

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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50p

THE 'NEW LABOUR' WARMONGERS

George Robertson, the Labour MP and Minister of Defence, contributes a more than half-page article to the weekly *Tribune* (12th September) justifying the New Labour government's concern that we should be armed to the teeth, but never mentions who the potential enemies are.

To the critics who argue that this country spends more than the other so-called European Union nations, he maintains that 'professional', as opposed to conscripted armed forces, "may be more expensive" but "they are much more effective" and, quite rightly, he says "I cannot imagine anyone would propose that we should re-introduce conscription in Britain to make savings". And there will be a chorus of 'Hear! hear!' *But* he then goes on to declare that "as an island nation Britain, with far-flung dependent territories, rightly has an interest in maritime security as well as the wider security of Europe. We believe that, *to defend our economic and trading interests* as well as our dependent territories, Britain must maintain a considerable navy as well as land and air forces" (our italics).

He then goes on to justify the continued massive expenditure on the military, which he describes as "a more fundamental reason why Labour believes in strong defence. We are not an isolationist party. We are an internationalist party. And if Labour is to pursue an internationalist foreign and defence policy it makes no sense to tie defence expenditure to levels set by countries which have a different history, obligations and interests to the United Kingdom."

In vulgar language: We can only discuss with the rest of the world not with arguments but with our military force. This is what all governments depend on. So why be so surprised and outraged when the IRA know that the only argument the British government (Tory or Labour) understand is

the threat of violence? It is so obvious, surely?

The Minister makes all kinds of the usual remarks about saving money "where possible" in order to re-invest it in education and other worthwhile social initiatives. But at the same time he bollocks the Tories for over the past eighteen years having "inflicted large-scale cuts in defence spending". And he adds "Similarly, numbers in the armed forces fell by a third between 1979 and 1997. The army is currently under strength."

The whole article deserves to be published in an anarchist paper to reveal that the political parties are all the same - the differences don't matter. For instance, an example of our Labour Defence Minister's *Tribune* article: "To commit ourselves to sudden and ill thought-out cuts in defence expenditure would not only make a nonsense of that process - *it would also mean potentially throwing thousands of defence workers on the dole, many of them trade unionists in Labour constituencies.* To do so would be to make the same mistakes as the Tories" (our italics).

So we must produce weapons in order to keep thousand of workers in employment in the armaments industry (not defence - after all, Britain is the second largest world exporter of armaments) or in other words, we supply the imaginary 'enemy' and so we have to defend ourselves (it's surrealism *more than mad*).

A last word from the Labour Defence Minister, who tells the readers of *Tribune* that they "must understand as a party that we can only achieve our foreign and security policies from a position of influence which comes from defence credibility. Strong and effective armed forces are not an optional extra. They are a vital part of Britain's standing in the world."

It's not from "a position of influence" surely, but of potential armed force. So realise, you bloody politicians, that the IRA are talking the same language, which is why neither side will win.

The people of Northern Ireland and everywhere else must realise that the real power is with them, and stop depending on the politicians.



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anarchist fortnightly

Freedom

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MANCHESTER: TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK CONFERENCE

WHORES FOR TONY

A favourite R&R spot for Manchester's female sex workers used to be the weekend disco at Sacha's Hotel off Piccadilly. Last month 220 professional prostitutes from the statutory and voluntary sector, along with a smattering of civil servants and academics, visited Sacha's again. This time to trance-dance to the sounds of Labour's 'New Deal'.

DJ Andrew Smith, Tony Blair's 'Enjoyment Minister' (his joke, honest) spun the new groove 'Let's Get Working' – or, to give the tune its proper title, 'Let's Get Them Working'. All the old favourites got played: 'Training For Work', 'SRB', 'Additionally', 'Leverage', 'ESF', 'Partnership', 'Quality Assurance' and stacks, stacks more. It was good to hear that classic European Social Democrat tune 'Subsidiary' given a solid British backing. And there were other new tunes in plenty: 'Employment Zones', 'Intermediate Labour Markets', 'Gateway' and many more.

JOIN THE DANCE

And oh how we danced. Some of us pretended we weren't keen on all the sounds. Some of us pretended we'd never danced like this before. Some of us pretended we'd never danced in our lives but we'd give it a go. But dance we did. 'He who pays the piper calls the tune' and that's the nub of it.

Routes into prostitution are many and varied. No single factor can explain why women and men sell themselves to complete (and potentially abusive) strangers. It's true that the

economic motive predominates, but a host of other factors are at play in any one individual case.

And so it was for those of us dancing at Sacha's. Each of us had our own complex of motives for being there, for doing what we were doing. Sure there were private training providers eager for more cash, yea the Training & Enterprise Councils were there eager for even more cash and more unaccountable power – all the usual suspects. But what were small community organisations doing there? What's their role going to be in delivering 'Welfare to Work'?

And then there were other 'nice girls' like the Unemployment Unit, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and even a Salvation Army lass. Surely organisations representing some of the most marginalised groups in our society couldn't be getting involved in this?

Oh many of them protested: 'We didn't want to do it, but we had no choice', 'They seemed so nice', 'It's been hard for the last few years just standing on the corner, so when this Labour lot showed up we thought why not ... I mean compared to the last lot they're real gents, we think'.

CUDDLING UP TO GOVERNMENT

You see for many of those gathered at the Manchester Conference, policy-makers, researchers, representatives of agencies and groups working with disadvantaged people,



'Minister of Enjoyment' Andrew Smith meets Chief Executive Frances Done

the Tory years had been the wilderness years, shut out from influence, power and cash. Now they were being invited in by the new government, asked for their advice, offered seats on advisory bodies and promised a role in the delivery of the 'New Deal'. A place by the fireside after years of pounding the beat with no punters. Who could blame them?

Labour has learned a lot from the Tories in the delivery of social policy and have combined these lessons with their own talent when in office for co-opting and neutralising liberal and leftist pressure groups. The delivery of the New Deal represents the fusion of these elements.

Essentially the 'Welfare to Work' scheme for 18-24 year olds, which is one part of the 'New Deal', is to be delivered by local partnerships (details of what these would look like are still unclear, as are most of the specifics around this) with the Employment Service as the lead agency. Partnerships, competitive funds, bidding and contracting on the basis of pre-defined outcomes were very much the Tories' brainchild. These partnerships would have the funds to underwrite the four strands of the programme and partners and agencies outside the partnership can bid to run programmes for one of the various options. This is the carrot for voluntary organisations at the local or community level, the chance to be involved in the delivery of the scheme, to have a place at the table and to fund projects. In return the state adds legitimacy to its scheme and neutralises opposition by making groups who might be critical of it part of the delivery process. For national organisations, policy and research groups, it is the hope to get involved in the design of the programmes, to have (they fondly imagine) the ears of ministers and to walk the corridors of power once more.

How often over our two days at Sacha's did we hear someone say 'This is the only opportunity we're going to have, we've got to make this work'? Well, all I can say is none of us appears to have learned anything. Essentially we are being co-opted to deliver 'Welfare to Work' and when it doesn't pan out the way we all hoped, we'll have no one to blame except ourselves. Not once over the two days of the conference did I hear anyone question the coercive elements of the programme. Surely people questioned some of the details (the size of the wages, the potential displacement of 16-17 year olds, 'creaming' the best onto the employer option and tipping the most disadvantaged onto the environmental option, the poor deal for single mothers, the quality of the training and work to be provided, and so on) but the fundamentals were not discussed or even mentioned.

I came away from Sacha's convinced of only one thing: the timetable is too tight for the programme, many elements are not in place, many of the details undecided. One delegate in the closing session (sounding one of the few notes of discord in the two days) described the New Deal as "a dog's breakfast". What we see on the ground in a year's time will not, I suspect, much resemble the pious hopes I heard at the conference. There will be few carrots for entering the labour market, but plenty of ill-made sticks. Watch this space. Even the most streetwise whores can find themselves in very nasty scenes sometimes.

Moll Flanders

'Let's Get Working' was a conference for the voluntary sector and others on the details of Labour's New Deal and the role that voluntary organisations will be asked to play in its delivery.

ROCHDALE RENDEZVOUS POLL TAX PUSHER PALS UP WITH SLAVE-DRIVER

On the banks of the River Roach in Rochdale's pseudo-Gothic town hall, Andrew Smith, Minister for Employment, last month met Lancashire's answer to Madame Defarge, Rochdale Town Council's Chief Executive and Treasurer Frances Done. Earlier this decade Ms Done made her local reputation as the relentless pursuer of poll tax defaulters. To date she has proved herself to be no slouch in running down dodgers, and in some cases chasing them almost to the ends of the earth. One girl was forced to pay up even though she was living in Germany during the Thatcher poll tax regime. Ms Done presented the case for the prosecution.

It must be viewed with some nervousness than Frances 'Defarge' Done should have a front seat in the dealings with the setting up of New Labour's forced labour scheme in the area called 'New Deal'. The 'New Deal' involves railroading youngsters under 25 into jobs and training. Some seven hundred young folk in Rochdale are going to have to buckle down to this new form of civil conscription whether they like it or not.

