERS'

Cesare Lombroso has a lot to answer for. As the main proponent of the 'science' of physiognomy (the idiotic theory that criminals were physically distinguishable from non-criminals) he it was who inspired the vitriolic anti-anarchist campaigns in the 1890s press. We are all familiar with the media stereotype of the typical 'anarchist', and Christine Donovan's pamphlet *Soho Crackpots: anarchists in the media in the 1890s* clearly demonstrates how and why these caricatures were cooked up, the amount of damage they have done to the movement, and why they persist in the public mind. Even today many writers in the mainstream press feel obliged to debunk this image when describing anarchists (see, for example, the recent long article in *The Guardian*, photocopies available for £1.20 plus 30p postage, UK only). The detail into which nineteenth century writers went in describing the traits of 'anarchists' ranged from the absurd to the grotesque to the downright hilarious: in Lombroso's case – he wrote an entire book on the subject – Italian anarchists were supposed to possess turned-up noses. Such was the political climate of the times that many writers and journalists climbed aboard the fashionable bandwagon – Conrad, Chesterton, Zola, Tenniel, *Punch*, *The Graphic*, to name but a few. Even the Rossetti sisters, who wrote *A Girl Among the Anarchists* under the joint pseudonym 'Isabel Meredith' based on their experiences as editors of the anarchist journal *The Torch*, used similar clichés, but, says Donovan, in their case the intention was deliberately satirical, aimed at undermining

the popular stereotypes. Although this publication is photocopied and uses stapled A4 sheets, the typesetting and layout are good quality and the 24 pages include many illustrations and photographs. For £2, not something to turn your nose up at.

The recent advent of the 40th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution has prompted the ACF to publish *A Brief Flowering of Freedom: the Hungarian revolution 1956*, a revised and updated version of a 1976 account by the AWA. This edition is a cheap (60p) and accessible introduction to the events, characters and background in 24 A5 pages which re-emphasise the importance of the working class as the main catalyst of the events, through the Workers' Councils, in that idyllic 'workers' state'. The ungrateful proles actually had the temerity to rise up against their Communist masters, as a reward for which they were brutally attacked by the state police and the



RECKONING WITHOUT THEIR HOST.

FIRST ANARCHIST: "ENFIN, MON AMI!-VE SHALL NOT BE INTERRUPT IN ZIS FREE ENGLAND!"  
 HULL: "A1 (with force). "DON'T BE TOO SURE, MOSSOO! YOU'LL FIND NO EXTENUATING CIRCUM-  
 STANCES HERE!"

Russian army, tens of thousands of lives were lost and the repression continued for years. Includes photographs and an appendix on the Hungarian anarchist movement. For a much fuller account see Phoenix Press's *Hungary '56\** (124 pages, £3.95) by Andy Anderson.

Unmentioned for some time is a rather tasty pamphlet called *Political Duty: a confession of skepticism*, comprising an essay by Theo P. Perkins originally published by Benjamin Tucker in the American *Liberty* magazine in 1892 and reprinted by The Owl Press. From behind a smokescreen of the deceptively bland question "Is there sufficient reason why the people of this country should always obey the lawful commands of their official rulers?", Perkins proceeds to dissect the various justifications used to legitimise law and the state and step-by-step carefully and rationally exposes them all as empty constructs. He speaks, naturally, about the country he is most familiar with, i.e. the USA, but exactly the same arguments apply to virtually any country. After following through his often sophisticated and sometimes quite exquisite reasoning, he concludes that we have not only the right but the duty to resist the state and its lawmakers. Perkins was a bright and agile thinker and could probably have floored most people in debate; these days it is rare to find anyone rehearsing these detailed arguments against the state, let alone with the finesse he displays, and some of the phraseology is just musical. A smartly produced A4 pamphlet of 24 pages for £1.

If you are old enough to remember Abbie Hoffman – the radical American student who achieved notoriety for his formation of the Yippies (from Youth International Party), and his espousal of the Black Panthers and the Weathermen, not to mention his *Steal This Book* and the Chicago Conspiracy Trial – then



more frequently cited by the German parents. Some researcher somewhere in Italy must have made a comparable survey. I would be very interested in hearing the results. The British investigator, Mayer Hillman, tentatively asks a key question, which is whether, as he puts it, "the damaging outcomes of the growing parental restrictions on children revealed in our surveys may be associated with some of the anti-social behaviour observed among the current generation of teenagers?"

But merely to mention comparisons between our stereotypes of the British and Italian attitudes to childhood is to invite a comment on the standard Italian view of British parents, as cold and indifferent to the special needs of children, and the British view of Italian adults as absurdly indulgent to the presence of children in public places, and as overflowing with demonstrable affection for children encountered in the street, the shop or the café. You will know that the English-speaking countries are at present in a 'moral panic' about paedophilia, and you will have read in Britain and America people think twice before following the normal human instincts to comfort a crying child or to smile at an unknown child in the street in case their motives should be misunderstood.

