

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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THOUGHTS ON THE SEPTEMBER SPECTACULAR MEDIA HYPOCRISY AND MASS HYSTERIA

We write these lines hours before the grand finale of the 'Diana September Spectacular' as it sets off from the Abbey with the voice of her hero Elton John echoing all the way along the route to her final resting place. A route not lined by flowers this time but by an estimated six million human 'mourners', some of them equipped with sleeping bags and rations who will have squatted on the pavements for two days to 'get the best seats' as the show goes by.¹

For *Freedom* to simply dismiss the event would be to ignore the power of the media and the general dissatisfaction of a large section of the community *with their own lives*.

Surely one does not need to elaborate on the power of the mass media (and this of course includes television). They cater for the lowest common denominator in human prejudices: unemployment is the fault of allowing too many immigrants, mostly black, into the country; poverty doesn't exist; half the unemployed draw the dole and benefits, and at the same time moonlight.

The super-rich are never criticised. After all, they provide jobs, just like the armaments industry. And surely it's not surprising that for millions of the underprivileged Diana was the success story to aim at. Apart from her aristocratic background, she was not all that bright (she learned an awful lot during her sixteen years in the Royal entourage). How many simple but beautiful nineteen year olds would not daydream of marrying the Royal Prince and eventually becoming Queen?

One interesting and amusing article in *The Independent* (5th September) which, like the rest of the so-called broadsheets, joined the Diana chorus of 'grief' and 'mourning' for the first four days, admits that "after all when

I was eleven I wanted to marry Prince Charles myself".² This writer so agrees with her comment that "I didn't know her - I can't mourn for someone I did not know". This is the whole point, surely, about the pernicious role of the mass media: *they create 'personalities'*, feed them with hype and when it suits them they also *destroy* them. The Princess of Wales was part of this racket. She wanted the best of both worlds: *privacy* and *publicity*. But for the publicity she might have gone on being a nanny - a good one.

Thanks to the publicity she's now dead in the prime of life and will not see the stupid millions lining the route of her coffin, nor the millions of signatures of her 'mourners' who spent up to six hours on their feet to put their X.

For anarchists the spectacle of that week is surely one of depression. She was a not-all-that-intelligent member of the privileged class. Admittedly she was beautiful and, after sixteen years in the limelight, was in fact a 'superstar', and the tabloids and the media in general used her, as she obviously used them. But what is surely much more depressing is the *mass hysteria*.

Imagine if one could persuade all those millions of 'Diana mourners' to block the streets of our cities to protest at the invasion of the motor car and the pollution and the thousands of deaths every year, and advocate more and better public transport, for instance?

Imagine if all the old age pensioners who were among the millions of 'mourners' joined Jack Jones to protest at their poor pensions, which are also being threatened.

Imagine if all the sick needing hospital treatment and are being told that because of 'shortage of money'

they may have to wait at least a year before they can be admitted, were to demonstrate along Whitehall and into Downing Street.

We anarchists answer that the general public is brainwashed by the mass media, the capitalist press, and this includes the broadsheet papers who in the first three days were as bad as the vulgar tabloids.

So long as there is no millionaire press to combat them one must expect the kind of hysterical reactions following the Paris car crash and the sanctification of Diana.

In the opening paragraph of her feature article in *The Independent* (5th September) that excellent journalist Suzanne Moore writes:

"The media giveth and the media taketh away, but what the media wants the media shall have. By reflecting the will of the people this week, it has moved mountains. The Queen, the iciest peak of all, will talk to the nation because that is what the nation wants. How do we know that the nation wants this? Because the media has told us so."

Is it not time that enough of the victims of the media said ENOUGH and thought about creating a media that provided news and information, and did not want to slant the news for the benefit of its millionaire bosses and their class?

Surely it's time one started to consider an *alternative press* and the events of this September spectacular is the best reason to reject our media and to seek to create genuine alternatives, even within the capitalist system.

1. In *The Daily Telegraph* (5th September) the headline was "Pavement mourners start a long vigil. Memories shared as the best seats are claimed" followed by half a page of sentimental 'interviews'.

2. Sara Maitland in 'We are not all part of this' in *The Independent* (5th September).

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MAGNET AND LIVERPOOL LOCK-OUTS: A FETISH OF FLEXIBLE LABOUR ...

BLAIR'S DIVINE DEITY OF DESPAIR

Last week saw worldwide stoppages against the Liverpool lock-out of up to 500 dockers. The men who were sacked nearly two years ago, when they refused to cross a picket line in support of the eighty workers made redundant by an independent stevedoring firm. Their campaign of continuous picketing has dominated the Port of Liverpool, and lit the imagination of solidarity of a world of labour. An International Day of Action on Monday 8th September was backed by strikes in Australia, North America, Canada, Denmark, Japan, South Africa and Sweden. This will be followed by a rally in Liverpool to mark the second anniversary of the dispute on 27th September.

Scabs have been moved in to replace the sacked workers. Although the bosses, Mersey Docks & Harbour Board, claim their business has been unaffected by the dispute, their share price has been volatile. Argos, the catalogue sale firm, is one of the customers using Mersey Docks facilities for the import and export of goods to and from Ireland, and it has been targeted by a boycott by Dockers support groups. Shares in Argos have slumped of late.

Across the Pennines in Darlington, after three years of frozen pay 350 Magnet workers struck in September 1996. Less than two weeks later the strikers were sacked and

Magnet refused to negotiate. Most of these workers had long service, but the boss who kicked them out had worked for the firm for 42 days.

Last year Magnet's profits hit £27 million, £11 million earned by Magnet Darlington. Magnet has spent millions covering the cost of the strike – a fair pay rise for the Darlington workers would have cost, at most, £40,000 a year. Poor quality of work, low morale and production of the occupying scabs has been reported.

These are the facts in the case of two disputes which have caught the imagination of the international labour movement.

CHANGING REALITY

The *Financial Times* last week reports: "The flexible Blair tells unions" as a headline comment on his address to the TUC conference. The next day the National Council of Citizens' Advice Bureaux warned that flexible labour markets hit at the poor and those on low pay. The flexible labour market was a one-sided deal, it said, with the bosses offering nothing in return and leading to "people suffering uncontrollable insecurity".

This tells us something about how modern folk tackle a crisis today. Max Weber in his



Diana, Princess of Wales, "most iconic woman of our times" by photographer Mario Testino

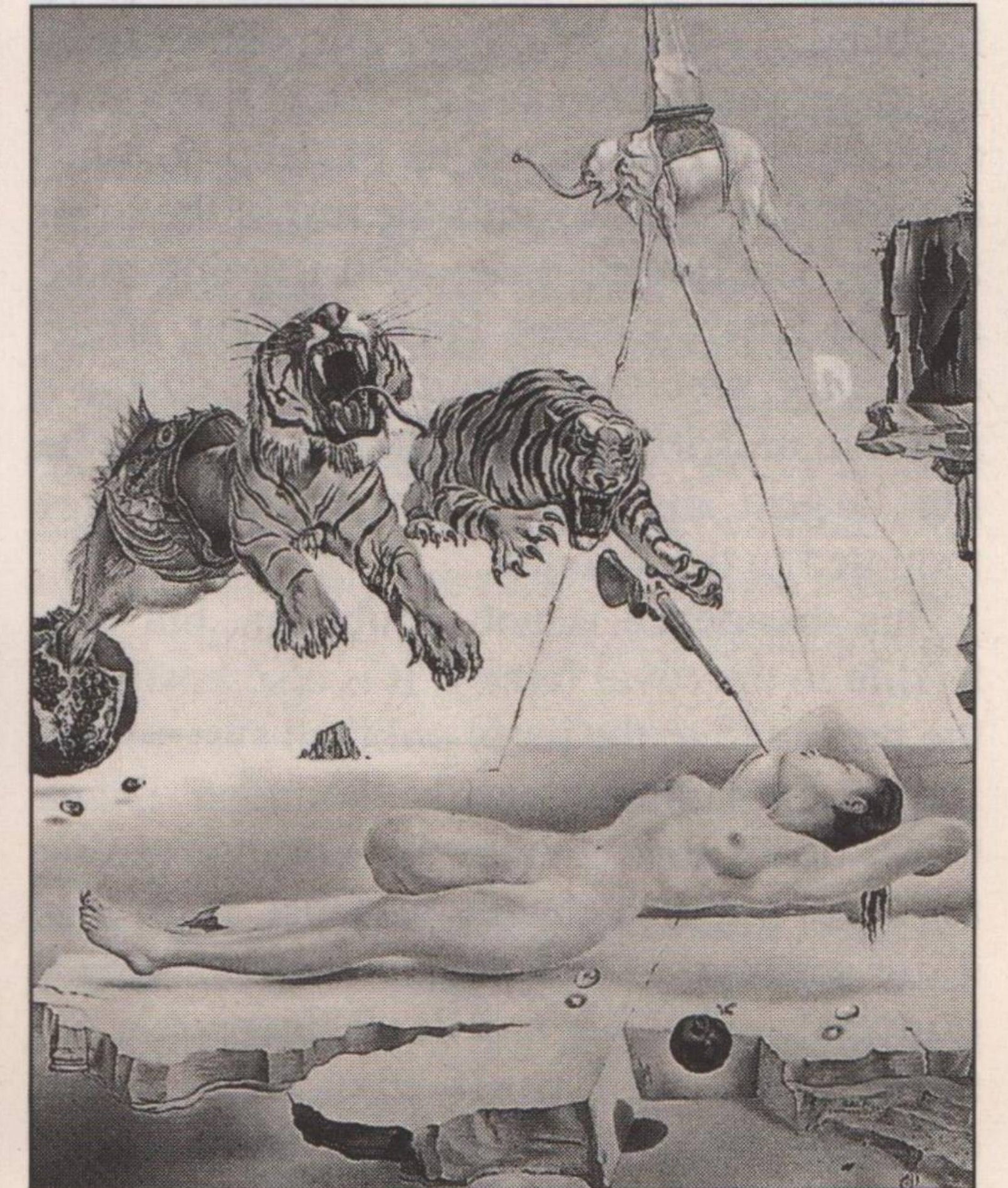
book *General Economic History* claims that "crises became an imminent factor of the economic order" when "production was freed from the organic limitations in which nature had held it confined" in the nineteenth century, with the use of iron rather than wood in building machines. Crises like chronic unemployment, destitution, the glutting of the market and political disorder which upset industrial life, had always gone on everywhere. But the big difference between the old Chinese peasant who is hungry and cold and knows, as Weber says, "that while the Deity is unfavourable to him or the spirits are disturbed, nature consequently does not give him rain or sunshine at the right time", and the modern workers who he says hold that "the social order itself may be held responsible for the crisis is that "in one case men turn to religion", in the other "the work of man is held at fault and the labouring man draws the conclusion that it must be changed".

