

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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50p

RACKETS ARE THE HEALTH OF CAPITALISM



crossing to Calais and return laden with booze and tobacco daily, and when massive lorries get away without inspection what conclusions can the law-abiding citizens of this country come to? After all, they too do their bit of fiddling one way or another.

I am sure a number of anarchists will write to *Freedom* saying and why not? And what *Freedom* should ask these anarchists is whether they are demanding a free health service, free education at all levels and lots of services we need to live even modestly, and if so who is going to pay for it in the capitalist world in which we, alas, all live?

Libertarian

It's obvious that no government will be able to cope with the drugs industry even if, and when, they were to legalise the use, even just of the so-called soft drugs. After all, beer is a legalised soft drug and, unless you

make your own beer as I do, every pint pays Excise Duty of I don't know how much and, needless to say, as a result of our European Union a vast smuggling racket is going on every day across the Channel.

The *East Anglian Daily Times* (1st October) gives the front page to this racket. The headlines sum it up: "Raid on Suffolk warehouse part of £100 million duty evasion operation. Customs seize massive haul". And it includes a colour picture of the rear section of a massive lorry with hundreds of crates of beer which have been smuggled from France *duty free*.

The article describes the raid of a Suffolk warehouse "believed to be at the centre of a £60 million bootlegging operation". It also mentions that Customs officers "believe hundreds of containers of beer, wines and spirits, which should have been exported to Europe, had been diverted for sale in the UK at outlets including cash and carry warehouses and corner shops" (my italics).

So even assuming that the Customs and Excise officers are all saints (which I don't for one moment) it is quite clear that the bootlegging is growing every day. Small vans do the

THE SCOURGE OF RELIGION

More and more facts are emerging from Algeria where the fundamentalists are responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people by the most barbarous means. Mankind can be individually so wonderful and generous, and collectively be so cruel, irrational and unthinking.

We don't know what the latest American religious fad, the Promise Keepers, are up to. *Time* magazine, referring to their massive demonstration in Washington, asks "are they behaving nobly? Or a threat to freedom?"

We would think all religions, as well as politicians, are a threat to freedom!

THOUGHTS ON BOXERS

Women boxers have been in the news, particularly the two thirteen year old girls who were given much publicity for their forthcoming mutual bashing which, as a result of the publicity, was abandoned. But a so-called serious broadsheet, *The Independent* (4th October) had a half-page feature on the idea that "better to be a boxer than to be bullied to death", a reference to a thirteen year old, Kelly, who because of her physical appearance was so bullied by her classmates that she ended up committing suicide. Did nobody - staff, other kids, family - not see what this poor child was going through? But apart from that, when will society ban boxing not just for girls but *altogether*. No government will, but if we profess to be to be *civilised* people we can ban boxing and other violent, dangerous so-called 'sports' - like rugby, for instance - by simply staying away and in the end they will go out of business.

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From Thatcher to Blair ...

AN ALARMING ALCHEMY IN MODERN GOVERNMENT

The passion for New Labour is becoming a little overheated. In August Mr Max Pike, of Max Pike Bathrooms, was telling us that New Labour was nudging the public into a more modern mind-set.

"People", he says, "are beginning to think modern rather than retro. Cast-iron has very few merits at all, and the Victorian roll-top [bath] is dying a natural death".

It seems that volcanic lava from the Massif Central in France is, according to Mr Pike, the latest material for baths.

Tony Blair is showing himself to be in favour of the 'latest' in everything that's going. As leader of Her Majesty's Opposition he got agate eating at London's Riverside Restaurant and dining on the latest dishes in the vogue of nouveau cuisine.

At the TUC Conference in September the Prime Minister declared: "Modernity is our spirit as it is the spirit of our age". Andrew Rawnsley in the *Observer* counted eighteen uses of modern, modernise "and that ugly sibling - modernity" in this Brighton TUC speech.

This would all be very exciting if we couldn't remember Harold Wilson and his "white hot heat of the technological revolution" in 1964. Or if our parents hadn't told us about Clement Attlee and the 'Party of Planning' in 1945. Perhaps it is better if we do not recall the Right Honourable Ramsay MacDonald and the earlier Labour administrations.

The approach of Labour has always been the same: it is a concept of a world full of idiots controlled by geniuses. The one virtue of the Victorian cast-iron bath is that it seems to have had more durability than some of the passing fancies in politics.

FEROCIOUS FLEXIBILITY

In the realm of political economy the fashions have been no less pervasive. The Gold Standard followed by Keynesianism, then neo-Keynesianism to be replaced by Monetarism and the Chicago School of economists. Alan Walters instead of J.K. Galbraith as the economic guru of our times, while the editor of the *Observer*, Will Hutton, anxiously waits in the wings. Many are called but few are chosen as economic advisers to government.