I am reluctant to reinforce national stereotypes, but I should alert you to a recent book published in England, which tends to support the standard opinions. The English novelist Tim Parks has lived in Italy for many years, has an Italian wife and Italian children. His very entertaining book *An Italian Education* contrasts British and Italian attitudes to childhood. His family is not typical of those of his age-group and social class, since he and his wife actually have *three* children. I have to refrain from quoting his opinions, because you will protest that he fails to understand the disadvantages of childhood in an Italian city, but I must add that he settled in Italy in order to escape what he sees as *la tipica freddezza anglo-sassone*, and he concludes that:

"I do believe that kids have a better time here, that adolescence is more fun here. Certainly I never saw



*The Child in the City* and two other titles by Colin Ward, *The Child in the Country* and *Welcome, Thinner City*, are available at the reduced price of £1.75 each from Freedom Press (post free UK, elsewhere add 15%).

a group of people so confident and at ease with themselves and their youth. I wish it for my children."

Now in the Anglo-Saxon countries, adolescents are seen as a *threat* to the adult world.

The most significant comparison, in this connection, comes from the English oral historian Professor Paul Thompson. He has been involved in a long-term comparative study, together with Professor Luisa Passerini, of the family lives of automobile workers in Coventry, England, and in Torino. Thompson described (in a lecture in my book *Talking Schools*, Freedom Press, 1995) the difference between the two cities, in the face of structural change in the motor industry. "I found", he says, that:

"... while the English city in the face of that crisis seemed depressed and hopeless, the Italian city was unexpectedly optimistic, indeed booming with new

firms, at all social levels ... Again I have been struck by apparent links between that inventive adaptability and the ways in which people are brought up in the two cities. In Coventry – perhaps as a result of more than three generations of factory work in Britain – interviews brought a picture of a very rigid type of socialisation. In many families, children were still expected to be seen and not heard, for example at mealtimes, and indeed some are expected scarcely to talk or discuss at all with their parents. Parents seemed surprisingly unable to transmit either their ideas or hopes or their skills to them, and children were often harshly

disciplined. In Turin, by contrast, children were brought up with a much more open expression of affection, and a rare use of physical punishment, while discussions at table was absolutely central to family life ... The case of Turin is not unique ..."

To me, this is a very significant comparison, but it is not the whole story. We all know the truth I have mentioned, that the biggest restraint on the freedom of children to use the modern city is the motor vehicle. Many of the cities of northern Europe, in Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Germany, have embarked on programmes of pedestrianisation in city centres and of 'traffic-calming'. The results are measurable in the reduction of deaths and injuries to the old, as well as to the young.

But what happened when a great Italian city, Bologna, embarked on a policy of traffic exclusion and traffic limitation? The city's motorists ignored this policy as an unreasonable restriction on their liberty to drive whatever they wanted to.

In that city, as in most of the cities of Europe, the freedom of the motorists is perceived as more important than the freedom of the child.

Colin Ward

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## RICH AND POOR

Despite all the efforts of highly-paid publicists, the anarchist idea has managed to survive and is doing remarkably well. The resurgence of anarcho-syndicalism, at least in the north of England, is rapidly becoming a populist movement. Backed by patient altruistic theorists here is yet another indication of the vitality of the anarchist idea and its importance for the welfare of the people with actions by the people themselves towards a society of their own making and under their control.

Even so, the question must be asked as to why there is this recurring role for the anarchist movement to be always on the defensive. Anybody who has failed to read Peter Kropotkin's account of the dreadful hardships of the working people in past centuries cannot possibly understand what is taking place this very moment. The problem of quoting from other anarchists like Kropotkin (a marvellously lucid, conscientious and sensitive writer) is that the language has not aged in a hundred years to the extent that reading him gives this writer goose-pimples, for every word of his argument and phrasing echoes the method I try to use myself. Let me quote this passage and judge for yourself. I am certain that a striking docker in Liverpool will read this heart-rending account and recognise the similarities: "... and while the press is prone to explain strikes by 'intimidation', there is genuine mutual aid and support which are constantly practised by them. Everyone has heard of the colossal amount of work which was done by volunteer workers for organising relief during the London dock-labourers' strike; of the miner's widow who brought her life savings to the strike fund; of the Radstock miners, favoured with larger kitchen-gardens, who invited four hundred Bristol miners to take their share of cabbage and potatoes ..." (from *Mutual Aid*).