Smiling, with the gap showing between his

front teeth, Andrew Smith describes himself as the Minister for Enjoyment. He presents a jolly figure on the town hall steps, but he is flanked by Madame 'Defarge' Done and all the promises of partnership and co-operation to getting people off benefits and back into work are overshadowed with thoughts of guillotines, committees of public safety, knitting needles, bailiffs and debt collectors.

In keeping with the time we live in, Madame Done is into 'Girl Power'. Rumour-mongers suggest she got the job of Chief Executive because she had previously stood as a Labour candidate. Some local fuss-pots grumble about the band of wailing banshees she employed at Poll Tax House to harangue those who tried to hold out against the poll tax.

The presence of this Madame Defarge figure in any Labour 'Welfare to Work' endeavour will send a shiver down the spine of the youth of Lancashire. They won't be able to stay in bed with her around, and two winters from now there will be more running noses than standing pricks up here if she has owt to do with it.

Unemployed Worker

— ABOVE THE PARAPETS —

Chomsky's Warning

One of the central arguments for freedom of expression, for real civil libertarians at least, is that it is only through self-expression and dialogue with others that one can truly think. Freedom of expression is an essential component of freedom of thought. Without the effort of saying what we think, of trying to communicate it to others, we cannot know what we really think. And it is only through dialogue with others that our own ideas can come into focus – and change in the process.

A stark example of this everyday phenomenon came for me a few years ago when I wrote a book about Noam Chomsky's political writings. It was only after *Chomsky's Politics* had gone to press that I fully understood some of the things that I had been groping after in the writing of the book. It was only then, for example, that I identified the crucial sentence in Chomsky's work which illuminated everything else. Buried away on page 154, I included – without great emphasis – Chomsky's warning that "the level of culture that can be achieved in the United States is a life and death matter for large masses of suffering humanity". This is, I believe, Chomsky's main 'message' for us all, both in the North and the South.

By 'culture', Chomsky does not mean what happens in opera houses or art galleries, but the common standards of a society – standards of decency and honesty, compassion and integrity. To what extent is a society willing to face the truth about itself, and about its dominant institutions? To what extent are the majority of people willing to act on that understanding: to restrain dominant institutions from oppression and exploitation, and to reform or replace those institutions in order to prevent such oppression and exploitation from occurring?

These questions are the hinge between Chomsky's withering analysis of US foreign policy and its roots in US society, and his dissection of the functioning of the US mass media (and scholarship). The most important tasks are, on the one hand, to stop ongoing atrocities and threats, and, on the other, to lay the basis for future change which will prevent further atrocities from occurring. The problem is that our ability to understand what is going on, and to dig up the roots of international problems which are presented as isolated aberrations, is radically limited by the power of western ideological institutions, particularly the elite sections of the mass media.

Our ability to think up appropriate reforms

(or larger-scale institutional changes) to solve present-day problems, and our ability to persuade our fellow citizens of the appropriateness of these changes, is blocked by the power of the propaganda system. Hence the importance of the level of culture that can be achieved in the most powerful states, which can, and do, do the most damage internationally. Put another way: "for those who stubbornly seek freedom, there can be no more urgent task than to come to understand the mechanisms and practices of indoctrination. We need to free ourselves from the propaganda system so that we can begin to understand what is going on in the world and react appropriately. The more we here in the West act to restrain western governments and transnational corporations from their oppressive and exploitative practices, the more space there is for people in the South to resist, and simply to survive.

There is, in other words, a direct relationship between suffering in the South, at the other end of the guns, and the degrees of awareness and sympathy achieved in the societies of the North. Chomsky gives the example of Central America in the 1980s. The United States conducted international terrorism on a grand scale during that decade, through a terrorist network of immense complexity and sophistication. This campaign cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the region. Western Central America solidarity activists may well feel that their efforts – which were on an unprecedented scale – were not very successful. Chomsky points out that people fail to make the right comparison. The question is what would have happened if the solidarity movements had not existed, if solidarity activists had not gone into the region to live and work and provide a limited shield for people, if they had not educated and demonstrated and resisted back in the United States. It is fairly clear that the Reagan administration was, in the early 1980s, gearing up for another Vietnam War. This did not happen – largely because of domestic dissidence in the USA. "What took place is bad enough", Chomsky comments, "B-52 bombing would have been worse, much worse".

It is not only freedom of thought that requires, needs, freedom of expression. Other freedoms, some very basic like the right to life, also depend in a very direct way with freedom of expression and liberation from the mental chains of the western propaganda system.

Milan Rai

MEDIA MOURNERS

Surely *Time* cannot be included among the sensational papers, yet the latest issue (22nd September) has not only the front cover but more than two features exploiting the Diana death. Not only have they been digging up the details of the car driver's last hours ("drunk and drugged") occupying more than four pages, followed by a sentimental piece by one Bruce Hardy who apparently "can't laugh without you" (meaning Diana), and that is followed by a three-page feature about Earl Spencer with the title "His Sister's Keeper". And there is also a five-page feature from their London correspondent Elizabeth Gleick on "The long road ahead" with the sub-heading "Together and separately the Prince and the Prime Minister must help a nation finish mourning and move into the future".

What utter rubbish! The simpletons enjoy a 'spectacular' to relieve the daily boredom, but for 23 hours they are plunged back into the daily routine but for the fact that the media are

exploiting the details of the crash (just as *Time* does over four pages, boasting that they are revealing "the shocking tale of how Diana spent the hours before her death" and followed by what amounts to an exposure of Earl Spencer "His sister's keeper").

What is interesting from an anarchist approach is that such people, the aristocracy, are awful people. One interesting detail which this writer has not seen in the British press is that the Earl Spencer (father of Diana and the present ninth Earl) lived with them after he had divorced at Park House, a ten-bedroom mansion on the grounds of the Queen's Sandringham estate (so surely this explains why the Royals chose 'the virgin Diana' for their son's bride).

When will the media stop concentrating on the gossip? They won't. But when will the victims of the capitalist system rise up and get rid of all these parasites?

ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR
PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Friday 17th

Action Arms, Kingsland
Road, Hackney, London E5

8.00pm

Benefit for Movement Against the Monarchy (MA'AM) with The Living Legends and the 1926 Committee. £3/£2.50 concs.

Saturday 18th

Conway Hall, Red Lion
Square, London WC1

MAIN HALL

10.00am-7.00pm

Bookfair compered by Tony Allen.

Balloon competition via A Distribution stall (winner announced at 6.30pm).

9.00-11.00pm

A Comedy Benefit evening at the anarchist bookfair Mark Thomas, Mark Kelly (MC) and Rory Motion.

Tickets £5 in advance or £6 / £5 concs on the door (tickets available from Freedom Bookshop, Housmans Bookshop or New Anarchist Review, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Cheques payable to New Anarchist Review).

SMALL HALL

12-1.00pm

Green Anarchist The Gandalf Trial

1.00-2.00pm

Fabian Thomsett Anarcho-fascism

2.00-3.00pm

Colin Ward Bad Boys: Anarchism and Gender Assumptions

3.00-4.00pm

Dave Morris with Helen Steel A workshop on the McLibel Campaign

4.00-5.00pm

ACF Beyond Resistances: an anarchist manifesto for the millennium

5.00-6.00pm

Ex-Class War What we're doing and where we're going

6.00-7.00pm

Reclaim the Streets What forms of organisation work best and maximise people's involvement? A workshop on Reclaim the Streets and the anti-roads movement.

7.30-8.30pm

Anarchist Poetry and Music featuring Jeff Cloves, Dennis Gould and John Gallas (to be confirmed), with songs from James Bowen

CLUB ROOM

12-1.00pm

John Moore readings of his own anarchist short fiction

1.00-2.00pm

Anarchist Research Group
Heiner Becker: Anarchism and History

2.00-3.00pm

Movement Against the Monarchy (MA'AM) Meeting

3.00-4.00pm

Lib Ed David Gribble: Real Education – varieties of freedom

4.00-5.00pm

Haringey Solidarity Federation
Organising locally: successes and failures

5.00-6.30pm

Twenty-first Century Anarchism
Debate with editor James Bowen on this recently published book

6.30-7.30pm

Women Sex Workers Show and Tell

THE BERTRAND RUSSELL ROOM

11.30am-4.30pm

Creche with professional creche workers

NORTH ROOM

12-7.00pm

Exploding Cinema An Exploding Cinema sampler: short films, video and projection
Human society moves forward; the State is always the brake.

NORTH TOWER

1-2.00pm

Sexual Freedom Coalition Debate on sexual freedom, with Tuppy Owens

BALCONY

12-7.00pm

Poster Exhibition Steve Kinky

Techno Excursion Paintings by Joe Kavanagh

BAR

open from 12 noon for drinks and snacks

FOOD

from 12 noon vegetarian/vegan food provided by Veggies Co-op, and in the evening by Fat Freddie's Fervent Food Fiesta

121 Railton Road,
Brixton, London SE23

11pm-7am

Ambush presents Fifth Force Party
entrance £3.

Downstairs:

Urban hardcore and broken beats, with live sets from Shizuo (Digital Hardcore Recordings, Berlin) and Hekate (London-based sound system), and DJs Christoph (Praxis Records), Scud and Sphasic (both Ambush).