With daily regularity and supreme confidence do these economic experts pontificate on the development of the world's economies. Fiscal this, monetary that, to tax or to raise interest rates.

And now the latest buzz-words in the Anglo-Saxon economies are 'Flexible Labour Markets' which, says Gavyn Davis in the *Independent*, the "new Labour government is now actively seeking to export to the European continent".

What hampers flexibility in the labour market is thought to be:

- high levels of union membership;
- laws which protect workers' rights;
- limits on the bosses' right to sack staff;
- the existence of worker directors on company boards;
- minimum pay laws.

It was with this scenario in mind that Tony Blair told the TUC Conference in September: "Be flexible". The theory is that if workers put themselves at the beck and call of the bosses and capital there will be less unemployment about. The Tiger Economies of South East Asia, where some were until recently willing to work for a bowl of rice, are used as an example to encourage European and British



Turning base metal into gold - man looked to alchemy to make his dreams of wealth come true

(picture: D. Stolcius v. Stolcenberg, *Viridarium chymicum*, Frankfurt, 1624)

workers to tighten their belts and accept poor pay and conditions at work.

The snag is that some of these Asian tigers have become toothless, with currency and baking crises generally. This echoes the debacle in Mexico, seen as another cheap labour area, in late 1994. Some investment analysts are now looking to Egypt as a new market to out-perform south east Asia, even if the tigers manage a recovery.

ALCHEMISTS IN THE SCRAPYARDS

What's wrong with all these economic pundits apart from their general inhumanity? Inhumanity among economic experts is always justified by the motto "We have to be cruel to be kind", or by Thatcher's fatalistic approach "There is no alternative".

The problem of economics, as with psychology and all the 'social sciences', was best put by William James in 1890: "Psychology is not yet a science but only the hope of a science".

Economics is not a science, though some economists talk as if it is, it is a social science. Maurice Drury, the psychiatrist and philosopher, wrote on the desire to turn the social sciences into science. Such harbingers of new science from social science, he says, await their Sir Isaac Newton.

Mr Drury expects them to wait in vain. Of their hope of a 'new science' he ponders: "A science which will place on a sound scientific basis such important subjects as psychiatry, education, sociology, criminology and

penology, and even international politics. The hope is that in the future a truly scientific psychology will enable us to control the vagaries of the human mind to the same extent that the physical sciences have given us such power over our material environment".