Just as the role of anarchist defence has not changed, similarly the encroachments of what may be called 'neo-enclosures' continue their relentless devastations. A current development is how the originally anarchist/socialist

endeavours towards the practice of mutual aid are being hived off to serve the rich. Building societies were originally benefit societies. The idea was that enough people put in their spare cash so that you could borrow from the common fund to *build your own dwelling*. That the Halifax alone should have attracted seven million members shows that even such an *insignificant* anarchist idea has succeeded out of all proportions. But of course the financial joke which was dreamt up by the whizz-kids is simply this. Give the members back their 'pennies' while the directors and their cronies keep the pounds. The joke is cruel. People are even told that they are offered £1,000 for giving up their rights of mutuality. Nothing of the sort, comrades. Only shares are offered, a minuscule amount out of a huge Stock Exchange flotation, the individual members get less than 1% of the flotation, 99% will go to the new owners, who of course could not raise that kind of wealth without the majority having been hoodwinked.

Amazing but true. The same applies as to how other communal enterprises have been 'neo-enclosed'. Perhaps anarchists should have more faith in their own economics. Again Kropotkin was right that production and consumption has to be balanced. It is only a question of distribution and proper attribution.

Value, anarchist value, is a difficult concept and has been probably the only stumbling block for anarchist theories. We must go by the common good, but which institutions do we respect and which do we reject. There is no 'folk-meet' now to make the decisions, parliament has usurped that function. But this is the wrong way of thinking anyway, in my opinion. We cannot always be on the defensive. Neither can we bring back old forms of organisations, however we would wish. When we oppose delegation of our authority it is sufficient as the building block for the anarchist edifice.

Unless we should fall into sectarian fanaticism, we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

John Rety

## ROUND-UP

you may still have a soft spot for him. Pirate Press has reprinted his 1988 speech to the first National Student Convention – from the Internet, apparently – as an eight-page pamphlet entitled *Reflections on Student Activism*.\* In it he recalls how the left of the '60s and '70s was destroyed by in-fighting and sectarianism and urges the audience not to allow that to happen to their movement. He stresses the importance of organising and resisting, and complementary nature of street actions and constitutional activity, and he warns about the problems of decision-making: "By 1970, when you had 15 people show up and three were FBI agents and six were schizophrenics, universal agreement was getting to be a problem". But despite the lighthearted moments, he no longer has that fire in him, and he's certainly no Theo Perkins. So a lightweight read but at a lightweight price, 50p.

After being dormant for four years *Direct Action* is being republished in magazine format by the anarcho-syndicalist Solidarity Federation (the British section of the International Workers Association), formed in 1994 by the merging of the old Direct Action Movement and various industrial networks, groups and individuals. The first issue is out now, is £1.50 for 36 A4 pages and aims to be quarterly. A brief glance through it indicates that it is of a much higher quality than before, well designed and laid-out and has a good cross-section of topics, including features on violence, anarchism and machismo; bullying and harassment in the workplace; children deprived of childhood.

There are articles on the JSA; the Spanish Civil War; the Labour Party, the unions and works councils, and a regular space for news of direct action and industrial/workplace activities, education, and book/film/music reviews.

For those people who over the last eighteen months or so have been asking for information on the Red Brigades and other terrorist groups in Italy, and for anyone else who might be interested, we now have back in stock Elephant Editions' *Armed Struggle in Italy 1976-78: a chronology*,\* under their 'Bratach Dubh' imprint (don't ask). It is just what it says, a day-by-day account of various armed actions – including bombings, arson and killings – against various aspects of the Italian state and capitalism, together with assorted long-winded and badly-worded justifications for them. An object lesson in how *not* to bring about an anarchist society and because of that, a particular useful historical document. 112 pages, £2.50.

**Note:** *Statism and Anarchy* by Bakunin, and *What is Property?* by Proudhon (both Cambridge University Press) have gone up in price to £13.95 each; we now have no more copies of *Misunderstanding Media* and it is no longer available. Now back in stock, however, is *Freedom in Education*\* (Lib Ed), £3.95.

**Four Eyes**

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## — ABOVE THE PARAPETS —

## THE UNCHANGING CONSTITUTION

The election campaign has begun with the party leaders stressing social issues – on the need, for example, to kick beggars off the streets. In the media, there is much debate on constitutional change, occasioned by the plans by the Liberal Democrats and New Labour to hold referenda on whether to change the voting system for Westminster elections, whether to have a Scottish Parliament, and so on. The House of Lords also faces reform under Labour, we are told.

One striking feature of the debate on constitutional change is that it is concerned solely with national and regional 'government'. The basis of capitalist society is that 'politics' should only concern itself tangentially with the working life of the country: the commercial and industrial sectors of society are rigorously excluded from any structures of accountability. Yet the major corporations regulate and control the lives of their workers and of huge numbers of others with much greater power and intrusiveness than any local authority, quango or department of state.