Upstairs:

Sharps versus the Shaggies sound clash, with London Psychogeographical Association, Skinheads as Independent Travellers in Space and Disconauts.

A VERY MODEST FRAUD

Cohabitees, moonlighters and others on benefits who are tempted to stray off the straight and narrow had better look out, because MI5 is about to join with the Department of Social Security to catch benefit cheats and the coming Social Security Fraud Act gives greater powers of recovery and prosecution. Already ministers at the Department of Social Security have approved the appointment of MI5 agents to oversee the audit of the 5,000 staff running the benefit fraud operation.

The new Social Security Fraud Act means that anybody overpaid benefits, where they have failed to disclose some information, will have the choice of a standard fine of repayment of the overpaid sum plus 30%, or to be prosecuted. Any office which does not address fraud, including the Housing Benefit Unit, will also be penalised heavily.

This crackdown comes amid disclosures last week in *The Guardian* of a confidential

memorandum to top brass in the ministry informing them of MI5's involvement. MI5 has talked ministers into the idea that social security fraud is a kosher area for its agents to operate. It says that social security and housing benefit fraud falls within MI5's new remit to combat 'serious crime'.

The previous Tory government claimed that it would confine MI5's new activities to helping the police act against mafia gangs and drug barons. Now Labour seems bent on letting the secret agents loose on benefit claimants.

SHORT OF SOMETHING TO DO

The Ministry of Social Security want to save £2.8 billion over the next three years, and out of the £80 billion benefit bill. Who better to frighten people off benefits than the agents of the security service MI5, who formerly chased subversives and spies.

Since the Cold War closed down the security services have been short of something to do but now, after being commissioned by the DSS, MI5 will be paid out of the social security budget. They will examine procedures for running down the social security cheats, among other things.

Some civil servants and MPs are claiming to be surprised that Labour seems to be tightening up and toughening up the Tory squeeze on claimants. The excuse used by a Benefit Agency spokeswoman is that MI5 is being brought in to fight big-time crime. She said: "Where organised crime is connected with benefit fraud ... MI5 is contacted. But I must stress that when individual claimants only are involved it is not a matter for MI5."

Be that as it may, the brutal culture of the two agencies is complementary and they should have no trouble getting into bed with each other. Last month Annie Machon, who quit MI5, said she was disillusioned with the agency's incompetence and excessive bureaucracy. She was arrested on 20th September and questioned by police under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 18th October, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 9th October

Her boyfriend is David Shayler, a former MI5 officer, who recently revealed that MI5 keeps hundreds of thousands of files on individuals in this country who they consider subversive and their archives include some top politicians.

FRAUD AND THE 'WICKED MIND'

The temptation for the DSS Benefit Agency to cut corners to knock down the benefit bill is great. Boarders, lodgers, lone parents and short-term claimants are all seen as high risk categories, and are likely to be targeted in any Benefit Agency fraud campaign.

Fraud is dishonesty. The House of Lords in the leading case *Derry versus Peek* (1889) found that the absence of honest belief is essential to constitute fraud. In common law it must be shown to make the charge of fraud stick, that the defendant had a 'wicked mind'.

Does a claimant have a 'wicked mind' (does he or she commit fraud) by omitting to mention a change of circumstances to a benefit officer or someone in the Employment Service?

I think we can be sure that more claimants labelled 'benefit cheats' will be dealt with and convicted by the justice system than insider traders convicted of fraud in the coming years.

Pity someone can't do something about the dirty/clean money racket openly used by professional bodies to extract Euro-money from the European Union. These agencies, some of whom attended the Training and Employment Conference in Manchester last month, freely fix creative accounting to cheat the EU for their adventures into schemes like Welfare to Work and the New Deal.

The same professionals who talk about electronic tagging and DNA testing for claimants have no qualms about milking the system themselves on a massive scale.

Mack the Knife

GANDALF TRIAL UNDERWAY

Two of the 'Gandalf Six' defendants, Paul Rogers and Steve Booth, made an informative and entertaining presentation of the case to the London Anarchist Forum on 19th September.

'Gandalf' is an acronym: Green Anarchist and Animal Liberation Front. There are six defendants. Four of them (Paul Rogers, Stephen Booth, Saxon Wood and Noel Molland) are associated with our contemporary *Green Anarchist*. Two (Robin Webb and Simon Russell) are of the Animal Liberation Front Support Group.

Four of the six accused are currently on trial in Portsmouth. Webb and Rogers expect to be tried later.

The magistrate at the indictment hearing refused to commit Robin Webb for trial, on the ground that the evidence against him had been used at an earlier trial where he was acquitted and it would be "abuse of process" to try him twice on the same evidence, albeit on a different charge. The prosecution has been granted a judicial review, and it is predicted by lawyers that the magistrate's ruling will be overturned.

'SEVERED' FROM OTHER DEFENDANTS

Paul Rogers was on trial with the other defendants until early September, when he had a disagreement with his counsel. He wanted certain facts mentioned as part of his defence case. The barrister considered these facts irrelevant, declined to accept his client's instruction and withdrew. The judge invited Paul to conduct his own defence, and courteously offered a 24-hour recess for Paul to examine the case documents (which number about 6,000). Paul is adamant that he needs his case put by experienced counsel, and his case was severed from the others so that this can be arranged. He will probably return to court in early 1998, perhaps in the dock with Robin Webb.

On the first day of the trial, Tuesday 26th August, more than forty supporters of the defendants were demonstrating outside Portsmouth Crown Court. However, neither the public nor the defendants were allowed into court as the day was taken up by legal argument about Public Interest Immunity Certificates (i.e. certificates signed by government ministers to the effect that disclosure of documents would damage 'national security').

The whole of 27th August was taken up with arguments about the selection of jurors. The prosecution wanted to exclude anyone associated in any way with the idea of animal rights, and the defence to exclude anyone opposed to the idea. Forty-one inhabitants of Portsmouth had been called for jury service, and the whole of 28th August was taken up with the selection of twelve jurors and two reserves from among the 41.

The trial proper began on 29th August. Each defendant has been allocated a different barrister because their cases are different. Steve Booth ran the 'Diary of Community Resistance' in *Green Anarchist*, listing acts of resistance reported in the press. Noel Molland, when he was a student, wrote a 'Janet and John' story in which a missile was projected at a shop window. Saxon Wood ran the *Green Anarchist* mail order service, including the book *Urban Attack* which describes the manufacture of weapons.

According to prosecution counsel Richard Onslow, the defendants had different ends and

different beliefs, but were working together because they "all wanted criminal damage to be done. They devoted their lives to it." The gist of the defence is that they were simply reporting events and/or describing methods, and that this does not constitute incitement.

Apart from its interest to anarchists, this case is important to everyone concerned for 'democratic rights' and 'liberty of the subject'. Most liberals (with a small l) would concede that there are proper limits to freedom of speech, and that prohibition of incitement to violence is one such limit. But this case raises the question of whether it is proper to prohibit the mere reporting of violent acts. Yet there has been little comment in the national press (*The Guardian* does not seem even to have reported the case) presumably because, following the accident in Paris, all available space was needed for hastily-written piffle.

One commentator who did get into print was Nick Cohen in *The Observer*, who recalled the case of a man who sat in ambush in his allotment hut and shot a persistent thief. The *Daily Mail* called it outrageous that the shot-gun man was ordered to pay compensation for the injuries he had inflicted. The courts, it said, persistently came down harder "on those who over-react in self-defence than on those who commit the original crime". The law was "skewed against" decent people. This could be interpreted as incitement to violence against non-violent criminals, but Mr Cohen's doubts that the *Daily Mail* will be prosecuted.

JUDGE IS A MAJOR-GENERAL

His Honour Judge Selwyn, aka Major-General Selwyn, is the only circuit judge to boast a military rank. Mr Selwyn had already qualified as a solicitor when he was conscripted for 'national service' and his entire army career was in the legal department. He was promoted to Major-General on appointment as Director of Army Legal Services. All judges are members of the Establishment, and there is no evidence that this one is more Establishment-minded than most.

Prosecuting counsel Mr Onslow is nicknamed 'On Slow' by other barristers, because of his style of delivery. He ponderously reads out, and invites police witnesses to read out, from obscure periodicals published abroad which the defendants have never even heard of.

Defence counsel could quite properly challenge this irrelevant material as soon as it is produced, but in fact they wait until each reading is finished before challenging it. Apparently their tactic is to let Mr Onslow show the jury that he is a bore and his case is a waste of time. But they cannot allow the case to drag on for too long because if it does they will not be available for a prestigious IRA case due to start in the autumn.