Herr Weber insists: "Rational socialism would never have originated in the absence of crises". Modern times bringing with it reason rather than religion, rational businessmen, rational socialism, even rational anarchism.

But now suddenly we have a new deity, a new god: the flexible market-place. Down on your knees, workers, before your supreme god: the globalised all-devouring market.

The nature of politics, even in modern times, is to get folk to believe there is nothing to be done and no one is to blame for the bad lot they must endure. The system is not responsible. If anything it is the docker, the carpenter on kitchen furniture or the unemployed themselves who are to blame.

The nazis perfected the idea that there was something inevitable about their party coming to power in the 1930s. Then Margaret



'Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee Around a Pomegranate, a Second Before Waking Up' by Salvador Dali

Thatcher in the 1980s came up with the same old war cry – "There is no alternative" – when she got people to accept job cuts.

It was this kind of thinking that Bertolt Brecht sought to challenge when he wrote *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* based on Hitler's rise to power.

PROGRESS IS A SWINDLE

Tony Blair and Mrs Thatcher today promote the flexible market as a means of setting humanity free, in the same way that old socialists like H.G. Wells advocated the machine culture. For Mr Wells progress was "the machines, our new race of slaves, which will set humanity free".

Yesterday the machine world suggested for some, like Orwell, socialism, whereas today the flexible market suggests capitalism red-raw-in-tooth-and-claw. What Mr Wells, Blair and Thatcher all had in common is the way they were all proponents of the 'new', the modern and progress.

You can't stop progress, they say. This, and phrases like 'There is no alternative', tend to induce impotence and an attitude of mind that believes nothing can be done to resist job losses and a boss's persecution of his workforce. It is a case of the government telling us to take our medicine, however foul; without complaint.

If it's true that you can't kick the market, modern humanity seems worse off than Weber's traditional Chinese peasant. At least the Chinese man can turn to his god for comfort, or even to pin the blame, but modern folk living under the flexible market and Tony Blair's new deity of despair have only themselves to blame. If this is progress, then progress is a swindle.

Mack the Knife

THE FLICKERING FLAME FLARES

For the third time in two years the world's dockers have achieved the incredible feat of a global strike in support of their tenacious brothers in Liverpool. To the media wallowing in the 'grieve-a-thon' for Diana this is not newsworthy. The facts say otherwise.

The Swedish dockers stopped all work on ACC and cast containers for 24 hours, while Denmark's dockers voted for a 24-hour strike with more actions to come in both countries. All of Portugal's ports were paralysed by strike action, some for two hours whilst others, such as Lisbon, ceased work for 24 hours during which they discussed the situation of the world's dockers and showed the Ken Loach film *The Flickering Flame*. In Spain the Coordinadora and CGT are planning 24-hour strikes and a congress to be held in Paris of southern European dockers.

Despite legal threats from the Mandela government, South African dockers struck on the 4th September and have promised a total boycott of ships using Liverpool and Sheerness.

In Australia all major ports closed for five hours and the Aussie dockers also wrote to the

TUC saying "adopt the same approach to Liverpool as the rest of the world, and that is support".

In Canada Saint John Port struck for 24 hours, as did Vancouver and Halifax for four hours. From Alaska to Mexico, the West Coast closed down for eight hours.

Closer to home, Belfast and Drogheda dockers took strike action, while in London Reclaim the Streets picketed the home of the Mersey Docks chairman Gordon Waddell with a banner which read "Injustice is not anonymous, it has a name and address".

All stirring stuff. Hopefully you feel inspired to do something yourself in support of the heroic embattled community of the Liverpool dockers.

On 27th September the dockers demonstrate to commemorate their two years in struggle. They march in Liverpool in an act of defiance to show they won't go away.

For more information telephone the Liverpool dockers on 0151-207 3388. Any donations should be sent by cheque to Mersey Dock Shop Stewards, c/o Jimmy Davies, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool.

— ABOVE THE PARAPETS —

The Funeral of Hope

Writing several days before the funeral of Diana Windsor/Spencer, I suspect that this is going to be an important event not only in the relationship between the people of Britain and the monarchy, but more widely between the general public and the institutions of power in this country. By the time this is published, many of the following observations are likely to have become commonplace observations, even so they have logical consequences which are unlikely to be stated.

While much of Diana's appeal derives from her royal status, and is therefore thoroughly monarchist and reactionary, one strand of this appeal seems to be that she is perceived as having been an ordinary person who attained royal status (her aristocratic background is forgotten). The strength of the public reaction to her death derives, it seems to me, from the fact that Diana is seen as having had a tragic life after being mistreated cruelly by the rest of her husband's family, most cruelly by her husband, Charles Windsor. The outpourings of grief and reverence for Diana are simultaneously expressions of deep hostility towards him, and towards the rest of the royal family. The funeral procession is going to be an anti-Establishment Establishment affair, reflecting precisely the duality of Diana's position in British society. It will probably be the largest dissident demonstration ever mounted in this country.

This dissidence is not republican, but it is hostile to the royal family. It is also hostile to the press and to the party political system, the former for having allegedly 'hounded' Diana to her death and the latter for not intervening to 'save' her. It is deeply populist. Blair was quite correct to call Diana 'the people's princess'; in her life and death the people see themselves and their own hopes and disappointments. I was unexpectedly moved to hear on the television one young man say, "Leave her to us, we'll give her a funeral". He was speaking for an 'us' of ordinary decent people, who feel increasingly alienated from those who are alleged to represent us and to articulate our needs and aspirations. There is

a deep and growing well of bitterness and cynicism in this country which has been measured in opinion polls and discussed in agonising tones in Establishment circles. Whether or not she truly possessed such qualities, she was *seen* as someone in public life with warmth and humanity, vulnerability and strength. Her early death, after her husband's unfaithfulness, her exclusion from the royal family, the government's rejection of her request to be an ambassador for Britain, and the harrying attentions of the press, is being felt by the people of Britain, I believe, as a profound blow to certain cherished values.

The resulting dissidence and wariness is not necessarily to the advantage of the Left. The strengthening of celebrity-worship, fashion-worship, beauty-worship, the powerful reinforcement of the mystique of royalty that the image of 'Diana-the-martyr' bestows, and the stoking of a highly canalised and restricted hatred of the press and the political system, all mean that the anti-Establishment rumblings of the general public have a distinctly authoritarian feel to them. There is, I would say, a whiff of fascism in the air.

Milan Rai

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POSTSCRIPT TO THE SATURDAY SPECTACULAR

The Sunday media pulled out all the stops with supplements and hype galore. "Now you belong to Heaven" declared the *News of the World*. The *Mail on Sunday* made sure it advertised its 32-page 'special edition' on Classic FM all day on Saturday for "The day we all said goodbye". The *Sunday Express* had a 32-page "celebration of an extraordinary life" and the *Sunday Telegraph* offered a "32-page colour souvenir magazine" also described as a "celebration" of Saint Diana's short life. And so on and so on.