A.R. Orage, leading proponent of Guild Socialism, asked in 1914, "How comes it, then, that our democratised political structure still remains unrelated to democratic reality? The answer is simple: *Four-fifths of the community are imprisoned by the wage system, and the wage system is the negation of democracy.*" Much has happened to the British political system since 1914, but we are hardly any closer to introducing any element of democratic accountability into industrial relations.

Orage also wrote, in *National Guilds: An Inquiry into the Wage System and the Way Out*, that "the existence of two main divisions of society (however subdivided) – the possessing classes and the wage-earners – creates two types of citizenship, the active and the passive, which accurately respond to the power, qualities and psychology of the two economic divisions. Vote or no vote, what actually weighs in society is the power to exploit". This reality – of class division – is

what is missing from mainstream propaganda concerning citizenship, electoral reform and constitutional change generally. What is needed desperately is some equality and freedom and democracy in the workplace. This would be of immeasurably greater significance than half-hearted gestures towards satisfying the nationalisms of Scotland and Wales, or minor reforms of the Houses of Parliament.

What is needed is constitutional change in the larger structure of the British state, the barely regulated ruling institutions of society. We are governed by directors and corporate managers and the very rich as much as by Parliament and local government. The mechanisms of business domination – over workers and over the rest of society – are part of the real constitutional framework of Britain and reform is long overdue. It will not be brought about by Labour or the Liberal Democrats or reformers of the Charter 88 variety.

Having said all that, constitutional changes of the kind being discussed are not completely insignificant. The incorporation of the European Charter of Human Rights (which has *nothing* to do with the European Union, by the way) into British law may well have a beneficial effect on civil liberties in this country. As Ralph Miliband remarked in his classic *The State in Capitalist Society*, while one can make numerous damning criticisms of the state of civil and political liberties in advanced capitalist countries, yet "when all of this and more has been said about the limits and contingent character of civic and political liberties under 'bourgeois democracy', and when the fact has been duly noted that some of these liberties are a mere cloak for class domination, it remains the case that many others have constituted an important and valuable element of life in advanced capitalist societies; and that they have materially affected the encounter between the state and the citizen, and between the dominant classes and the subordinate ones". Quite true, and a balancing observation to that of Orage.

Milan Rai

UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS:  
WHO BELIEVES THE GOVERNMENT?LIST OF TOWNS ON  
PROJECT WORK

<i>The North</i>	<i>East Anglia</i>
Bolton and Bury	Norwich
Bradford	Peterborough
Huddersfield	
Wigan and St Helens	<i>South West</i>
Preston	Bristol
South Tyneside	Bath
Grimsby	Weston Super Mare
<i>Midlands</i>	<i>South East</i>
Derby	Brighton
Dudley and Sandwell	Hertford and Harlow
Leicester	East and North East London
Nottingham	Portsmouth
Stoke	
<i>Wales</i>	<i>Scotland</i>
Swansea	Dundee
Neath and Port Talbot	Dunfermline
Merthyr and Rhymney	Edinburgh
	Lanarkshire

No one! No one in their right mind believes in the government's figures on unemployment. One prominent politician claimed that more people believe in Father Christmas.

John Philpott, director of the Employment Policy Institute, last month argued: "The government may applaud the downward path in unemployment, which has taken the monthly count of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance below the politically sensitive two million mark. But the claimant count is widely mistrusted."

The government bases its calculations for those out of work on the 'claimant count' of those qualifying for the Jobseeker's Allowance. But government laws, like the Job Seeker's Act and Project Work, are designed to frighten people off the claimant register.

The figure for those who want a job but can't get one is 4,287,000 (see Employment Policy Institute indicators in EPI Employment Audit). No wonder the Royal Statistical Society has called for a new monthly count based on an internationally agreed definition of what constitutes an unemployed job seeker.

## THE SHRINKING JOB MARKET

A reading of the EPI Audit, as John Philpott said last month in an essay entitled 'Wanted: a warts-and-all tally of the UK's jobless', shows "that the number of jobless people who say they want a job is not 1.9 million registered by the claimant count, but well over four million".

The government claimant count puts the jobless at under two million. John Philpott and the EPI

## — OBITUARY —

## Ronnie Scott

The wisecracking successful Ronnie Scott portrayed in most obituaries was not by any means the whole of him. There was a demotic side to his character epitomised by the way he continued to play pitch and toss in the entrance of the club regardless of the status of the Great and the Good who had to step over and around him on such occasions.

"You think Ronnie knows this is going on?" said one of these eminences one day with all the suppressed excitement of a tourist who has found true low-life at last.

"Nah," came Scott's voice from the floor, "but if you pay to go in you'll get the chance to tell him."