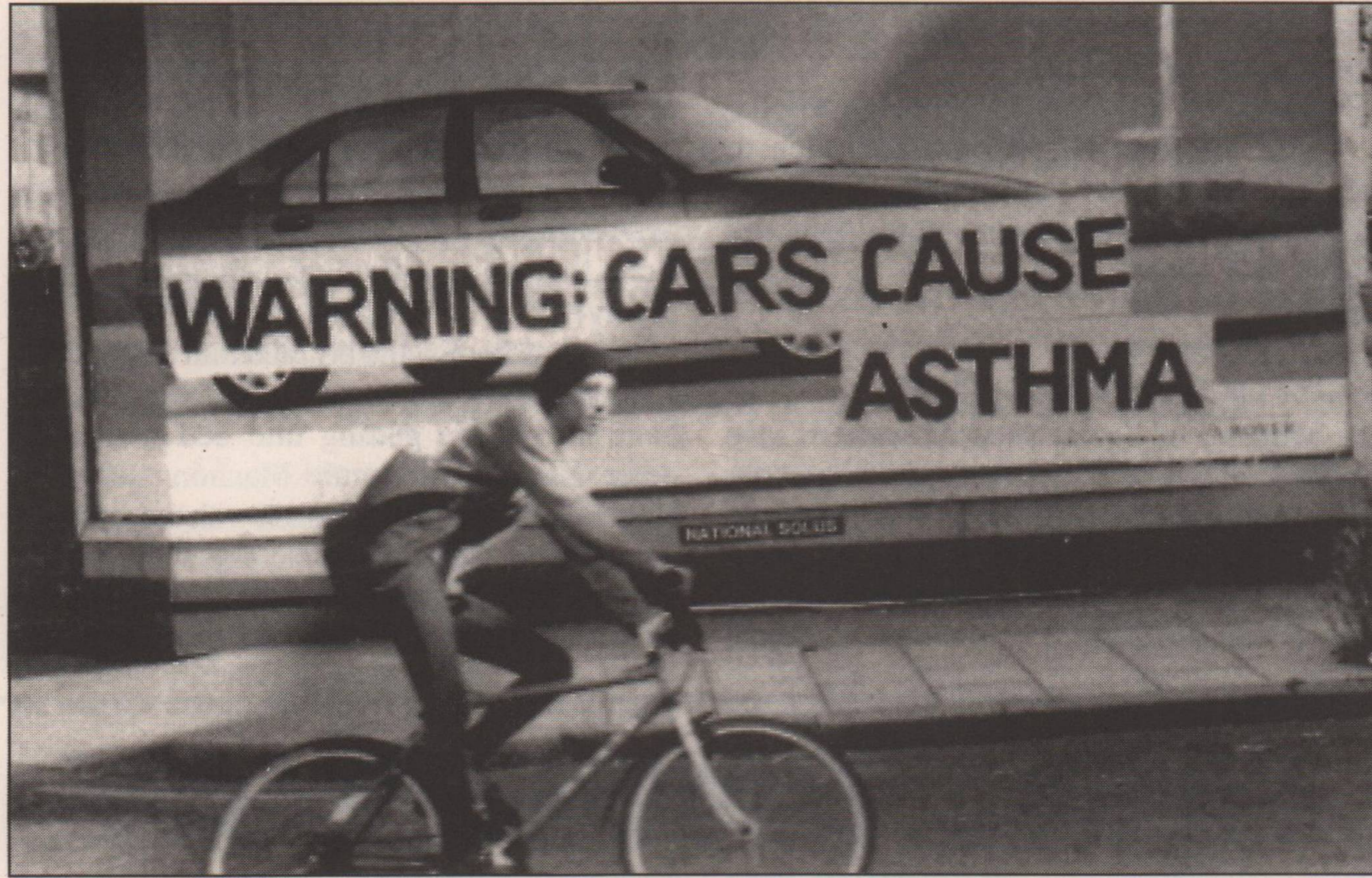
The defendants are preparing for the worst, which on the basis of precedence might mean prison sentences of two and a half years. But it seems reasonable, on the evidence, to hope that they will be acquitted.

DR



— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

GRABBING THE PUBLIC IMAGINATION



Subvertising billboards

We used to be told of simple people who, when at last a drought was followed by welcome rain, would attribute it to their rain-making ceremony. In precisely the same way, whenever I see a slight shift in the government policy on road-building I happily attribute it to those protesters, whether in deep tunnels or high tree-houses, who have dramatised the issues. By my standards they have succeeded in capturing the public imagination, an achievement which has always eluded me.

I have been writing, sensibly and reasonably, about transport issues for many decades, and seven years ago distilled my experience in a modest little book called *Freedom to Go: after the motor age* (Freedom Press, £3.50*). It was well reviewed and three times translated, but it changed no-one's mind, whereas the young, witty and resourceful road protesters impeding the earth-movers, while they are eventually driven out, have begun the process of changing the nation's mind. The popular heroes have not been the contractors, nor the bailiffs, but young agitators known as Animal and Swampy.

Two days before Swampy was driven out of his Fairmile tunnel, the *Daily Mirror* (29th January 1997) carried a feature celebrating "the battle to stop cars taking over Britain" and an editorial explaining "why Animal is right" arguing that "Britain faces a choked, grid-locked future". It was not exaggerating. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on 18th September warned of a "looming crisis" and, the press explained, "took the unprecedented step of producing a second report on transport and the environment within three years because it said that since its last report in 1994 all the trends were in the wrong direction and there had been

a lot of talk from government but no action".

And, bringing the issue specifically into the context of the road protesters, Steven Norris, a former Conservative transport minister (who was not seeking re-election) admitted in a *Panorama* television programme in March that in his view the protesters, high in the threatened trees along the route of the Newbury bypass, "were right" and that the

road should never have been built on the chosen route. He said "I think it's fair to say that the formula was more motorist-based than it should have been and that it didn't apply the same kind of cash values to environmental considerations which it did to motorists' inconvenience".

It is a pity that he did not project such opinions while in office, and with a change in

government bringing what Anthony Fyson called "unimpressive tweakings" in the road building programme, he commented, in *Planning* (15th August 1997), that:

"Last month's mixed bag of road scheme decisions – some cut, some permitted and some shelved for the moment – impressed no-one very much. The fact is that road building has, anyway, diminished dramatically since the old Department of Transport was in its pomp and Mrs Thatcher's 'great car economy' was supposed to point the way to prosperity. Dropping a few high-profile schemes like the Salisbury by-pass makes little difference to the national road traffic situation, welcome though it may be to environmental campaigners and a cash-strapped Treasury. It certainly does not represent the beginning of any kind of integrated transport strategy and transport minister Gavin Strang has as yet nothing to offer by way of significant public investment in an alternative, public transport based system."

All too true, and in its 'Road Rage Round-Up' the campaigning journal *Squall* (subtitled 'Necessity Breeds Ingenuity') reports in its Summer 1997 issue that:

"Surrey County Council have come up with an excellent way of getting rid of protesters – decide not to build the road. While activists in four camps along the route of the A320 road widening and straightening scheme in Guildford, which would have cut through Stringers Common, were busily burrowing away in May fearing imminent eviction, the council ran out of money. 'With regret', the council, which went Tory in May, announced that they had to abandon their plan. So 220 mature trees, wet grassland, homes of bats, lizards and aquatic life, as well as the usual SSIs, will not be destroyed."

This, of course, is the confusing and haphazard way in which policy makers and protesters alike grope for a rational approach to transport in the next century.

Colin Ward

Diana as Star and Spectacle

Most socialist and anarchist comment has missed the most relevant point about the life and death of Diana, even in *Freedom* (20th September). This is that Diana was the most spectacular example of the 'spectacular society' since the concept was launched.

When the Situationist International was formed by a handful of intellectuals, forty years ago, the most important negative item of its ideology was that we are no longer subjected to material and economic so much as to intellectual and cultural oppression, that we are no longer deprived of a sufficient standard of living so much as of a satisfactory style of life, that we no longer experience the world directly in our own actions and reactions so much as observe it indirectly through the images manufactured and projected by the mass media, that we are no longer integrated members of a living community so much as isolated spectators in

a society of spectacle.

Thus when Guy Debord, the main ideological figure among the Situationists, published his book *The Society of the Spectacle*, thirty years ago, he opened it with a parody of the opening of Karl Marx's *Capital*: "The whole life of the societies in which the conditions of modern production prevail is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was once directly lived has moved away into a representation".

The Situationists described and denounced a wide variety of spectacular representations in advertising, periodicals, cinema, and television; we could now add more in videos, computers, lotteries and sport. The mass media have become the main medium through which more and more people perceive the world and even perceive themselves. The image of the world transmitted through films and plays, pop songs and soap operas, advertisements and interviews, scandals and disasters tends to become more significant to many people than the world itself.

This isn't a new phenomenon. It is a common human characteristic to find more sense of reality in literature or music or art than in everyday life, because imaginary adventure and beauty and truth are more reliable and often more intense than ordinary events. Nowadays it is increasingly common to find a sense of virtual reality through various electronic means, because of the increasing technical efficiency and economic advantages of such means.

It is also a common human characteristic to make sense of critical episodes of life and death through fairytale and myth rather than factual narrative and through collective ceremony rather than individual reflection. Fantasy is easier than fact, stories are easier than histories, ritual is easier than reality, symbols are easier than things themselves. Nowadays, as traditional forms of discourse and drama and belief and behaviour lose their force, many people feel the need for other

kinds of displacement activity to discharge affect and anxiety.