One discordant voice appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph* by one of their regular journalists, Minette Marrin, with the provocative title "Why I cannot share the people's grief". We would like to reproduce it in full since it underlines the theme of our article, but we must be content with one or two quotes. In her opening paragraphs she writes:

"To me the most startling and disturbing thing about the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, has been the public response to it. I cannot share this response. It fills me with disquiet.

I watched television with amazement and distaste, and sometimes anger. At moments I have felt like an alien in my own country. I suspect that there are many people who feel the same. Yet somehow, and this is even more disturbing, it is not permissible to say so."

And she sensibly draws a distinction between what would be the "spontaneous sadness" of the news of a sudden death of somebody who is always in the news with:

"the public response as it has been distorted and exaggerated and imposed upon us by the media, and by all those who have tried to use Diana's image for their own ends. From the very first moments we have been crudely manipulated."

And in another respect Minette Marrin points out that:

"The great altars of flowers and cuddly toys wouldn't have reached such astonishing proportions, I believe, if they had not been so widely shown on television with approving comments. Television made laying a bunch of flowers seems like the proper thing to do, to people who hadn't at first thought of it, and then it became a media event."

In the *Sunday Telegraph* of 7th September there is at least one article in the midst of the Diana hype with the headline "Are we united in grief or going collectively nuts?" by one Joan Smith. Full of interesting questions and reflections, but we have only space to quote the last paragraph:

"Now she is dead, and an unreliable hagiography is being created before our eyes, it is all the more vital to recognise that disjunction. That is why some of us sympathise with Diana's family without feeling drawn into a carnival of grief whose manifestations were apparent as early as Tuesday morning, when a placard appeared on a lamp-post in central London. 'If Jesus was God's only son', it demanded, 'then who is Diana?' This is evidence not of a nation united in grief but of one tending towards madness."

Surely most anarchists would agree? What do you, our comrades and readers, have to say about this spectacular?

ANARCHIST NEWS IN BRIEF

SAVE THE NHS OR ELSE In her *Independent* feature Suzanne Moore recounts her own experience of having to be taken from Heathrow by ambulance to hospital with back trouble. She apparently expected that "fifteen sex gods would jump up and down on me, forming deeply meaningful relationships with me and each other in the process. Mostly I thought they would make the pain stop." What happened in fact was that she "was left on a trolley in a corridor for three hours" (my italics).

This is not exceptional. One of *Freedom's* editors was last year rushed to hospital by ambulance with a gastric ulcer about to explode. He was transferred onto a stretcher and then dumped in a corridor for two hours without anybody even saying 'hello'. But one can't blame the over-worked hospital staff.

I say spend less on armaments and more on the 'Ill-Health' Service.

DRUGS IN THE NEWS Why not? It's now probably the world's biggest industry, and in spite of billions of pounds spent to combat it, it goes on and on. The powers that be don't or won't realise that the main drugs dealers are not just simple pushers. You can be sure that they have their informers in all the government – police, MI6, you name them – departments dealing with drugs. Now even the top policemen are saying that something has to be done to de-criminalise drugs. At least certain drugs. The Italian anarchist Malatesta was suggesting, nearly a hundred years ago, just this for the then problem drug cocaine, and suggesting a massive propaganda campaign explaining the dangers of such drugs.

Some many heed the warnings, others may not, but at least it would help to neutralise the dealers and some of the crime that results from young people needing the money to buy their dope.

WHEN IS A SECRET SERVICE NOT A SECRET?

All the fuss about the revelations made by an ex-secret service man makes one laugh. Today there can no longer be 'secrets'. Money in the capitalist world we live in can buy anything at

a price. Anyway, when one learns that MI5 had a dossier on Edward Heath, they must have been hard-up for the real enemies of the state. But they obviously go through the motions of following 'suspects' and phone-tapping them on quite a scale. As the armaments bosses point out in spite of not knowing where the 'enemy' is, it provides thousands of jobs. And presumably MI5 does likewise. What a crazy world we live in.

SOME FAT CATS ARE FATTER THAN OTHERS

Even where fat cats are concerned, there is some kind of arbitration as to who is getting just right or too much. Crisp Consulting, which apparently "advises regulated industries", and the Centre for Economics and Business Research maintain that "the bosses of the privatised utilities are underpaid by an average of 6%". I should add that the spokesman for Economics and Business Research is a former CBI economist. An example of the *thin* cats is one Victor Cocker, chief executive of water company Severn Trent who, according to the *Guardian* (25th August 1997), have been criticised for making over £700 profit a minute since privatisations. So, according to these experts, Mr Cocker has been done out of a quarter of a million pounds. "His position merits £610,700" – which, in terms you and I can understand, is £1 a minute, £60 an hour.

The study conceded that "the assumptions about perfect competition do not apply in the real world". The examples given are of the salaries of the chiefs of two supermarkets which occupy similar market positions. David Sainsbury earns (?) £307,000 whereas the Tesco chairman gets £767,000. Apart from the fact that both gentlemen surely have profitable shares in their business, compare their income with that of pensioners who have worked for forty years or more and get the basic pension of £3,255. Sainsbury's salary is 94 times more and the Tesco chairman's 'modest' salary is no less than 235 times as much as that of a pensioner who is expected to enjoy his or her retirement. Such is our classless, democratic society. **Libertarian**

NOT UTOPIA, BUT INTERESTING!

A news item I can't miss appeared in the *Independent* first on 24th July with the heading "Workers' paradise delivers the goods" and on the next day "Message from the workers' paradise: we're doing fine". It's about a small engineering firm with 28 staff who have not actually taken over the firm from the boss, Mr Lewis, but who more or less run it as a group.

"The 28 staff work in teams of seven and decide their own work patterns, and when to take a long weekend to go fishing instead of slaving over a hot press.

There are no workers committees or trade unions, and overtime is an alien concept. The average salary is £16,500 but at the end of every month 20% of the profits are shared out among staff."

Mr Lewis, the boss, apparently got the idea after a visit to Japan in 1984. He says "It's just common bloody sense ... I am a happy man and so is everyone else because people's quality of life has gone up. We work smart not hard."

The firm's business manager, Tina Mason, maintains that the key elements to its undoubted success are trust and work structures that place the emphasis on self-reliance.

"We've got away from the idea that management can do it all themselves – they like to think they can, but they can't. It's the people in there that can' she said, pointing to the shopfloor."

This is surely not a new discovery.

"The basic package is £16,500 a year and, with overtime no longer necessary, a working week of normally four days, unless a job needs finishing, and a share in company profits she believes the new arrangements benefit everyone."

Derek Prickett, a 41 year old "experienced metal polisher", is no longer worried.

"If one of our team needs to take the afternoon off because, for example, they need to pick up the children, we will cover for him knowing he will do the same for us. It's all about team-work. I wouldn't go back to the old ways – not unless you paid me £20 an hour!"

While there are still some tensions, 'like anywhere else', he says staff are happy in their work and he has learnt new skills on top of his metal polishing expertise. 'It's like a little factory.'

Obviously Mr Lewis is still the boss in the semi-workers'-control utopia. At least he appears not to be a know-all and spends much of his time being a propagandist.

As the *Independent* puts it:

"Since the business now runs without him Mr Lewis can afford to spend his time going round the country proselytising and promoting his book *How to Transform Your Company and Enjoy It*."

I ask when will the workers learn that they can well manage without the bosses and the capitalists?

Libertarian

CLAIMANT HIT SQUADS DOLE OUT JUSTICE IN EDINBURGH, BRIGHTON AND NOTTINGHAM

HOT SUMMER OF DISCONTENT IN NATION'S DOLE OFFICES

Earlier this year a question was put to the Employment and Education Committee in the House of Commons regarding possible threats from the Groundswell organisation. The question inquired: "Could you tell us more about this organisation and its activities, and how the Employment Service has dealt with them?"

The response came back: "Groundswell is a loose federation of radical groups which made anonymous and illegal threats against Employment Service and Benefit Agency staff who implemented JSA benefit sanctions. The threats were taken seriously and both the police and HSE were consulted. Police advice and support has been exemplary, and appears

to have helped deter Groundswell from implementing their threats to harm staff."

The respondent also claimed that though there "have been a small number of specific threats made against individuals ... to date there has been no case of direct harm caused to any person or damage to their property".

That was in January. In the summer one Scottish newspaper reported: "Dusk falls over Edinburgh and two masked men slink off into the darkness, their covert work for the day finally done. Looking like some strange characters from an old *Batman* episode, these masked bandits have just poster up their last poster ... - a big, bold affair, intended to name and shame a Job Centre adviser they have

accused of abusing his position. They say he has been harassing claimants. This makes him, in the slang of this underground group, a 'dole harasser'."