Ronnie Scott, jazz musician and club owner, died on 23rd December 1996, aged 69.

His anarchist tendencies may have been largely limited to his pleasure in deflating the pompous and the powerful but there was also a well concealed generous side. During skiffle's brief vogue he, like most jazz musicians, mocked the skiffles' combination of musical ineptitude with Top Ten fame. However he'd known some of us as fans of his and in that small incestuous world of '50s Soho quietly extended small tokens of support when the going got rough. With me at least it took the form of the odd meal or drink in a pub

"jazz faces" did not frequent. "Can't be seen talking to washboard players in public" he'd say, "I don't know the words of *Worried Man* – though God knows I should ..."

He would come to my late night Charing Cross Road bookstall to get some air and buy science fiction (at that time a politically subversive form) to read "when the chatsbies [i.e. loud talkers] have taken over the club". He always made the time to gossip a bit and he was blistering about the record contracts of the time that had some of us on the breadline while our records were still in the charts. I remember him tearing out the flyleaf from a paperback and writing me a free pass for the club. I didn't use it often – in those impoverished days I could rarely afford the drinks even with free entrance, but I used it enough to stay in his mind. A couple of years later when I'd become an elderly university student (and was financially challenged as usual) I got the bar job in what had by then become Ronnie Scott's Old Place – a home for the *avant garde* of the time. Paying a routine visit from his shiny Frith Street premises he congratulated me on getting 'a job in the dry' and demanded the pass back. "Staff get in free and I'm not having you getting in free twice an evening" he said.

The Old Place was typical of his sardonic good nature. John Rety has noted that he let anarchists use it free for a conference. Anyone else would have sold the premises but Ronnie kept it going, at a loss, in order that the new jazz could have its say. Both Chris McGregor and Mike Westbrook had their London showcase there and although sometimes we had to break open the cigarette machine to pay the musicians their pittance it was the place where a lot of them, like John Surman and Dudu Pukwana first established a following.

He always had a memorable line. One time, when his hero Stan Getz had been more than usually difficult, he came up to my stall around midnight muttering imprecations about musicians in general and American tenor sax players in particular.

"I'm used to my idols having feet of clay" he said with more venom than usual. "This is the first time one has had a head full of the stuff!"

Many years ago he stated that on his death he wanted to be cremated and have his ashes scattered over his agent. Well he was cremated but not only musicians and fashionable nightclubbers will mourn his passing – those of us who survive from the old anarchic anti-authoritarian fringe of '50s Soho will as well. He helped a lot of us when there could be no possible profit in so doing.

John Pilgrim

Audit reckon the 'wannajob' level to be "well over four million". But in May last year I reported in *Freedom* (see 'Manchester Claimants Seize Job Centre') that: "Pamela Meadows, director of the Policy Studies Institute, claims that *up to seven million people of working age have no jobs*". This figure of seven million is made up of young adults who stay on in full-time education into their mid-twenties, and men aged over fifty who take early retirement rather than face a career change, as well as of the 'wannajob' element.

Pamela Meadows last year, in the journal *People Management*, was reported to be concerned about "the squeeze of the working population into the 25-50 age group, and the departure of the experienced employees from the national workforce".

Some still have jobs, but they might now be temporary, part-time or freelance. Recently this has hit the middle class journalists and other professionals as much as the workers.

## A NATION OF PART-TIMERS

A recent study from Cambridge Faculty of Social Science calculates that manual workers are 60% more likely to land in insecure jobs than are professionals. Many low-skill workers end up in a revolving door set-up, one week in a job, the next week on the dole. Even government figures show that half of all new claimants have been on the dole before, within the last year.

Some don't know where next week's money is going to come from. Security guards, general labourers, shop assistants, all are now at risk of instant dismissal on some pretext. In and out of work! As Yvette Cooper says in *The Independent*, "a worryingly large group of people are becoming trapped in a weird world on the edge of the labour market".

Of course the Government Employment Service will try to push claimants on training schemes, restart courses or into work experience programmes – anything to get people off the register. But even the government's own TEC (Training and Enterprise Council) fears for the lack of quality training available. Others, in 29 towns scheduled to start Project Work (see list), will be conscripted from March into menial jobs like painting the railings on the coast for East Yorkshire County Council.

According to the quarterly *Labour Force Survey*, of the 283,000 new jobs over the year to last November, just over half were part-time. Hence, as I write, the government has just published a further fall in the claimant count figure for unemployment to 1,884,700. The OECD figures still put nearly one in five non-pensioner households in Britain as having nobody in work, one of the worst in the industrial world.

We are becoming a nation of single parents, part-timers and security guards.