Unfortunately the Situationists, as avant-garde intellectuals, brought into their ideology so much personal and political confusion and behaved in such disruptive and destructive ways that they became little more than a spectacle themselves, though they had their brief encounter with glory in the French 'events' of 1968. But the concept of the spectacle still has great force, and without adopting all the rest of the Situationist baggage it should be adapted to the developing pathology of our society.

Unfortunately the Situationists, as left-wing intellectuals, made the mistake of supposing that the mass media are part of some kind of class conspiracy, of a process of brain-washing, of conscious manipulation of the masses. But this approach tells us nothing about the true nature of cultural life in modern society, and if we can't understand this aspect of the world we can't hope to change it.

It is too simple to refer just to media hypocrisy and mass hysteria. The people who produce and consume the mass media are not just hypocrites and hysterics. The media manipulate themselves as well as the masses, and are in turn manipulated by the masses in a process of mutual mystification. The whole gigantic phenomenon is not to be understood in terms of political paranoia.

Consider on a much smaller scale the amount of hypocrisy and hysteria involved in editing and reading *Freedom*. Consider how much anarchism is affected or infected by fantasy and myth. Consider how much so-called anarchist so-called activity is unrealistic and irrational. Consider how each of us actually engages with other people and wider society, and actually responds to the ups and downs of everyday life.

Diana is a much more complex figure than may be supposed. She belongs to a growing pantheon of celebrities who are not icons, as they are sometimes called, because they represent only themselves, but are stars, of the

sky as well as the screen, very distant but also very close. Debord saw the celebrity, the star as the supreme illustration of the spectacle, the final and fatal attempt to overcome the banality of everyday life:

"By concentrating in himself or herself the image of a popular role, the celebrity, the spectacular representation of a living human being, concentrates this banality. The condition of the star is the specialisation of the apparently lived; the object of identification with shallow apparent life, which must compensate for the fragments of actually lived productive specialisations. Celebrities exist in order to represent various types of life-styles and styles of comprehending society, free to express themselves globally. They incarnate the inaccessible result of social labour by miming the sub-products of this labour, which are magically projected above it as its goal: power and holidays, decision and consumption, which are at the beginning and end of an undiscussed process. On the one hand, governmental power personalises itself in a pseudo-celebrity; on the other, the star of consumption gets itself elected by plebiscite as a pseudo-power over the lived."

(The Hegelian/Marxist style is sadly typical.)

The cult of Diana alive wasn't just invented by the ruling class or the mass media; after all, it did great damage to both. It was conjured up from a general and genuine yearning for a vision of beauty and youth and wealth and health and glamour and glory beyond what is possible or practicable in our ugly and brutal age. And the cult of Diana dead, however much it was manufactured and manipulated, provided a catharsis of genuine grief and guilt and real regret and resentment. The extraordinary scenes before, during and after the funeral were extraordinary not just in themselves but in the fact that they were unpaid, unplanned, unformed, unorganised, unregulated, unstructured, unsponsored. Deep and strong social forces were at work for a moment.

Many of us felt much, most of us felt something, few of us felt nothing. Whatever we may feel about it, the spectacle of Diana is an essential part of the life of millions of people in capitalist societies at the end of the twentieth century. As with religion, if we can't understand what happened and what it means we are doomed to perpetual obscurity.

NW

ART REVIEW

Sensation: Royal Academy of Arts
Botticelli it ain't



"Your ticket of admission and one throwing egg, sir."

Would I Lie?

A spectre is haunting Europe and it is a shambling army of geriatrics threatening to write their autobiographies so that finally the truth can be told. Anyone active within any grouping, be it social, religious, sporting, political or blood-red revolutionary, knows that no one knows the true story about who did what, plus the matter of the money to find them an honest publisher, and they will blazon the truth across Europe even if it means destroying this corrupt civilisation before the Cup Final.

Year by year I have listened to the voice of the White Hart tempter, and in four months I have typed three pages bringing me up to the edge of three years, and so far not one exposé. Autobiography, and its bastard biography, after a brief moment of rage or giggling can only survive if it is well written and is deemed to honestly inform and create a cast of characters who can take their place in the world of fiction, amusing or interesting in their own right. Farson and Peppiatt, in their lives of the painter Francis Bacon, unfortunately for me do neither, yet in the end it is understandable for their casting net was too small and their subjects in the ol' final analysis led lives that became less interesting with every turning page. It is excusable with Peppiatt for one assumes that he has sired 366 pages of what I assume is the definitive life of the painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992) and, as reputations dealerwise fade, then one wonders why a particular work is being read except by those, of course, who are doing that mysterious 'thing': their thesis.

When Dali was producing his surrealist paintings and Bacon his screaming Popes, I would walk across London to view them for I was caught in that emotional time-warp, but too much viewing highlighted the faults, and never more so than with Bacon, for to me Dali is still the master mystic painter. In 1957 the Hanover Gallery had an exhibition of Bacon's '... Van Gogh' walking away in the sun-drenched fields of Provence and surrounded by these large brightly coloured canvases I accepted that, for me, Bacon was but a minor popular painter of the mode.

For those comrades impatient over the council's failure to grant them permission to

erect a barricade, I can understand their cry of 'Give us the pith, man' and this, as it must be, is in Daniel Farson's *The Gilded Gutter*. Secondary to Peppiatt's book, yet in its 279 pages it captures the feel of a small clique circulating around a few pubs and clubs in Soho, each seeking the bitch goddess success, united only by a dislike of each other's public figure. Only John Deakin comes out as a figure in the round because everyone hated him, his barbed tongue and his indifference to insults. What is interesting in books of this type is not what is in but what is left out, and there is no mention of the French coffee house with Iron Foot Jack, Irene the Fox, Billy Kay, Quentin Crisp and others wherein you could sit only as long as you did not fall asleep. The Irish pub in Piccadilly where drug dealers openly had the drugs on the tables with bowls of Irish stew being spooned. Nina Hammett, who posed for Gaudier-Brzeska's 'Laughing Torso', spent her time in the public bar scrounging drinks until she jumped to her death out of a Soho window. The Fitzroy with Nina in the public so-empty bar and the saloon packed to the door with the entire kaleidoscope happy-time homosexuals from stately 'Queens' to dignified transvestites to raucous pre-gays, while the piano banged away in the corner and the First World War poster fluttered from the wall and Nina in the public bar awaiting another free-loading drink. And all until the law closed the Fitzroy as the worst den of vice in all its years, so went another happy-time watering hole. But no mention of it? The pub in Old Compton Street where the rent boys sat in the gloom waiting for customers, and the tiny basement theatre under the AIA Gallery where forgotten Jacobean plays were performed and twenty people, actors and audience, filled the room - no mention. Aleister Crowley, "the wickedest man in Europe", in his rented basement where, for a price, one might perform a black mass - but no mention? After the dreariness of the Colony and Muriel, plus the Groucho Club's 'the fame is the spur, boys', they ended up in the Caves Club because "the people who use the Caves were classless". I have heard that chant so many times by time-serving 'anarchists' when what they mean is that they



dislike the labouring class and pray to be accepted to the class above them, heigh ho.

Every single autobiography or biography is a lie and it is only in raging alternatives that the true figure emerges, for what is important is not what is in but what is left out. I liked Albert Meltzer, but his friendship was dangerous and when he published his autobiography trembling fingers thumbed the pages, but, heigh ho, I got off with but a brief exposure. He was patronised by those not involved with him as 'dear old ...', 'lovable old ...', 'funny old ...', but he failed all those names. In relation to myself, I cried "Albert, you never mentioned that you were responsible for the Special Branch turning my rooms over; when you were doing a rent-dodging flit from the Wooden Shoe you left a full manuscript scattered on the floor (the printing had been paid for), and when I kicked in the door of that bookshop to get the author's manuscript you came running up crying 'They've kicked in

my door, I'm entitled to police protection like any other shop-keeper.'" Oh Albert, I was asked to do paid pornographic drawings for the down-market Soho trade by Albert, and I refused, not for moral reasons but because I did not trust those associated with that market. When Alan Barlow was given eighteen months for trying to blow in the door of the Spanish bank in Covent Garden, you did not attend the trial, Albert, and when during those eighteen months we regularly brought his outside dinner and took it in to him, Albert never once contributed a paid potato or a visit, yet when Alan was released from Wormwood Scrubs both you and Robinson were outside the prison gates waiting to grab the body as a glory trophy. Albert, you sent me a silly midnight telegram saying you were dead and next morning I telephoned and telephoned to confirm that. It was not true but I went along out of curiosity to be told by a gate-keeper in the Jewish cemetery that the only burial there that week was of a 'muslim'. Oh Albert, you lived off that story for years. At the *Private Eye* libel case they asked me to keep you away from the defence lawyers, even paying for a meal for the two of us. We got kicked out of El Vino, a silly pub in Fleet Street, because you were wearing a straw boater but no tie. I led a small mutiny on the North of England, even to the Mutiny Act being read, and Albert, you pretended to have done the same but it was never funny. I was under 'Close Arrest' and 'Open Arrest' facing two courts martial, one for which 317 British soldiers had been executed by firing squad in the First World War, and Albert, your giggle over the fantasy mutiny was never funny. I finished the war posted in Berlin and a short bus ride to the Russian Third Army, while Albert had his peaceful 'good war' in the Middle East. But fantasy for Albert always took over. Albert will be remembered, to his credit, as quartermaster to his small shifting squad of mercenaries, but, again to his credit, he produced *Black Flag* wherein he slagged off all and everyone. A dangerous friend, but colourful. We must wait for the next and the next definitive biography on our period telling 'de true story' of this time, okay Albert.