Barry Reamsbottom, General Secretary of the CPSA, accused the group of using Kangaroo Court tactics to bully civil servants. How are staff supposed to defend themselves against their accusers, he asks.

It seems that in the absence of any ability to stop the administration of this bite-back strategy by jobless claimants, Mr Reamsbottom is asking for some appeals machinery so that his members can put their case to their jobless accusers. The Employment Service is helpless and hopeless faced with the artful exponents of 'Paparazzi Politics'. The dole queue militants' tactics are doing the business.

NOTTINGHAM ARRESTS

On 21st July unemployed members of the Nottingham Campaign Against the JSA disrupted the Castle Boulevard Unemployment Benefit Office, when they launched their 'Three Strikes and You're Out' initiative. Then they served warning letters to three members of staff on whom they had gathered evidence of bullying and intimidation towards claimants. They appealed for more information about local dole bullies, and offered support and advice to those who need it.

One campaigner, Ben McDonald, said: "Dole workers are public employees who are there to help us and are bound by codes of practice, instead we often find power-crazed bullies repeatedly treating us like crap ... The message is get your act together or get out, you have been warned".

Since this action in Nottinghamshire the group has been approached indirectly by the union, the CPSA. An informal meeting has been requested. The union also indicated that the Department of Social Security was considering calling in the police.

Later two people were woken by the police in the early hours and their houses were searched. The two were kept in custody for

— COPY DEADLINE —
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 4th October, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 25th September

GOD SAVE PAPARAZZI PORNOGRAPHY IN ... A NATION OF NOSEY PARKERS

The chief complaint suffered by those of us who were brought up after the war is that our eyes are bigger than our bellies. Machiavelli was aware of the seductiveness of novelty, but it seems to have reached ridiculous proportions in modern times. Orwell insists that "modern man is rather like a bisected wasp which goes on sucking jam and pretends that the loss of its abdomen does not matter".

The row about the paparazzi photographers in Paris who pursued the Princess of Wales is revealing. It brings out the hypocrisy and repressed 'nosey parker' element in the English people. Many of the Princess's detractors suddenly overnight became her most adoring fans. Eminent feminists have gone on to claim her for their own. One even called her a victim of men.

One would have thought that she was more a victim of the modern world which she herself so deftly tried to manipulate. Killed in a speeding car driven by a drunk driver from the Ritz, chased by paparazzi who she had informed of her movements that very night.

The term 'paparazzi' was first used in the 1960s film *La Dolce Vita* ('The Sweet Life'). One critic called it a meaningless death on a par with that of James Dean (*Rebel Without a Cause*) or Elvis.

The moon-faced well-fed feminist pundit Polly Toynbee, who writes about poverty, disadvantage and single mothers for the *Independent*, claimed it was not "hypocrisy, it is human" to wallow in the gossip of tabloid newspapers and at the same time condemn the same contents as demeaning and degrading. She says that the "law is about protecting us from ourselves ... once prurient gossip is out there for sale, we may find it irresistible ... as humans, we band together to curb those natural appetites in order to make society bearable to live in". She calls for a law to set "limits to our greed for gossip, for our own sakes".

If Ms Toynbee can't be trusted to control her appetite, can't we have her sectioned? Her attitude is that of a snivelling sanctimonious drivell about getting the poor out of bed and onto Workfare, or making men pay their maintenance on time, or stopping us all from reading trashy gossip.

The reality, of course, is that the Royal Family provide us with an entitlement to be nosey parkers on a mass collective scale,

something which would be considered rude and unforgivable if we practised the same thing on our neighbours. Unlike other nations, it is not the done thing to pry into the affairs of others in our communities, although 'Fraud Hot-Lines' and recently enacted Social Security Fraud Acts seem to be trying to counter this instinct.

George Orwell claimed that "the most hateful of all names in an English ear is nosey parker". The Royal Family and the paparazzi allow us to become nosey parkers by proxy, which is a rather good English compromise allowing us to be nosey from our own armchair. At a time when we are all being modernised, conscripted, dragooned, listed, labelled and numbered, one of the few pleasures left to us is to drool over the lives of royalty and their hangers-on, like Diana.

Arturo Ui



— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

WHAT THE CHILDREN REMEMBER



Whitechapel: life in the street, 1938

taken from *Out of the Ghetto* by Joe Jacobs

(Phoenix Press, £9.00* from Freedom Press Bookshop).

Joe Jacobs was born the son of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and grew up in the Jewish district of Whitechapel in the heart of London's East End. This book documents his own political development and the threat posed by Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. It is a controversial book, which ends by being highly critical of the actions of the British Communist Party and of world communism in general from a militant and revolutionary standpoint.

compared to other children's".

My own feeling, for which the contributors provide some evidence, is that, like the three major parties, even the Communist Party

contained both authoritarians and libertarians. It had its automatic bureaucrats, who in Eastern Europe became the people who cheerfully sentenced their rivals to death (Harry Pollitt's

I was reared in one of those London suburbs which were an overflow from the incredibly overcrowded pre-war East End. Consequently from childhood I knew plenty of Communist Party families, waving at me their books from the Little Lenin Library as well as the collected works of Marx and Engels. Their publishers, Lawrence & Wishart, celebrate their sixtieth anniversary this year and their latest book, *Children of the Revolution* by Phil Cohen (£12.99) is a devastating critique of the communist background. There is an engaging literature, from Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* to Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*, exploring the experience of childhood in non-conformist sects which alone were the messengers of the real truth. Phil Cohen was the child of communist parents and, having described his own shift of allegiance from Lenin to Lennon, he interviewed twelve people who grew up as the children of communist parents in the Cold War Britain of the 1950s.

He says that the analogy with religion (not non-conformity but catholicism) continually cropped up in the interviews, bringing a recurring question to his mind: "Why did sincere and intelligent people suspend their critical faculties for so long, both in supporting foreign leaders and regimes that were so evidently not worthy of support, and believing that British people would eventually 'see the light' and vote for them?"

The testimonies are absorbing for anyone who is trying to understand the period. I can remember people reared in the 1930s who recalled for me the *embarrassment* of parental beliefs, like the agony of belonging to the family who stayed seated when the national anthem was played in the cinema. None of this awkwardness in being different is reflected by Phil Cohen's witnesses. Nor is there evidence of a particular style of communist parenthood. One of them reports how her father's typically authoritarian and dogmatic response to her opinions was "Oh, don't be stupid, you don't know what you are talking about".

However, another recollection is that "We had very open discussion in the family, and one of the things I noticed at the time, and my children subsequently commented on, is how much more debate there was in our home

son reports on his own personal brushes "with the well-known 'excesses' of Soviet and Eastern European regimes in which they'd devoured their own children"). And of course, when a youth culture emerged in the '60s, the bosses of the Young Communist League were completely out of touch with what was actually happening.

Yet there were also party members who could not be contained by the party puritanism. Mike Rosen recalls gratefully how his parents "worked on the principle of giving us enormous freedoms; looking back they gave me many more freedoms than I give my kids". He attributes their liberality to the fact that "they were the kind of CP-ers who had been affected by the Bloomsbury end of bohemian life and it was no problem for them to encompass that within their socialism".

He reckons that his mother was "an anarcho-Stalinist", however absurd that sounds, just as Phil Cohen's father was "a born anarchist" and the niece of the satirical poet Roger Woddis sees him as "an anarchist, although it was a left-wing anarchism". Alexei Sayle explains that "there was a thread of not complying with Victorian social mores, which were still running through British life then".

Inevitably those children of party members who themselves served the party's purposes are the most bitter. Mike Power explains that "what the party gave me was not what a group of corrupt full-time officials presented. It gave me an idea about struggle, about empowerment, it gave me a sense of class loyalty - which has become less and less relevant in the sense that the world has changed". He now sees the Communist Party as something we did not need, imposed on British socialism to suit Lenin's foreign policy. "And yet I gave the best years of my life to something which was objectively destructive to socialism".

Indeed this collection is punctuated by the series of defections by either parents or children. There was the Hungarian Revolt of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968 and finally, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet empire, the decision in 1991 that the only thing for the rump of the Communist Party to do was to wind itself up. The book puts a variety of private faces on the public record.

Colin Ward

Apart from 'freedom', a concept notoriously difficult to formulate, the only generally recognised essential element of a practicable anarchist community is probably some kind of system of mutual aid.

This is a plant that grows in the most unpromising of soils and in what follows I shall be looking at examples of three highly disparate types of organisation that display this characteristic. These are ex-servicemen's associations, building societies and self-build projects. My central thesis is that whatever their size, constituents and original purpose, such structures, starting with the best of intentions, almost invariably over time tend to become hierarchical, profit-conscious and power-seeking, all these being associated with the 'right' in politics.