Mack the Knife



# Who Minds the Minders?

Dear Freedom,

While agreeing with Amorey Gethin's criticism of the quarantine solution for dangerous offenders (*Freedom*, 11th January), I'd like to point out that the proposed alternative may be even more problematic.

While sounding reasonable on first reading, the idea of assigning minders to watch over dangerous people is totally unrealistic in terms of human psychology. The problems are threefold:

1) Given that anti-social problems are more likely to be experienced in the early stages of an anarchist community, the majority of the population are unlikely to be as tolerant as comrades Gethin, Platts and Murray. A major threat to the well-being of the offender will come from the community at large. A single 'minder' would be unable to protect their 'ward' from an angry mob – even a heavily armed militia would find this task daunting.

2) Even in a community of people with exceptional tolerance, who would actually want to spend a large percentage of their time with an arsehole? If we are genuine anarchists, we are so because we want to live in a better world and share it with our fellows, not spend our time babysitting psychotics. I would suggest that those community spirited and self sacrificing enough to want to do this are themselves in need of therapy! I don't believe that if comrade Gethin sat down and thought what would be involved in being a 'minder', not only in terms of commitment but also responsibility, that he would want to do it himself. A team of 'minders' working in shifts may be easier on the individuals concerned, but requires even greater numbers of tolerant people (or those seeking therapy through service).

3) Finally, assuming enough volunteers can be found (I find the idea of appointing 'minders' anti-libertarian and offensive), what would be the effect of the 'minding' on them? Is it not likely that a close relationship would develop between the 'minder' and his 'ward', particularly as the 'minder' is likely to be of

the sympathetic type or to have some other affinity with violent offenders? And could this not lead to a complicity between the two, as often occurs between hijackers and their victims for example? This needn't be direct complicity of involvement, the indirect complicity of deliberate negligence would have exactly the same effect. Some may claim that a non-psychotic could not collude with psychotic acts, but who can say this for sure? My anarchism is based more on the adaptability of individuals to fit their situation, not an optimistic faith in the benignity of human nature. It may be argued that a shift-working team of 'minders' would be unlikely to form such relationships with their 'wards', but it seems to me that the more individuals involved the more probable complicity becomes.

Furthermore, what is to stop a vengeance seeker volunteering to 'mind' the offender?

Who would 'mind' the 'minders' and ensure that they were doing their job properly? This sounds like a velvet-gloved prison service in the making. It would certainly tie up a significant part of the human resources of a small community.

For me the only solution to the dangerous offender is to remove them from their community and place them in some kind of closed sanctuary, where they would be outnumbered by a whole community of potential 'minders' who could perhaps even eventually re-integrate them in society. Failing this, it seems that only execution would work, something that naturally should be the very last option.

Minor (and one-time) offenders could easily be handled by the community as a whole. Greater but non-psychotic offenders should be expelled from every community they offended in until they learned to adapt their behaviour. Dangerous psychotics will probably always exist, but as post-revolutionary anarchism evolves they, along with the less dangerous offenders, would almost certainly dwindle away to a rarity.

Steve Ash

Dear Freedom,

Chris Platts appears to regard any form of sexual relations between children and adults as necessarily constituting 'abuse' (*Freedom*, 30th November 1996). Unfortunately, by making this equation, he effectively cuts off all further discussion. One is forced either to agree with his position, or else run the risk of being labelled a defender of child sexual abuse. Yet isn't it precisely this lack of distinction which needs to be challenged and examined carefully?

As someone who works with abusers, Mr Platts is on the receiving end of what the law delivers. By failing to make any distinction whatever between acts which are affectionate and loving, freely accepted and given, and those which involve force, the law shows itself incapable of dealing with people as they are and of respecting individual choice. Everyone is steamrollered flat. The law rules with an iron fist. Does anarchism have nothing better to offer, except more of the same?

Mr Platts attempts to help abusers "to understand what motivates them to offend". Insofar as this enables them to avoid further encounters with the law, it is no doubt necessary and useful. But let us for a moment substitute the word 'homosexual' for 'abuser' and a somewhat different picture emerges.

It isn't so long ago that homosexuals too were encouraged "to understand what motivates them to offend". No allowance was made for what is now accepted as no more than a different sexual orientation. By treating all child abusers in the same way, by lumping together those who use force with those who genuinely care for children, the law itself becomes the abuser and destroyer.

Sex is a marvellous part of the human experience, and all human beings of whatever age are naturally able to respond to it, and are entitled to respond to it if they wish. This, I believe, is a basic human right, limited only by the inadmissibility of force. Unfortunately it often comes mixed with other ideas of power, control, exploitation, domination and taboo. But if a cart refuses to move which do you whip, the cart or the horse? Sex itself is not the problem, nor the age of the participants. It is the accompanying issues which need to be addressed, worked through and resolved.