Arthur Moyses

Michael Peppiatt, *Anatomy of an Enigma* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £20).

Daniel Farson, *The Gilded Gutter* (Century, £17.99).

Yes, you lucky bookworms, it's almost that time again when the annual anarchist bookfair descends upon us like a blessing from above. And this year, as you'll have noticed it's much more than just(?) a bookfair, with meetings and videos all day long, a bar, food, and a cabaret in the evening. The organisers have pulled out all the stops for this one with a full programme listing the time and location of all the events, so do show your appreciation by coming along if you possibly can and contributing to the positive celebratory atmosphere and the general success of the occasion.

Freedom Press will have its stall there as always, with the usual stimulating mixture of new titles, classics, bargain books and special 'bookfair only' offers. There are few enough occasions for the entire spectrum of the anarchist movement in the UK to come together, so on the 18th October get out of bed, get on yer bike/bus/train/mule and get down there or we'll send the posse round.

The following is a small selection of some of the many titles you can expect to find on our stall on the day, and which are already in stock in the shop. The new *Anarchist Calendar 1998** (from the same people who brought you the 1997 *anarcho-surrealist calendar*) is a superb month-to-a-page wall/desk calendar which both entertains and informs. Amongst the cartoons and illustrations which separate the months are 'Pirate Tales', 'The Black Cat Story', 'Peter Kropotkin's Big Adventure' and 'The Visitor' (from the planet Mala-Testa, of course). In A4 landscape format on good quality paper with a card cover, it also has an anarcho-quiz featuring questions for each month with answers at the back. At only £4, one to make a date with.

Unique in the world of publishing is See Sharp Press's brand new *African Anarchism: the history of a movement** £6.95. The authors, Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariwey, are members of the anarchist

FREEDOM PRESS BOOKSHOP READERS' ROUND-UP

Nigerian Awareness League and both they and the publishers are to be congratulated on producing the first book of its kind in English. Apart from definitions of anarchism and its history, it details anarchistic precedents in Africa, the development of socialism and why it failed, and the future for anarchism in Africa. It throws light on fascinating details of the tribal system as well as on little-known aspects of the colonial legacy. The 120 pages include an index, bibliography, footnotes, preface and a foreword by Chaz Bufe.

The first issue of a new occasional magazine based in Derby has appeared, called *Total Liberty: a journal of non-aligned anarchism*. Owing no allegiance to "any group, organisation or particular ideological position within the anarchist pantheon" it aims to carry articles from different strands of the movement as well as critical pieces by non-anarchists, and both theory and practice will be discussed and examined in serious and more light-hearted vein. Issue one covers anarchists in British labour history, an account of the formation and demise of the old Anarchist Federation of Britain, a proposal for an anarchist media group, and much more very interesting material smartly produced at 75p for 12 A4 pages.

Karl S. Guthke's *B. Traven: the life behind the legends** is generally agreed to be the best biography available of the enigmatic German anarchist B. Traven, aka Ret Marut and dozens of other pseudonyms, and is a formidable piece of combined detective work and story-telling which

gradually builds up into a captivating picture of this elusive literary genius and revolutionary. With the help of Traven's widow, the Traven estate and Traven's German publishers, Guthke assembles an exhaustive study by both systematic research and by the dogged pursuit of clues, rumours and red herrings down blind alleys, up garden paths and via umpteen cul-de-sacs before finally emerging triumphant with this fascinating account woven from the myriad threads of Traven's astonishing life. Author of the classic *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and the acclaimed series of jungle novels, Traven was top of the reading list of people such as Albert Einstein, and was a friend of the Mexican artists Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros (some of whose work is currently on display at the Whitechapel Art Gallery next door). This bulky tome of almost 500 pages, originally published by Lawrence Hill at £11, has been obtained by Freedom Press Distributors on your behalf, dear comrade, at half price, a mere £5.50 to you (inland postage costs alone are £2.30, but your price also includes postage in the UK). There are several pages of black and white photographs and illustrations, plus an index, bibliography, 62 pages of notes and a preface. Not to be missed.

The English Civil War tract written by Gerard Winstanley and others in the Digger movement, *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced*, has been re-issued as a cheap pamphlet together with the contemporary case for land rights and a brief synopsis of the Diggers. Included are a reading list

and useful resources and contact groups such as The Land is Ours, Tinker's Bubble and The Dongas. 50p, unpaginated.

Another new publication which we have not yet had time to peruse concerns two old favourites. *Anarchists Adrift: Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman* by Kenneth Wenzler is published by Brandywine Press at £7.95 for 114 pages, and if names are anything to go by it should be worth tasting.

Two more See Sharp Press pamphlets now back in stock are *The Meaning of Atheism** by E. Haldeman-Julius with 24 pages at £1.20; and *Anarchist Society and its Practical Realisation** by Graham Purchase, with its cover designed by Clifford Harper, 16 pages at £1.25. Alternatively the latter is included, along with eleven other essays, in his *Anarchism and Environmental Survival** mentioned some weeks ago, at the princely proletarian price of £2.50 (previously £8.95) - check it out.

Finally, please note that Goodway's *For Anarchism* has jumped £1 to £14.99, and William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* has been reported out of print, so expect a hefty price increase if and when Penguin decide to re-print it.

Look out for more treats and surprises at the bookfair. Be seeing you.

Four Eyes

Titles distributed by Freedom Press Distributors (marked*) are post-free inland (please add 15% postage and packing to overseas orders). For other titles add 10% towards p&p inland, 20% overseas. Cheques in sterling to 'FREEDOM PRESS' please.

I must admit that one of the main reasons (apart from being an anarchist at heart) for which I read *Freedom* are the lively and varied reports on international affairs. Reports on the situation in remote places such as Indonesia, Ecuador and Paraguay always gave me a feeling that I am correctly informed on the social developments in these places.

Therefore as a *Freedom* reader who lives in a kibbutz I was somewhat shocked by the poor representation of the situation in the kibbutzim today in the article 'End of Jewish Utopia' (*Freedom*, 6th of September). This article quotes outdated sources from fifty years ago. While being bleak and unclear it gives facts which are either wrong or distorted. I would like to try to give more ample and correct information on the kibbutzim then and now.

First of all the kibbutz movement was never Jewish-Arab but based purely, like the rest of the Zionist movement, from its beginning in the turn of the century, on Jewish immigrants from east Europe who were influenced by marxist ideas. Anarchism was not really part of the game as Russia was revered as the almighty father (the main headline in the kibbutzim newspaper on the day of Stalin's death in 1953 said "The sun of nationalities has turned off").

The kibbutzim adopted a strict communal lifestyle which interweaved with the then vigilant (as now in a way) situation of Jewish settlement in Israel. All private property was banned, even clothes were communal. The kibbutz members lived in rooms which had virtually nothing in them apart from a bed. All decisions were made by the members' assembly in a democratic way including the names of the first babies! Eating was (and still is) done in a dining hall with a central kitchen, laundry was also communal and so was the kindergarten. The children did not sleep at home with their parents but in a dormitory in the kindergarten/school with one parent in shift guarding them. The idea in these central/communal facilities was also to liberate women from the endless toil of the housework by shifting it to central facilities thus also making it more efficient. After all there is hardly any doubt that it is more efficient and economical to cook for a few hundred people in one central kitchen or laundry than each family for itself. The members were requested to work a similar amount of hours a day and received their consumption needs according to a general budget or allocation decided concerning health, housing etc. All the profits and the assets belong to the community which decided how to use it, there were no private bank

A NARCHY IN ACTION?

— NUMBER 12 —

Kibbutz Samar

I feel that in Samar it is proven that true anarchy can exist and benefit the people who practice it. People here are always willing to defend the way of life we live even if it means restraining themselves since eventually they do prosper and enjoy a good deal of freedom.

accounts. All budgets were similar thus creating a society where people were (materially) equal.

From the period of the beginning of the century until the 1980s about three hundred different kibbutzim were built. They were hailed as containing the creme de la creme of Israeli society (the state was established in 1948), many artists but also leaders, and generals of Israel came from the kibbutzim even though they contained only 3% of the population in Israel. Indeed many saw the kibbutz as a utopia at that time, and it became the most sociologically researched society in the world. The nature of the society was absolutely secular excluding a few religious kibbutzim. Unfortunately apart from one attempt there was never any real effort to merge with the Arab population in Israel. The kibbutzim took what is referred to as a 'mild left wing stance', while advocating peace and co-existence with the Arabs within and without Israel, they remained strictly arrogantly Zionist, therefore never willing to compromise on the Jewish only character of Israel.