Perhaps at this point I should explain why I have chosen these particular cases. It's purely personal. I am an ex-soldier and thus willy-nilly a member of an informal network of veterans. I have for years been a client of the Woolwich building society and watched with trepidation its recent transformation. Finally, I have recently been involved with a self-build scheme on a voluntary basis.

Informal groupings of ex-servicemen are odd in one important particular. They consist in the main of tight-lipped, stoic, elderly, unforgiving *Daily Mail* readers and yet in their dealings with each other (if not the rest of the human race) they are compassionate, cooperative and tolerant, displaying the characteristics of what one could term 'unconscious anarchism'. I have no desire to sentimentalise the whole business of being an old soldier, nonetheless this phenomenon does appear to provide evidence that the most unlikely human groups, particularly if they already share a value system and have together

THE RIGHTWARD DRIFT AND THE LAW OF MAXIMUM SHITTINESS

endured a significant rite of passage, will develop patterns of comradeship based on mutual aid. However, there can be problems. The Klu Klux Klan began life in 1867 as just such an organisation helping Confederate veterans readjust to civilian life, but within a few years had become so violent in its bigotry that its first Grand Wizard, Nathan Bedford Forrest, resigned in protest, although he had previously gained the unenviable reputation for routinely shooting black prisoners of war. The Stalheim (Steel Helmet) in Weimar Germany had similar origins, but quickly became a fertile recruiting ground for Hitler's SS. Nearer home, the British Legion, being a charity, is apolitical, but it will be interesting to see whether there is a corporate hardening of attitudes as a result of the current drive to raise its annual income from eight to forty million pounds.

To move on to the Woolwich, which was founded in August 1847 as an "equitable benefit building and investment association". Its first directors were all church-goers and, in the words of the society's own literature, "shared a genuine commitment to improving conditions in the town". A century later its assets totalled more than £50 million (over a billion today) and in 1990, appropriately enough, dropped the word 'equitable' from its title. This year, with a great ringing of bells,

the Woolwich achieved plc status and was floated on the stock exchange, the process being accompanied by a distinct falling off in standards of customer service. All this took a century and a half to achieve, and it's impossible to identify a precise point at which Smilesian self-help based on sound commercial principles gave way to the current feeding frenzy. But happen it did and it will be interesting to see if the Woolwich continues in the same vein and institutes a "£1 charge to queue" as the Abbey has done (*The Times*, 3rd September).

The 'Redwing Housing Co-op' (not its real title) was formed about five years ago as a means of providing low-cost housing for those who would otherwise experience difficulty in raising the necessary capital for home ownership. A group of like-minded, highly-motivated and well educated people, they seemed abundantly equipped to overcome the usual difficulties - bureaucratic inertia, professional bungling and the inevitable tension between the needs of the family, the individual and those of the community. But the two factors that caused almost irreversible damage to the project, driving away almost all the original members and creating lasting rancour, were those old favourites sex and money. Because they were mostly young(ish) individuals thrown

together in an enforced intimacy, human nature being what it is, a fluid series of sexual relationships developed and dissolved with bewildering rapidity, with deleterious outcomes for all concerned. Another major cause of tension was that founder members who left were not recompensed for the months of back-breaking toil they had put in and felt that their replacements were undeservedly reaping the benefits of this. However, it might be that projects of this nature, being small-scale and ideologically based, resist the drive to the right more readily than other larger organisations (see Colin Ward in *Freedom*, 16th August 1997).

To return to the central problem outlined at the beginning of this short piece - why is it that once systems of mutual aid become formalised and the stakes raised beyond a certain point, the slide towards competitiveness and authoritarianism becomes almost inevitable? Is there some sociological 'law of maximum shittiness' at work here? Perhaps someone better equipped than I could construct the equivalent of the 'unified field theory' in physics to explain the process, taking into account the socio-political and economic background, the nature and aims of the group and the inner drives that make us what we are. I await your answers.

Adrian Walker

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ... AND ACTION!

CURRENT ITEMS ON THE BOOKSHOP MENU

Libertarian Labor Review: anarcho-syndicalist ideas and discussion, #21. Currently bi-annual but considering going quarterly, this rather smart magazine is produced in Champaign (sounds better than it looks), Illinois. Being published by an independent collective and not by one of the main anarcho-syndicalist groups means that it is able to take a much more objective view (and it does so) of not just those organisations but of labour movement and workplace issues, and perhaps even the anarchist movement generally. People working on the magazine do belong to anarcho-syndicalist or syndicalist groups but seem conscious of not allowing that to unduly influence the content towards a particular line. This is a serious and thoughtful publication which, beside the main news articles and features, has a section on international development, editorials, reviews and letters. The bookshop is hoping to stock *Libertarian Labor Review* regularly from now on and wishes it well. A letter from Sweden in the current issue contains these laudatory remarks: "Whether covering topics with in-depth analysis or in its critique of dogmatism in organisations or publications, the *Review* maintains a reasoning and constructive tone which is both refreshing and serious ... [it] shows respect for the readers' integrity and a confidence in the spirit inherent in our common libertarian ideas". A3, 42 pages, £2.00.

Direct Action #3, Solidarity Federation. This issue's theme is 'social control', reflected in articles on issues from immigration control, state and private surveillance and the control exercised by language, to the dark

possibilities raised by the 'science' of eugenics, now back in the news with the allegations that Austria, Scandinavia and France have all been sterilising 'undesirables' for years so that their physical or mental 'imperfections' cannot be transmitted to the next generation. Quite a bit of other material jostles for space with all that, including news, letters and reviews. A4, 36 pages, £1.50

The Crimes of Jehovah: a brief selection from the Bible* by Mark Mirabello, See Sharp Press. An amusing pamphlet (if perhaps shocking to one's aunt Edna) consisting of grisly, disgusting, sadistic and outrageous passages from the Old Testament which can only make one concur with Jules Renard's observation: "I don't know if God exists, but it would be better for his reputation if he didn't". The publisher adds: "If you have any doubts about the truth of that statement, this pamphlet will remove them. It clearly demonstrates – through dozens of biblical passages – that Jehovah, the god of the Old Testament, is cruel, vindictive, inconsistent and remarkably juvenile. In short, it shows that the judeo-christian deity is a savage god invented by savages". 36 pages, £2.00.

Beyond Resistance: a revolutionary manifesto for the millennium, Anarchist Communist Federation. An ambitious title for an ambitious document which is nevertheless imaginative and well thought out. The introduction admits that the very idea of a new millennium is quite arbitrary – based as it is on the Christian calendar – but then shrugs its shoulders, so to speak, and says well, what the hell, given the current crisis in

ROYALISM: THE BAD NEWS

I used to be one of those optimists who discerned a decline in the habit of deference, an urge towards equality, a slow movement in the direction of a freer society. The public reaction to the untimely death of Princess Diana has turned me into a pessimist. Good-looking, kind-hearted women tragically often die in terrible accidents, mourned by their families and friends. Diana is mourned by millions who never met her, merely because she happened to be a royal. I am forced to perceive that people in modern Britain share the belief of their medieval ancestors, that royals are mystically superior to ordinary mortals.

When the Anglo-Saxons conquered Britain in the fifth to seventh centuries, they chose all their kings from members of one particular family, who possessed magical powers by reason of their descent from Woden. As Paganism was replaced by Christianity, converted kings were systematically canonised (Ethelbert of Kent, Edmund of East Anglia, Oswald of Northumbria, David of Scotland, Olaf of Norway), so that the old magic was transferred to the new religion.

The Norman Conquest introduced the idea of primogeniture, but the English custom of Parliament selecting the monarch from among the royal family persisted in practice. William the Conqueror was succeeded by his eldest son as Duke of Normandy, but by his third son William Rufus as King of England. Henry I's daughter Matilda was his heir presumptive,

but when he died Parliament elected his nephew Stephen as King. The most recent example of primogeniture being set aside occurred in 1936.

Occasional anti-royal insurrections have occurred, as in 1381 and 1648, but the usual demand of English insurrectionaries has been that one member of the royal family should be chosen as monarch in preference to another.

The current popular cry, that Princess Diana was badly treated by the Windsors, is associated with a campaign to have Prince Charles set aside in favour of Prince William. This is not anti-royalist. It is entirely in keeping with royalist tradition. If brain-power is inherited from parents, Wills probably has the intellectual capacity of a small soap-dish, but no matter. The important thing is that he has inherited the magic of royalty.

Let us not deceive ourselves that the ballyhoo is a media invention. Certainly the numbers of people dumping flowers outside royal palaces were swelled by followers of fashion, but the media were largely responding to the public mood in the (justified) hope of selling more newspapers. The unprecedented applause for a funeral oration, the flowers flung at a moving hearse and the ballyhoo continuing long after the funeral was over, were all genuinely spontaneous events.

For one who had hoped that people these days were disabused of medieval superstition, it is all profoundly depressing.