Respect for others' freedom of choice. Respect for personhood. Respect for individual differences. Rejection of power and control. Aren't these what anarchism has to offer? Or am I simply wasting my time?

Malcolm Ledger

Dear Editors,

David Murray's letter ('How I'd Deal with Delinquents', 14th December 1996) admits that the word 'delinquents' is loaded, but goes on: "so are all others in this field – let's just use it as a label for now". As a label for whom?

There is no clear answer. We are given vague phrases: delinquents are "those who abuse innocent people", "those who damage others", "those who are too dangerous to be allowed to walk freely". Occasionally Murray is a bit more specific: delinquents are, or include, "people on the streets who are likely to abuse children, rape anybody, mug old ladies, or terrorise people in their homes". But what about people who run sweatshops and exploit child labour? What about arms manufacturers? What about tyrants who have exterminated millions of human beings? Does Murray think the only people too dangerous to be allowed to walk freely are the down-trodden and disturbed wretches who roam the streets?

Murray's proposal for dealing with his 'delinquents' (whoever they may be) is that all such "scumbags", unless they respond to "intensive psychotherapy", should be deported to some far-away place for life. The snag in this "libertarian solution", to my mind, is that

people who have the power to decide who is allowed to walk freely, and who is to be deported as an incorrigible delinquent, are the most dangerous people of the lot. Who will deport them?

Who in fact isn't dangerous? In a society as corrupt as ours, how many people can avoid accommodating themselves to social customs, traditions and institutions that are harmful? How many, for example, can avoid compromising with a system of wage slavery, or paying taxes to oppressive governments, or going along with nationalistic trends and attitudes that lead to war? Surely we are all responsible for the continued existence of the dangerous and damaging society in which we live; and so, unless Murray is proposing that we should all be deported, perhaps to some other planet, I can't see what he means.

The Amerindians, whose solutions "are not applicable in the world as it is" in Murray's opinion, seem to me to understand something important. They talk about 'wholeness' and 'the inter-relatedness of all things'. Now if we really saw that all things – including all human beings and all their thoughts, feelings and actions – are inter-related in a single whole, shouldn't we then be less inclined to damage and abuse each other? The question seems worth investigating, if we really are concerned about creating a decent world. But such an investigation requires a serious approach, a willingness to question all our traditional ideas and prejudices. It's far easier just to pick on a few 'delinquents' and get rid of them.

Francis Ellingham

Dear Freedom,

Believe it or not, neither do I want people wandering round abusing children, raping people and causing mayhem – that's why I do the job I do.

David Murray (*Freedom*, 14th December) seems to think that 'ordinary people' should be excluded from being made aware of the options of dealing with abusers, whereas I think it important to discuss what should happen to those people and how best to tackle their behaviour, in as open a fashion as possible.

I may well be derided for it, but I do feel it is important to voice my opinion. I am open to other suggestions, and I have often thought of isolating perpetrators in the manner David describes. But the flaw in his idea is: where do we find the space, given the growing population and land being at a premium?

So let's look for a more practical solution to the problem. I do recognise that resources are finite, but time and space should not be restricted too tightly for those who are experiencing difficulties. Because if we limit these, we will not achieve a society, and a world, based on the qualities that we all want: freedom, equality and solidarity.

Chris Platts

## Our bookshop workers reply to their critics

Dear Freedom,

In response to points raised by two readers lately, may I first thank David Murray (30th November) for pointing out a mistake in my review of *Soft Core: moral crusades against pornography in Britain and America* in the previous issue. The line he rightly queries should have read: "Thompson shows how current separatist-feminist anti-porn campaigners (who are like refugees from the defunct Stalinist political parties seeking a new home for their authoritarian attitudes) have allied themselves with right-wing Christian fundamentalists ..." and not "... who are largely refugees ..." etc. The error makes little practical difference when one reads about their behaviour, but in the interests of accuracy, apologies to anyone who was misled.

As to the letter from London Class War's George Burroughs protesting that the Class War Federation has not been wound up (11th January), he refers to the necessarily brief mention in a small 'Stop Press' box in the last *Freedom*. I actually said it was a reported winding up, reported in the *Weekly Worker* by a supporter at the conference who said that the only two areas to object to disbanding were Doncaster and London. If this is correct then it doesn't sound to me like a Federation "going from strength to strength", but if indeed it is an "unfounded rumour" then of course I'm

sorry to have given the wrong impression. However, rather than shooting the messenger perhaps Class War should be more careful about who they let into their conferences.