The article claims "that the last of the kibbutz has given up". This is again only partially true (as is the picture drawn by the too short article in *The Raven* number 30 on 'New Life to the Land'), the thing which has been given up by the last kibbutz is the communal dormitory of the children and not the whole ideology which contains much more than that. It is true that the kibbutzim are changing. Israel has grown and became a much richer capitalistic Americanised and less ideological country. The kibbutzim whose fate was bound with Israeli society began to change also. At first a private kettle was allowed in the rooms then furniture then books, kitchens and all the other

wonders of private property. Today a house of a family in a kibbutz looks just like a typical house in the city. The dining hall still exists but members can choose if they wish to cook at home or eat in it. All property is allowed and is bought according to a member's budget where he can even create his own credit account. The communal lodging of the children has been renounced and the children sleep at home. Many central facilities still exist: the launderette, the central office which manages the managing, accountancy and governmental paperwork for all. Many kibbutzim are taking steps towards becoming a capitalist society, meaning:

- Private accounts for members which will account to every expense of the member including those which previously were not accounted for such as meals, electricity etc.
- The gradual leasing of the kibbutz assets to the members until their final purchasing by the members.
- Nomination of boards of directors to manage the kibbutz.
- Differentiation of budgets between the different members according to the responsibility of their work meaning: salaries.

Indeed here the article is right, many kibbutzim are not a utopistic society anymore but a society in transit towards a rural town on the scale of a small village. However, the kibbutzim were never "pioneers of anarchism" except a few rare examples, one of which, I feel, is the kibbutz I live in which like some others still maintains its revolutionary way of life but in a different way from the original kibbutz.

The kibbutz in which I live (it is called Samar) has an ideology of non-intervention with the member's life which remarkably

reminds me of anarchist theories. The main points of social 'order' here are:

- Everybody decides for himself where and how much he works.
- There is no budget, everyone draws cash as he wishes.
- Decisions are reached only by dialogue or the assembly.
- There are hardly any committees to monitor internal affairs as in other kibbutzim.
- All facilities e.g. kitchen, office etc., are open all the times - there are no locks anywhere.

These features or customs of our life style are possible because here lives a small group of people which decided it wants to live this way. Of course this requires much self control from the member since this whole system is based on the fact that people will consider the communal property, money and works to be their own and therefore will work well and spend the money sparingly, but all is done according to their decision. The belief is that this freedom will lead to better results than the usual systems of control and coercion societies usually use. Up to today things are working fine, this place is prospering and has a strong social spine. There are about 150 residents living here, including eighty members. We grow dates and vegetables and have a dairy farm and some tiny factories. Maybe the most interesting thing for *Freedom* readers about this place is the fact that you will not find here more than five people who know who Kropotkin was. The word anarchy is hardly ever mentioned, and is sometimes even abused in its negative misleading conception (equal to just one big mess where nobody cares about anything). This place emerged as an anarchistic society without people planning it ideologically. The healthy society here is more a result of people from well-to-do houses being fed up of the rotten systems they grew up in (many of them were raised in old and stagnated kibbutzim) having an opportunity to act freely and manage their own lives from A to Z as a small desolate rural place like Samar makes possible.

I feel that in Samar it is proven that true anarchy can exist and benefit the people who practice it. People here are always willing to defend the way of life we live even if it means restraining themselves since eventually they do prosper and enjoy a good deal of freedom. Readers who would like to contact us to learn more about Samar or to come and volunteer here are invited to write to: Meir Turniansky Kibbutz Samar, Doar Na Hevel Eilot, Israel 88815

e-mail: samar-accounts@samar.ardom.co.il
Meir Turniansky

THE SECOND TAKING OF SAN CRISTOBAL IN MEXICO NIGHTS OF ANARCHY IN CHIAPAS

It's 4am on Tuesday 9th September and the occupation of the town of San Cristobal de las Casas is complete. Some 10,000 masked but unarmed Zapatistas have overrun the central plazas and surrounding streets. Not since the momentous uprising on the 1st of January 1994 have they taken complete control of the former colonial capital of the state of Chiapas. It's cold and damp, but there's a street party raging. Thousands of masked rebels are dancing away the night in front of a banner bedecked stage in the central plaza proclaiming 'Welcome EZLN, forgers of dignity'. A sugary pop song, and unofficial Zapatista anthem, blasts out for the twentieth time and plots unfold, of romance and revolution beneath the legions of ski-masks and bandannas.

Beyond the stage front, the scene is one of Armageddon for Coletos. Zapatistas are everywhere, camped out on every available inch of space, an ocean of indigenous colours and blankets and masked faces and rebozos and guerrilla rucksacks. The aroma of tortillas cooking, the smell of the mountains, the demure sound of the people of corn, the quiet cacophony of indigenous tongues.

The Zapatista have re-occupied the Coletos Municipal Palace, seat of power of the historical owners of San Cristobal, the 'puro blanco', direct descendants of the Spanish colonisers, upholders of a Coletos apartheid tradition. Beneath the Palace's gracious colonial columns, a thousand occupiers sleep as if they own the place. The Coletos have

fled the palace, and indeed all of the public spaces of San Cristobal. Behind closed doors and barred windows, the town's residents curse the invasion of this horde of rebellious savages.

A beautiful, free, friendly mood reigns in occupied San Cristobal. The music and the dance and people sharing food and people chatting, smiles behind balaclavas. There are no police and no army and no state presence. Bags are strewn about wherever without fear of theft. Cigarettes are shared between strangers. Here there are only companeros.

The march of the 1,111 began at dawn yesterday with the departure of Zapatistas from each rebel village. Each of the 1,111 delegates is sent by their community to represent the 50,100,500 left behind. The delegates converge at their respective Aguascalientes or centres of resistance: La Realidad in the jungle, Morelia and La Garrucha, Roberto Barrios in the North, Oventic in the highlands. By late afternoon they have assembled outside San Cristobal, amassed in buses, trucks, jeeps and anything that moves. In orderly files, chanting slogans, the unarmed army descends upon the cobbled avenues. The pavements are lined with cheering onlookers and the marchers are embraced emotionally by thousands more waiting in the Central Plaza. It takes a full half hour for the EZLN to file into the plaza and line up in military formation before the stage. Here they are, men women and children, of all ages, now singing first

the national anthem, then the Zapatista anthem.

Twelve commandants, six men and six women, take the stage and officiate the formal ceremony and speeches. Lined beneath the massive cross of Cathedral Plaza, a sea of rebels. "We are here to demand that the government complies with the accords signed in San Andres. We are here to demonstrate that we the people are taking power, and we will no longer be humiliated", said Commandant Isaac. "We are ready to give our blood again if we have to!" says Commandant Zebedeo, and 10,000 Zapatistas soldiers answer with a "Viva La Lucha Zapatista!"

The taking of San Cristobal de las Casas was complete. The Zapatistas had demonstrated the power of the word, backed by the power of the people: because of the democratic space that they have fought to create since the uprising of 1st January, they could come armed not with AK-47s, but with dignity and justness. Sure enough, outside the town, the armed forces were gathered and waiting for their order to move ... but not this time. The unstoppable force was marching onto the Capital, like the Zapatistas of 1914, in their name, in their spirit, history and time.

It rose above the crucible of San Cristobal, into the dark, uncertain night, the voice of thousands and thousands: "Viva la toma de San Cristobal! Viva el EZLN! Viva la Revolution!"

Mark Connolly

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Rich and Poor



Other, to my utter surprise I find that this column is read with pleasure by a comrade, I might add, who in his time wrote superbly for *Freedom* and when he did not write he spoke with eloquence at public meetings. I will not reveal his name for I would not want him to be bombarded with junk mail on the occasion of his 81st birthday, but I shall summarise to the best of my ability a recent conversation we had on the subject of comradeship. He had also noticed, the first of my readers to do so to my knowledge, that on occasions I try to embellish this column by making the first letters of paragraphs into some comprehensible message. This week's acrostic should be on the lines of 'Pugilists and the Anarchist Movement', which refers to some extent to the conversation.

On my desk lies a copy of *Freedom* of thirty years ago. The whole front page is dominated by the Stuart Christie case as happily, after years of agitation, Stuart was released from the Carabanchel. In the bottom corner, under the heading 'Liars and Blackmailers', there is a very amusing piece by AM, who was himself then a contributor to *Freedom* and an eloquent advocate of pugilism which he maintained was a healthy pursuit for anarchist youth. He himself, to the best of my recollection, was there at the airport to await the arrival of our comrade and try to rescue Stuart with the rest of us from the hordes of cheque-book journalists and in his *Freedom* report AM described the scene vividly. One phrase worried me a little when he referred to "an eighteen-stone comrade who blocked the escalator". I found this phrase a little peculiar because the only eighteen-stone comrade I remember seeing there on that tumultuous day in 1967 was my then good comrade AM himself.

Xenophobia is not an anarchist characteristic, but it does sell newspapers. Ingenious AM may have been in referring to himself not by 'name' but by 'attribute' in his heroic role of putting his bodily weight where his mouth was. I still felt happier in the presence of such a stalwart defender of freedom, and little did I suspect that one day he would leave an eighteen-stone hole in our defences. Those were the days when mere ten-stones could shelter behind anarchist black flags borne aloft by amateur wrestling champions.