Donald Room

INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAN HAMMER THROWING & RHETORIC FLINGING COMPETITION



On: MAY 1ST, 1988. At: (where else?)
MARX MEADOWS in GOLDEN GATE PARK

CONTEST RULES

You will have two hours to compose a manifesto using the terms *struggle, heroic, vanguard, revolutionary, reified, workers party* (penalty for use of apostrophe), *people's army, liberated zone, revolutionary government, street youth, white skin privilege, womyn, wimmin, wimin, wimmen, wymyn, people of color* (not colored people), *petit bourgeois, trade union consciousness, infantile, objectively counterrevolutionary, objectively reactionary, bosses, stooge, puppet, decadent, exploitation, fight, smash, hands off, build, stop, unleash, free* (fill in the blank—Bob Avakian is a good choice), *revisionist, fascist, opportunist, deviationist and running dog*. You **must** use all terms!! (Special prize for the most inventive neologism. Last year's winner: *Phallocracy*.)

You will then have two hours to put your manifesto into publishable form. Supply your own tools. **Preferred typesetting equipment:** old manual typewriter (extra points for: worn ribbons, broken or filled-in characters, handwritten corrections).

The longest, most unreadable entry wins. The triumphant manifesto will then be copied on a 15-year-old xerox machine, which hasn't been cleaned since 1978, bound with a staple in one corner, and distributed to contest participants. Losers will be compelled to read it. Those who refuse will be unmasked as objectively counterrevolutionary petit bourgeois anarchists and will face the revolutionary justice of the people's democratic dictatorship.

picture by Chaz Bufe taken from *The Heretic's Handbook of Quotations*

the capitalist system we might as well start preparing for the future now. Hence this "contribution to the creation of a united and global revolutionary movement". Bit of a tall order that, given the current state of affairs, but as somebody famous once said, it's better to light a single candle than curse the darkness. Part A analyses the capitalist world, part B lays out the ideal of the anarchist communist world, and part C, the revolutionary programme, is basically about how to get from A to B. They certainly seem to have a better idea about how to get from A to B than most of the privatised rail companies – and they already have the trains! But the ACF says its manifesto is not a blueprint, and is modest enough to admit that it "is not a large body and we have no pretensions about our importance". Rather they see it as a point of departure for wider debate, and rightly so. A smartly produced A3 pamphlet of 36 pages for £2.00.

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT WE NOW HAVE NEW SUPPLIES OF THE FOLLOWING TITLES, ALL OF WHICH HAD BEEN OUT OF STOCK FOR QUITE A WHILE:

The Heretic's Handbook of Quotations: cutting comments on burning issues* (expanded edition), edited by Chaz Bufe, See Sharp Press. The source for the best quotes – over two thousand in all – on topics ranging from anarchism to the state, from law to freedom,

from marxism to capitalism, from religion to sex, from the arts to feminism, and a hell of a lot more. A timeless collection, this book should be on the shelves of every self-respecting radical. The numerous illustrations include several by a certain Donald Room, and the number of people quoted runs to several hundred. A large-format book of 238 pages, it includes two introductions, an index and 'capsule biographies' of those quoted running to several pages. £11.95.

The Art and Science of Billboard Improvement* by Billboard Liberation Front and Friends, Los Cabrones Press. A handy little primer on how to improve advertisements to reflect the message you want to put out, including reconnaissance, lettering and layout, security, materials and ... escape! 12 pages, illustrated, £1.20.

The Complete Manual of Pirate Radio* by Zeke Teflon, See Sharp Press. If you want a more permanent way of putting out your message then this is the essential handbook. 48 pages of detailed instructions and advice including choosing wavelengths and frequencies, technical references, finding parts, studios (including mobile), transmitters and antennas, security, and getting away with it. It also has illustrations and circuit diagrams, a preface and an introduction. £3.50.

The Heretic's Guide to the Bible* edited by Chaz Bufe, See Sharp Press. "The worst of the Bible – over 100 passages reveal it to be a contradiction-ridden exercise in hate, misogyny, domination and submission, and sadistic power fantasies" (also contained in the *Heretic's Handbook of Quotations*). 12 pages, £1.20.

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EX-YUGOSLAVIA: ANARCHIST MEETING

held at Tiszafured, Hungary, from 21st to 24th August

Hmm. We did it. We finally managed to meet. The idea of this meeting arose years ago, while the war was still raging. The need for it was (and still is) obvious. The only way how we could show to each other that we are opposed to what has happened in ex-Yugoslavia. There were some nice attempts at co-operation during the years, some concrete actions grew out of them, but also some conflicts have appeared. That was another reason to meet. There were plenty of potential motives. Unfortunately not that many people felt like that, but more about that later.

So, it was ZAP who proposed this meeting, and BAT (Budapesti Autonomi Tarsulas) who have helped us a great deal to put the idea into reality. Our part was to think of a concept, and spread the word, while BAT was in charge of finding a nice place to camp and of dealing with concrete problems such as how to get there.

HOW IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN

Since there was not too much time to make the concept itself, we decided just to propose a meeting, and offer the participants a chance to create the agenda themselves. We asked everybody to suggest what they wanted to do at the meeting and to prepare themselves in that context. We did that because we didn't want to monopolise the whole thing and choose the discussions by ourselves, as we had some bad experiences with that in the past. This kind of organising seemed the closest to direct democracy we could get. Spreading of information was done through three local contacts, in Slovenia, Croatia and Yugoslavia.

We also created a form, and asked everybody who's gonna come to fill it in in advance and send to local contacts. That wasn't obligatory, but we hoped to get a clue of who's coming and what they wanted to do. The camping place chosen by BAT was on the river Tisa. The exact spot was a secret, but we were all supposed to meet at two meeting points at certain times and proceed together. All this information was provided in a written form to quite a few addresses. Our estimation was that there were sent between three hundred and five hundred invitations.

THE REALITY

Our Slovenian contact didn't get any confirmations, and nobody from Slovenia came to the meeting. We, in Zagreb also didn't receive any written confirmations but got at least ten verbal ones. Four persons from Croatia came to the meeting, but we know that more left the country in order to get there. At least two got lost in Hungary since they came too late to the meeting points, and for the rest we don't know yet. In Yugoslavia approximately ten persons confirmed their arrival. Some in writing, some verbally. In the end five of them came, although one day late since they also missed the meeting points. In

the end, there were nine of us from ex-Yugoslavia, two comrades from the Polish Anarchist Federation, and four members of BAT. What was the reason for such a poor turn out, we don't know. Some people said that it was too far for them, others that they were not interested in that meeting, some people didn't have the money to travel and some just didn't show up. On the other hand, for last two months we were receiving nothing, but positive responses regarding the meeting, and it seemed that a lot of people would show up. It will remain a mystery why it turned out to be just the opposite.

The camping place was nice. A small island on Tisa, near Tiszafured. It was almost ideal, if only there weren't so many mosquitoes. Also, the rest of the organisation done by BAT was quite okay. Everything was thought out well. The only problem was the mess with meeting places and times since some people didn't make it on time. Sure, they were given a telephone number they could call and get more details, but these people didn't speak any foreign language, and that was a bit problematic. All in all, nobody should have any complaints about that part of organisation since it was done the best it could have been done.

THE MEETING ITSELF

In such a small group there was no need for an actual agenda. There were no conditions for any workshops with concrete results such as written material or paintings or flags or whatever, so we just decided to talk a lot. And we did. For the whole time, we just went on talking about so many different things, mainly sharing information and experiences. Sometimes all together, and sometimes in small groups of two or three. Spontaneously. The only conceptual discussion (or more like a presentation) was when BAT and FA presented their work. That was nice, and interesting. We all exchanged a lot of material, and at the end hugged and kissed and went separate ways.

CONCLUSION

Although the meeting wasn't what we expected it to be, it was somehow a very positive experience. This was the first meeting of this kind, and therefore important just because of that.

People who came will hopefully now have the energy to work more to make these meetings more regular which should also result in some concrete results. At least, that's what we're hoping for.

We've made new friends. Now, some people we co-operated with in the past also have faces and voices. They're not just names on paper or a screen anymore. It all got more personal. For any other conclusions you should have been there yourselves. This is just a short report anyway.

Marko Vukovic
reporting from Zagreb

ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR

Once a year Conway Hall, one of London's most venerable institutions, gets taken over by this country's most enduring moral-panic-in-residence. The result? The Anarchist Bookfair.

It's been a good year for anarchists. Direct action has set the agenda time and time again. In the UK successes have ranged from the public revelations in McLibel to the literal undermining of unwanted and unnecessary roads. Internationally, continued challenges to the rule of the world by money, from the ongoing Zapatista rebellion in the Mexican state of Chiapas, to the many provocative successes of computer hackers. Things are going on – and this is the place to find out about them.