With regard to *Class War* magazine, let's not beat about the bush: if a normally regular periodical suddenly stops appearing for a couple of issues then either 1) it has ceased publication, for whatever reason, or 2) it is still being published but being carefully hidden away so nobody can find it, either by agents of the state or by the publishers themselves. Since 2) appears to us the least likely, we must conclude, in the absence of any official information from *Class War*, that its 'notorious' organ has effectively ceased publication. Either way, the effect on shops and readers is the same. Neither we nor the distributors of *Class War* have had any new issues since August last year. If George Burroughs or anyone else from Class War had been as quick to inform their retail outlets about the situation as he has been to jump on alleged 'falsehoods' in *Freedom*, there would have been no problem. We have not consigned *Class War* to "the revolutionary cupboard of the yesterdays" and if and when it resumes its publication the bookshop will be happy to take the usual large numbers to sell, as before, and to inform both our mail order and our bookshop customers of the fact.

KM for FP bookshop workers

## Lord of the Flies

Dear Freedom,

As *Lord of the Flies* has reared its head again (*Freedom*, 14th December), together with its claim to be a microcosm showing 'human nature', maybe I can point out the obvious (as I did many years ago) that a microcosm totally excluding half the cosmos – that is the female – is hardly valid. Naturally in an environment without love – and, unconvincingly enough, without even the usual homosexual affairs between boys – man's activities are degraded.

The capitalist system – which tries to exclude love too, depending instead on struggle, competition and machismo – may well reflect better Golding's apocalyptic pessimism.

A more realistic fable about youths is Lindsay Anderson's film *If*.

Jonn Roe



# The next GROUNDSWELL CONFERENCE

is on  
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### - 1997 PROGRAMME -

**24th January** Symposium on Work (short  
submissions invited)

**31st January** A speaker from *Green Anarchist*  
(probably Arthur Mix) talking about their court  
action and showing the video *Exit Stage Right*.

**7th February** Symposium on Class Struggle  
Anarchism (short submissions invited)

**14th February** General discussion

**21st February** Searchlight for Beginners  
(Larry O'Hara will introduce his new  
pamphlet)

**28th February** General discussion

**7th March** Who to Vote For? (speaker Adrian  
Williams)

**14th March** General discussion

**21st March** Politics and the Ethical Void  
(Steve Booth will introduce his new pamphlet)

**28th March** General discussion

**4th April** Anarchism and History (speaker  
David Probart)

**11th April** General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a  
discussion, please contact Carol Saunders or  
Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville  
at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth,  
Middlesex TW7 4AW (telephone 0181-847  
0203 subject to caller display and an answer  
phone, which means if you withhold your  
telephone number you will be ignored or  
disconnected), giving subject and prospective  
dates and we will do our best to accommodate.

**Peter Neville / Carol Saunders**  
London Anarchist Forum

## Dales Red Rambles

A series of guided circular walks in the  
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Walks are between 5 and 8 miles long. All walks  
are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated.

**23rd February - Airedale:** Skipton to  
Embsay. Meet outside Skipton Castle at 10.45am.

**23rd March - Airedale:** Malham to Bordley.  
Meet in main car park at Malham at 10.45am.

**20th April - Bishopdale:** West Burton to  
Swinithwaite. Meet West Burton village school at  
11.00am.

**18th May - Lower Airedale:** Walk around  
Cowling. Meet Cowling village centre at  
10.45am.

**22nd June - Upper Wharfedale:** Buckden  
to Yockenthwaite. Meet in main car park at  
Buckden at 11am.

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

Telephone for further details  
**01756-799002**

## ACF

### DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Discussion meetings open to the public are  
convened by the London group of the  
Anarchist Communist Federation on the  
first Thursday of every month. They start at  
8.00pm at the Marchmont Community  
Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1  
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### Thursday 6th February at 8pm WHAT A DISASTER: CAPITALISM!

The Kings Cross fire, plane crashes, train  
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Further information from  
**ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX**

## Red Rambles

A programme of free guided walks in Derbyshire,  
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**February 2nd:** Walk leader Jonathan. Blore,  
Ilam and Limestone Country. Meet 11am at  
roadside next to Blore Hall, Blore, Derbyshire  
(Blore is off the A52T Ashbourne to Leek  
road).

**March 2nd:** Walk leader Malcolm. Derwent  
valley, woods and pastures. Meet at 11am  
at Lea Mills car park, Lea Bridge (near  
Holloway), Derbyshire.

**April 6th:** Walk leader Ray. Charnwood  
Forest. Meet 11am at Flying Horse Pub,  
Field Head, Leicestershire (take A50 from  
Junction 22, M1).

**June 1st:** Walk leader Jonathan. The  
Roaches, Staffordshire. Meet 11am at road-  
side entrance to Windygates Farm. Take  
A53 from Leek to Upper Hulme, turn off at  
Upper Hulme and follow signs to Roaches.  
Montainous walk through gritstone edges  
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Tel: **01773-827513** for details

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