Ideas carry more weight if there is some substance behind them – even anarchist ones. In the same conversation I was also reminded that there ought to be more discussion of anarchist principles and, whereas I do admire the strong men in the circus act upon whose generous shoulders the entire troupe may be supported, little attention is paid to the science of physics of which such an exciting performance is just one form of practical application. *Freedom* is, of course, that equivalent of the strong men and women in the circus, for it has no choice but to carry the entire task of elucidation and patient reiteration on its proverbial shoulders.

Nevertheless, the more the anarchist movement grows, the more vicious will become the forces of privilege and stasis. In my opinion there is no greater task ahead for the anarchist movement than the defence of communities of the underprivileged, and especially of children. As simple as that. I have always maintained with the old philosophers that there is nothing new under the sun. The methods of repression remain the same and the sole purpose of repression is not to allow political anarchism to reappear and for it to be seen to be easily administered to everybody's equal and unalloyed benefit.

Grow we must in numbers, wisdom and strength. We have not coined the phrase. We have not worked out the tenets of political anarchism. All records have disappeared except a few items delicately scratched in stone, sometimes of exquisite craftsmanship, unearthed by archaeologists. A pestle and mortar made from basalt, perhaps fifteen thousand years old. A woman holding in her hand the horn of plenty. The work of an anarchist artist twenty five thousand years ago as surely as the drawings which decorate this column. In other words, our task is not to create anarchism but to re-create it. And before I forget, to add a postscript, happy birthday greetings to our reader and comrade.

John Retey

How do we fight capitalism?

Dear *Freedom*,
Some belated comments on the letters (6th September). First off, although I sometimes find your editorial writer's attacks on capitalism a little obscure and awkward, they are far more likely to influence people towards anarchism than the ideas and attitudes of their critics, which seem to consist of the conviction that people are too stupid to become anarchists (Francis Ellingham) plus an unpleasant combination of self-righteous moralism and superstitious nonsense about 'human nature' from PJW. What we need is not more 'intelligence' as such but more *scientific* and *sceptical* thinking. This need is unfortunately by no means confined to non-anarchists.

If PJW believes that capitalism is part of 'human nature' perhaps s/he could explain why all such societies need armed force and coercion to maintain themselves? My explanation is that inequality, exploitation and injustice would not be tolerated for five minutes by free human beings. Capitalism is no more an innate human trait than slavery or

authoritarian religions, which all rely on the same terroristic methods.

"Man has pursued wealth since time began" claims PJW. This is either monumental ignorance – humanity has scarcely been around five minutes on the cosmic time-scale – or is an example of the witless rhetoric typical of those who parrot the 'human nature' slogan.

The only possible mechanism that could produce a 'human nature' – i.e. genetically inherited widespread behaviour traits – is Darwinian evolution. There is plenty of controversy over how much human behaviour is shaped by genes and how much by cultural factors. Some people like to pretend that human behaviour is completely immune to genetic influence, uniquely in the biological world. But a common fallacy on both sides is that a genetic behaviour pattern is somehow fixed and unalterable. Richard Dawkins points out in *The Selfish Gene* that we fairly easily overcome genetic influence every time we use contraception. We put our own individual and

social interests above the gene's drive for reproduction (surely a genetically inherited trait if anything is).

Life is not a 'unitary' process but an *evolutionary* process. I believe that most people will adopt anarchism when they see that it is in their *self-interest* to do so. Which is why I think the material privileges of the majority in the rich world are the main obstacle to a free egalitarian society. This is *not* a moral stance. I don't believe *homo sapiens* is basically a moral animal. But if PJW and others feel the need for morality the last place to look is biological nature. Capitalism and all previous societies have all too obviously been patterned on nature, the sole function of which after all is to reproduce the DNA molecule. Anarchism should be an attempt to evolve a society whose function is to promote the happiness of its members. As Andy Graziano-Stone said: "To transform human life in favour of all those living it".

John Wood

Are they playing at trains?

Dear *Freedom*,
It is a shame when an otherwise excellent paper such as yours gives credence and respectability to such ill-considered and irresponsible claptrap as the sort postulated by Adrian Williams (20th September 1997) by publishing it.

Is your correspondent aware that such ideas as using passengers to crew trains seemed to originate from the fevered imaginations of Far Right gurus such as Alan Walters, one of Thatcher's advisers back in the early 1980s.

For example, during 1981 he enlightened the Adam Smith Institute with his 'thoughts' with the notion that the wages of a train driver were so low and could be kept so if the railways were privatised, there would be no need to employ specialised staff to run the railways because the job was so easy. Passengers could be paid to do it without the problems of trade unions attempting to improve working conditions for staff.

Your correspondent's notion that all because the passengers drove the buses for some local bus outfit, then this experience can be made universal across all transport modes is utter nonsense. A national railway system is a complex organism which relies on the cooperative actions of many people to make it work – this still holds true today despite the Tory/Blairite adolescent wet dream fantasy of 'competition' between railway companies.

The idea of using passengers as railway

guards has absolutely nothing to do with any anarchist notion of workers' organisation in complex industries, as your correspondent asserts. It is about de-skilling and undermining yet more people's jobs in the name of the 'flexible labour market' which means more money in the pockets of the owners of the private railway companies at the expense of jobs and wages, something fully endorsed by Blair's 'New Party' despite the illusions the RMT still have.

Furthermore, the job of a guard is about more than just collecting tickets. For instance, how would your correspondent go about carrying out protection of the 07:10 to Waterloo if it should, unfortunately, meet with a similar disaster such as that at Southall?

Adrian Williams may dismiss my protest as mere 'trade union consciousness', 'economism' or worse SLP/CPB unreconstructed 1974-style 'left reformism', but the reality of the present situation is that we are all compelled to live within a capitalist society and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

I too look forward to the day when the last 'Executive Director' is strangled by the guts of the last 'Project Delivery Manager', but until that happens we need to challenge the privateers at every turn, which means defending jobs rather than appealing to some distant 'anarchist utopia' whatever that means.

RMT member and signalworker

Privilege and a just society

Dear *Freedom*,
This is the last time I will take up space over this issue (*Freedom*, 20th September). John Wood does not seem to understand that it is futile to found a politics on rank speculation. How does he know what the world's population will be and whether people will still be driving petrol-powered cars 25 years from now? I am not arguing about whether technology will 'save the day' for us, but only about the error of basing views on faulty premises. Reality is not kind to prognostications – neither of the pessimistic, neo-Malthusian variety of Mr Wood, nor of the Panglossian optimists. There are just too many variables and potential 'accidents of history' waiting to make fools out of would-be prophets. Think only of the wretched *hubris*-crushed Marxists. (If anything, history does show us that things never turn out as badly as the pessimists want, nor as fine as the dreams of the optimists. Humanity seems to muddle along from crisis to crisis.) It is pointless to create such a bitterly negative world-view – especially one you want to sell to workers – based upon what *might be*. Far better to deal with the here and now. Surely the oppression and exploitation we are subjected to on a daily basis is enough to propagandise around without moaning about life a generation hence.

Larry Gambone

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

PITY THE POOR WELL-OFF

On the same day that I received my monthly old age pension cheque for £251.12 (£62.78 per week, or £3,264 per annum) I read the hard-luck story in *The Independent* ('City' supplement, 17th September) of one Betty Redondo, 31, radio journalist at the BBC, whose salary is £520 a week, or £27,066 per annum, and who recognises that "I am paid quite well but I seem to struggle every month. What am I doing wrong? My social life is non-existent, because I can't even afford to go out for one drink at times".

I stay at home and enjoy my home-made brew (10p a pint and 5% alcohol into the bargain, compared to the pub's 3% fizzy stuff at £1.50).

Her interviewer points out that Betty says "she accounts for every penny but still doesn't see why she has so little cash to spare". The answer is provided by the young lady herself.

"She took out a loan to buy a car, and is now paying that off at £142 a month. She has £3,700 outstanding on her Access and Visa cards, and pays off £180 per month on these. Apart from those repayments, she also owes money to her bank, First Direct, with whom she has a Flexiloan account, and on her Dorothy Perkins storecard account. 'The reason I got a Dorothy Perkins card was that it's the only way I can afford to buy clothes', Betty says."

Needless to say, since the article is included in the 'City' supplement, Betty's *cris de coeur* is followed by a column and a half by 'experts' advising her how to cope: for instance by selling her car and her Norwich Union shares to pay off some of her debts, and simply hire a car when she wants to go off for a weekend, etc., etc.

Enough of this. If Betty can't survive on an income of £500 a week how are the single mothers going to manage when the New

Labour lot cut their benefits, or the OAPs who for years have not had their pensions linked to average wages?

But the Bettys live in a different world to us, and I don't envy them.

MOBILES ARE MACHO?

According to the science correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* (12th September) mobile telephones are being used by young men across the world as status symbols to attract women. Psychologists say that "they found makes so desperate to make the right impression that they talked to their phones over the thumping music of dance floors, pretended to make calls in places where it is impossible to get a signal, and even chatted earnestly into cheap plastic imitations".

I wonder how those of us who were trying to attract the opposite sex managed *before* the mobile telephone?

Libertarian

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Further information from
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- 1997 PROGRAMME -

3rd October General discussion

10th October What would you do if you won
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17th October General discussion

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

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