ANARCHISM BACK ON THE AGENDA Its emphasis on individual responsibility and direct action has won new converts in the Green movement, and captured the imagination of the young. Anti-road protests, land occupations and anarchy on the internet have transformed the political landscape in Britain.

The idea of anarchism is quite simple – a belief in freedom from imposed authority. In opposition to government a society based on autonomy and self-organisation.

To show these ideas in practice anarchists often create working examples. One of these combined self-organisation with direct action when 500 protesters occupied derelict land in Wandsworth. In a single day they cleared rubble and rubbish and created an anarchist village in a protest against homelessness, concentration of land ownership and dereliction and waste of urban sites. 'Pure Genius' was a series of timber structures, a geodesic dome and three mongolian yurts, and a communal centre for 200 to eat together and discuss the running of the community. The cleared ground was planted with flowers and vegetables. They received massive public support, and provided inspiration to 2,500 visitors in a single day.

Anarchism can be seen in the Walter Segal Self-Build Trust. Segal, an anarchist architect, was dissatisfied with serving the wealthy. He demonstrated how his cheap, simple, timber-framed method could benefit ordinary people without land or money. His do-it-yourself approach has resulted in several small permanent communities: Netherspring in Sheffield, Lightmoor in Telford, Maasport in Holland and Brighton's Digger Community.

DIRECT ACTION Anarchist hostility to parliamentary politics surfaced during the general election. Freedom Press produced thousands of copies of *Why I Won't Vote*, a four-page anti-election leaflet. Demand was such that all copies were gone well before polling day. One of the cheekiest anarchist actions was the printing of a spoof newspaper, *Evading Standards*, with the headline 'General Election Cancelled – election collapses as new polls reveal massive public cynicism. A similar attempt to distribute the paper was stopped when police swooped on the

Piccadilly distribution point, seized 20,000 copies and arrested three people. The paper, closely modelled on London's *Evening Standard*, was secretly reprinted and distributed during the London rush hour.

Anarchist opposition to parliamentary politics is not a rejection of democracy. Rather that democracy should permeate all spheres of life, including the workplace, not the sham of an elected mayor.

VIDEO ACTIVISM Anarchist emphasis on direct action has spawned a generation of video activists using camcorders in the social struggle. Video can prove what happened on demonstrations or picket lines. Video can prove police brutality does occur – the presence of a video camera can even prevent it.

Based in Oxford, Undercurrents Productions provides media support to grassroots organisations training groups to use camcorders effectively and to give interviews. It runs workshops on video for legal support, and advice on buying equipment. Over 500 people have been trained to use camcorders in their campaigns, and over 100 television stations have used material from the Undercurrents archive of footage by camcorder activists. *Undercurrents Alternative News Service* covers issues neglected by mainstream media – the 'news you don't see on the news'. Its raw, direct delivery was described as 'compelling' by the *Independent*. Each issue is watched by an estimated 40,000 people.

ANARCHY ON THE INTERNET Although suspicious of the impact of technology and its use as a means of social control, anarchists have embraced the internet. There are several anarchist home pages on the world wide web offering local information and direct links to other anarchist or related sites. Anarchist papers from all over the world are published in electronic format. Other internet titles include *The Anarchist* (Australia), *Counter Information* (UK) and *Love and Rage* (USA and Mexico), plus the daily multi-language international anarchist news service A-Infos produced by groups in five different countries.

A second manifestation of anarchy on the internet is Spunk Press, run by an international collective since 1992. Its catalogue contains over

1,000 items: speeches, essays or lectures by prominent anarchists both historical (Bakunin and Emma Goldman) or contemporary (Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin), issues such as environmentalism and alternative education, archives of anarchist journals, selections of anarchist poetry, anarchist images, symbols and portraits of famous anarchists, addresses of groups and reviews of anarchist books. The selection of material for publication on the net is undertaken by volunteers in their spare time, often using borrowed equipment.

DIRECT ACTION The anarchist press with its dedicated supporters who write, pay for and often print the dozens of anarchist papers with names like *Freedom*, *Black Flag*, *Class War*, *Direct Action* and *Organise!*, remains the major way of spreading anarchist ideas. *Organise!* is one of the most interesting in its attempt to stimulate the idea of an anarchist culture as a focus for opposition to capitalism. *By Pass* is a regular 44-page listing of anarchist papers and underground 'zines. *Squall* and *Schnews* are breaking new ground with news of the rave and festival scenes alongside details of anti-road protests and guerrilla theatre. The printed word may rule supreme in Britain, but in Spain, Italy and France anarchist groups have their own radio stations. Radio Libertaire in Paris provides a heady mix of politics, alternative news and music reaching a daily audience of 140,000.

The convergence of the main political parties and the discrediting of the state socialist left makes anarchism a natural home for those looking for a new world.

SOME ANARCHIST WEB SITES

Anarchy List
<http://www.cwi.nl/cwi/people/Jack.Jansen/anarchy/anarchy.html>

Spunk Press Home
<http://www.cwi.nl/cwi/people/Jack.Jansen/spunk/Spunk-Home.html>

Practical Anarchy Online
<http://www.wam.umd.edu/~ctmunson/pa-home.html>

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Rich and Poor



This has been a challenging month for all of us who are interested in furthering the ideas of anarchism.

There has been a closing of ranks, which is all to the good. An event may or may not have taken place recently, but as there has been no mention of it in *Freedom* we cannot be sure if it has taken place. This is not the first time that this column has alluded to this fact and, until we reach the safe shores of anarchy, it does not seem to me that it will be the last.

No doubt many of my readers will have seen a cartoon sketch by the American poet and activist Tuli Kupferberg which is very relevant to mention on the present occasion. It has been my intention to re-draw it to suit the present contingency, but in the end I have decided to leave it to the reader's practised imagination.

The cartoon depicts a mouth and an ear. It is presumed that the mouth is talking and the ear is listening.

Mouth: (explains) It is not the *New York Times* which works for the CIA.

Ear: (uncomprehendingly) Eh???

Mouth: (obligingly) It is the CIA which works for the *New York Times*.

Which about sums up the entire British press with the exception of the few anarchist/ socialist/idealist remnants – all small circulation papers, but then I prefer to read humble efforts such as the *Land is Ours* bulletin or a *Fin* newsletter or *Earth First* or *Organise* and many others, than the contrived mulch which goes by the name of newspapers.

Catullus, the Roman poet, understood this better than anybody else when he wrote: *PASSER MORTUUS EST MEAE PUELLAE*. Set in 72 point type it would still make an appropriate headline in any self-respecting tabloid newspaper. Put a black border around it and it will outsell all the competition: *MY LADY'S PET SPARROW IS DEAD*.

Except for the unfortunate fact that there is no such thing as competition: all the tabloids and newspapers are owned by one or two firms, or at least controlled by them. The same goes for television and the radio. All it needs is for some careless person to step on the corn of a notable and they will shut down the whole system and the wearing of black ties will be made compulsory from nursery to geriatric ward. It is not every day that my lady's pet sparrow passes into the unknown.

These Latin poets knew a thing or two. Martial himself had anticipated even the title of this effervescent column when he wrote his short poems, addressing them, just like me, to his fellow citizens who pretended not to understand. There is no space to quote his entire works in this small column, although not a lot remains – a succession of censors have seen to that and toady booksellers who made sure, just like today where anarchist books are rarely in the shop windows.

So here goes, even if it gives an atavistic kind of 'have been there before' feeling up one's spine. Martial said:

SEMPER PAUPER ERIS, SI PAUPER ES, AEMILIANE. DANTUR OPES NULLI NUNC NISI DIVITIBUS.

Which is the very meaning for the existence of the anarchist movement, to remove this condition which has alas persisted these many thousand years. For those who among my readers may dispute that it is still the case, as the man said:

YOU WILL ALWAYS BE POOR IF YOU ARE POOR, FRIEND / NO WEALTH IS GIVEN NOW EXCEPT TO THE RICH.

Had it not been for Martial and a few other anarchists, including this paper and this column, you may not even have noticed the disparity.

John Rety

Posing problems people can act on

Dear *Freedom*,
John Wood (6th September) is big on accusations directed towards *Freedom* contributors, but his suggestion that Larry Gambone is "pretending the car is not a problem" takes the cake. Wood wants to save the world from ecological disaster, so it's hardly surprising even he "can't pretend to know how to do it". If that is not running away from 'the problem' then what is?

One recognised ploy for making a problem intractable is to identify it in terms beyond our own experiences and capabilities. Academics and professionals have replaced the priest as masters of this craft. Many of our socially acknowledged 'intractable problems', like the car, cancer, the culture of poverty or unemployment, gain their status through a reluctance to examine the language, assumptions and beliefs which underpin them. To thinking man the world has always been in a mess. It's the down-side of having a big brain, but I thought anarchists strive to take control of their own lives by defining

problems in terms of what people can do about them.

Larry Gambone reads like an anarchist. He strikes me as a bloke with plenty of ideas and passion which you can go along with or dispute. 'Last word' Wood is just good at criticising and identifying the world's problems. He'd make a fine academic. Could he for a change pose the problem at his own level and tell us how he deals with life's absurdities, or do *Freedom* readers just have to put up with his authoritative whinings about other people's privileges?

Probably the biggest crisis facing those who live off the fat of western culture (myself included) is not to do with finite resources. Resources are dependent on variables. Their identification and use calls for human resourcefulness. It's our ingenuity which is declining and, as Larry Gambone implies in a recent article (*Freedom*, 6th September), the centralisation of education plays a key role in our loss of belief in ourselves.

Denis Pym

Privilege and a just society

Dear *Freedom*,
In answer to Andy Graziano-Stone (letters, 6th September), I think I understand his feelings. He wants to fight on behalf of the victims of injustice and is outraged because I have suggested that fighting for justice is futile.

In the name of justice there has been endless fighting, endless bloodshed, and people have committed all kinds of atrocities, but has justice ever been established on this earth even for five minutes?

Can there be justice? Some are born beautiful, others ugly, deformed, disabled. Is that just? Some have great talent, capacity, others little or none. Is that just? So what is justice?

To me justice involves treating everybody as essentially equal; but I can't do that if I think and feel that I'm a separate autonomous individual isolated from the rest of mankind. Hence the importance of seeing that life is a unitary process. To see that fact is to end the sense of isolation, thus opening the door to

compassion; and in the eyes of compassion, love, there is no essential difference between the beautiful and the ugly, the capable and the incapable, the rich and the poor.

In answer to PJW's question (letter, same date), if I'm not an autonomous individual I can have no way of altering my 'mind set'. But it doesn't follow that I'm a "hapless leaf floating on the river of evolution and time". I'm a human being and, as such, an integral part of the flow. My slightest movement is a manifestation of the same energy that is in every living creature, the inexhaustible energy that brought forth the universe. This is not to be hapless – "destitute of hap or good fortune, luckless" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). On the contrary, to see the truth of this is to be free of the fear of death. But I have to see it, not merely accept it as a theory, and my seeing it doesn't depend on my idealistic effort but on the flow of life. Sometimes one sees it, sometimes one doesn't.

Francis Ellingham

Are they playing at trains?

Dear Editors,
In *Freedom*, 16th August, Libertarian calls it "ridiculous" for a railway company to recruit regular travellers as guards for a single journey. Why? The company finds it difficult to recruit full-time guards in some areas, so they look for alternatives. Other people can be trained to do this job and safety need not be compromised. If it works at least one person per train is not a passive consumer of a service and gets free transport to work. That sounds like a small step towards the anarchist ideal to me (the main non-anarchist factor is that the guard gets paid as well).

The whole subject reminded me that at least one bus company elsewhere in England had its office workers and mechanics trained to drive buses. They each drove a bus in and out of the main town on their daily journey to work in the peak hour. By this means a small company kept its costs down and offered a rural area a bus service at a low cost, and let

its office workers experience the manual workers' problems. A large company will not do this. Recent changes in legislation have made it less likely that the small bus company does it.

The unthinking criticism of alterations to working methods seems to me to serve only the short-term interests of the big rigid workforce and the big trade union. Time for Libertarian to think again.

Adrian Williams

Rape of Socialism

Don Pedely has pointed out to us that his recent letter to *Freedom* on the elections (7th June) contained a typographical error, which was repeated in his follow-up letter of 5th July. In both letters, the phrase "taciturnly astute" should have read "tactically astute", and we apologise for our careless mistake.

We are pleased to hear that Don Pedely's new book *The Rape of Socialism: how Labour lost the millennium*, is now on sale in bookshops throughout Britain, including the Freedom Press Bookshop (£13.50, paperback, plus 10% inland, 20% overseas p&p) and we are hoping one of our readers will review it.

please keep sending in
 your letters and
 donations ... ✍️

Up the Republic

Dear *Freedom*,
Surely I cannot be the only person in this country heartily sick and tired of the sycophantic claptrap written about the late and undeservedly lamented Ms D. Spencer?

By what right did she assume the title 'People's Princess'? She was no princess of mine. I have been a committed republican ever since I can remember.

When did she ever speak one word in support of all the people who have been so cruelly robbed of their livelihoods by the Tories? When did she ever speak up on behalf of the steelworkers, miners, dockers, printworkers, dustmen, roadsweepers, local council workers and all those who have been made unemployed by downsizing, rationalisation, outsourcing (contracting out), privatisation and straightforward redundancy?

What experience did she have of trying to raise three children in a damp, mould-and-fungus riddled room in a bed-and-breakfast?

When did she ever have to survive on a £45 per week giro? When did they ever stop her giro for 'failing to make sufficient effort to secure employment'? (They stopped my giro because I failed to go to Next and buy a suit for an interview. How many £200 suits from Next could you buy on £45 a week?)

The one thing that has come out of this whole ridiculous affair is that at least we now know how to deal with these fat-cat scum: just point a camera flashgun at them, in the style of Groundswell's 'Paparazzi Man' activists, and give them a good flash. They'll be filled with an irresistible urge to make their own attempt on the world record for 'driving a limo through solid concrete'.

Up the republic!

Peter V.B. Reece

[Well, you can't expect us to want a republic to replace the monarchy, for which our correspondent calls, but in the course of his rhetoric completely fails to make any case for. We hope that some of the articles elsewhere in this issue will show him the anarchist point of view about the events following the Princess of Wales's death, if not about the rather larger issue of a constitutional monarchy, but we also draw our readers' attention to the invitation on page 2 to comment in our next issue – Editors.]

Beyond Bookchin

Dear *Freedom*,
David Watson, who also writes under the pen name George Bradford for the journal *Fifth Estate* in America, has written *Beyond Bookchin: preface for a future social ecology*.

The book is about Murray Bookchin, who is one of North America's most important writers on environmental issues and has been active in the ecology movement for more than thirty years. His first book was published in 1962.

The book started as an article for *Fifth Estate* but grew into a small book. It seems that Watson/Bradford wrote this as a counter-attack against Murray Bookchin responding to a chapter (pages 26 to 37) about Watson/Bradford in Bookchin's recent book *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* (from Freedom Press at £5.95*).

In the author's notes, David Watson says that he wants to do justice to Murray Bookchin's social ecology. Well, to say that this book is harsh about Murray Bookchin's writing would be an understatement. Watson's book covers ten of Bookchin's books and tries to take each one apart by quoting lines and trying to give them different meanings. I cannot recommend this book to anyone.

Trevor King

[This book is not yet available in Britain, but the Freedom Press Bookshop staff will no doubt note our reader's comments – Editors.]

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CAMBRIDGE AND DISTRICT

Anybody interested in forming a Freedom Readers Group in this area, come along to The Conservatory, The Cambridge Blue Public House, Gwydir Street, Cambridge, from 8pm on the first Wednesday of each month (starting 3rd September).

Contact Bill on 01223 511737

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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 8pm at the Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square). Disabled access. Free entrance.

Further information from
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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Anarchist Federation 1997

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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. Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion please contact Carol Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings.

- 1997 PROGRAMME -

19th September Hampshire Constabulary: A Threat to Free Speech? (speakers from the Gandalf Defence Campaign)

26th September Anarchy on the Net (speaker Martin Peacock)

3rd October General discussion

10th October What would you do if you won the Lottery? (speaker Adrian Williams)

17th October General discussion

24th October Political Correctness (symposium)
Carol Saunders / Peter Neville

DIALOGUE FOR CHANGE

We are looking for people interested in political and personal change, with a view to forming a discussion group drawing on the traditions of the tribal or community meeting, political consciousness-raising meetings and group psychotherapy. If you are intrigued by the idea of personally open and non-confrontational dialogue with other anti-authoritarians and could make weekly meetings in London over an extended period, we'd like to meet you.

Call 0171-328 5728 to find out more

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A programme of free guided walks in the Yorkshire Dales and surrounding area for Socialists, Libertarians, Greens and Anarchists. All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated. All walkers are reminded to wear boots and suitable clothing and to bring food and drink. Walks are 5 to 8 miles in length.

September 21st: Ribblesdales. Settle to Stainforth Force. Meet at Settle car park (before viaduct) at 10.45am.

October 12th: Nidderdale. Grimwith Reservoir. Meet at the Reservoir car park (off B6265 Pateley Bridge) at 11.00am.

November 23rd: Airedale. Bell Busk and Coniston Cold. Meet in Bell Busk village at 11.00am.

December 21st: Lower Airedale. Carleton to Gargrave. Meet outside the Swan Inn, Carleton, at 10.45am.

Telephone for further details
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