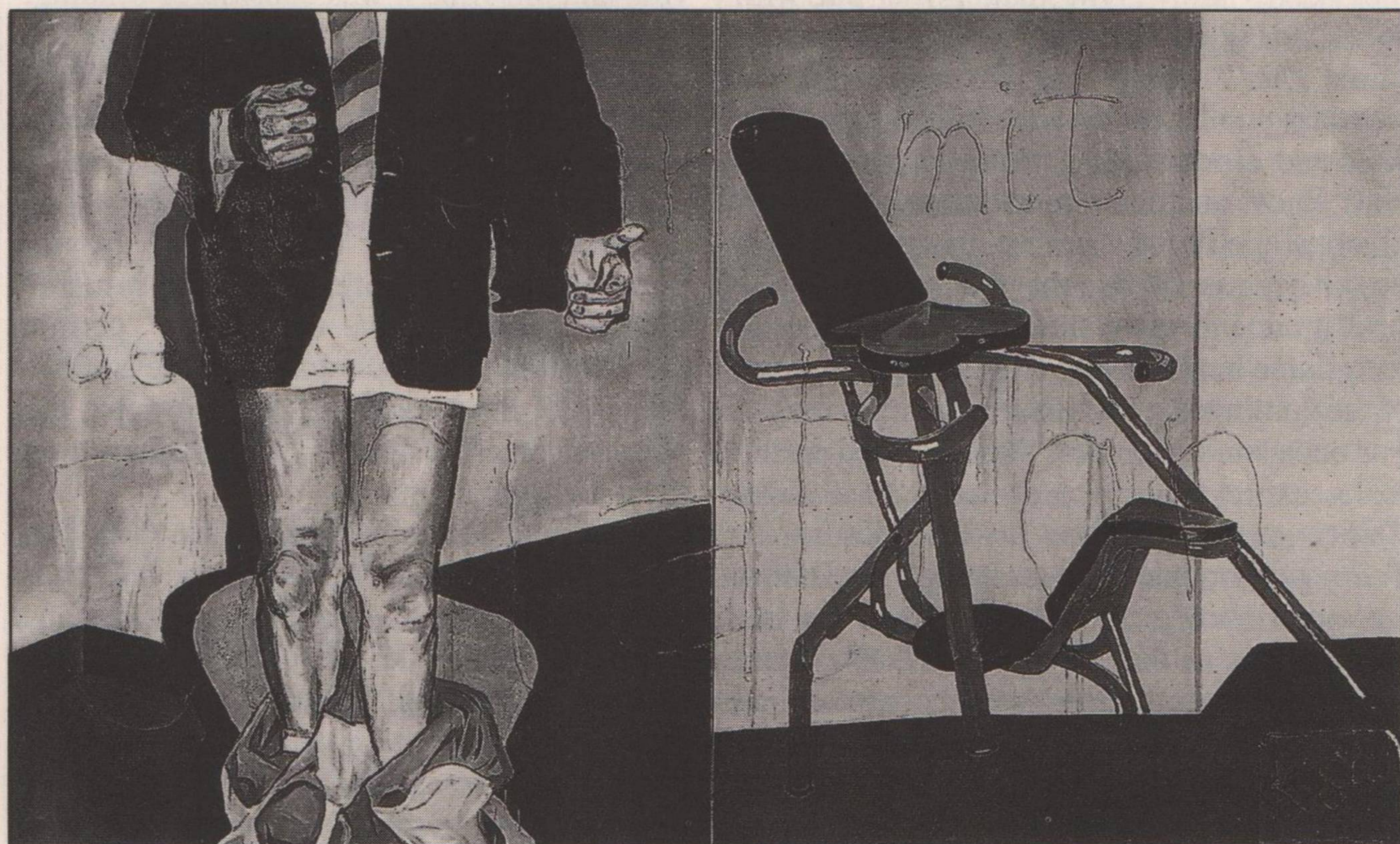
Economists, of course, want to control the vagaries of the human spirit, together with humanity's needs and wants. Just because Galileo kicked-off physics by rolling marbles down a slope to measure mass, time and velocity, they - the economists, the sociologists and the psychologists, etc. - think that by studying supply and demand curves, amassing statistics, making dogs salivate at the ring of a bell, watching rats running around a maze or pigeons learn tricks, they can come up with a new science worthy of the name.

In economics the experiments are being conducted by government experts on us, not rats or pigeons. The aim is to control the vagaries of our behaviour. The underlying idea is to perfect a new science of government and political economy.

This is the fallacy of the alchemists who seek to change the social science of political economy into what we would call a proper science. The only problem in modern times, such is the barrenness of the social sciences, is that instead of producing gold out of lead or cast iron, all they ultimately seem to turn out is increasing amounts of scrap.

My advice is don't chuck out your Victorian cast-iron baths yet - they may yet come back into fashion.

Mack the Knife



'Down with Inflation'

(picture: Martin Kippenberger, *Nieder mit der Inflation* ['Down with Inflation'], mixed media on canvas, 1984)

JOBPLAN WORKSHOPS: NEW FORM OF COERCION

According to the Job Seeker's Act, if you don't do what they want you to do when looking for a job, the Employment Service can issue you with a Job Seeker's Directive, leading to sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

The operation of the Employment Service is mostly shrouded in the official, corporate-speak claptrap of client and advisor, help and training, product and product knowledge, consultation and agreement, and 'improving' the functioning of the labour market. Directives are a last warning, and even after sanctioning you can appeal. But the reality is that *sanctions* are the foundation stone of the whole edifice, because *coercion* is its purpose. Because many people are appealing successfully, there is even a rumour that the appeal process will be scrapped.

In this context, the present stupidity of the bureaucrat is astonishing to behold. If they have after all noticed the trends since the JSA's arrival – merger and rationalisation, increased workload and targets, and of course redundancies – then we must add the charge of spinelessness.

For us 'clients' the story has been one of greater harassment and loss of dignity, greater

poverty and insecurity. But we have to show willing the play in the game so as not to be caught napping and lose our benefits. The bureaucrats play their own game: it's called creative interpretation of the law through the implementation of regulations. A glance at the Job Seeker's Act reveals that the often repeated mantra 'the Employment Service can make regulations to ...' justifies anything that they want to do. With their increased workload and reduced numbers they can never hope to offer the 'service' to their 'clients' that is the alleged purpose of the Act. Their real task is to harass the worker into ever-lower paid jobs, to do which they have to adopt the miraculous world-view that it is possible to hammer millions of pegs into thousands of holes.

Groundswell, the anti-JSA and anti-workfare network, have recognised in their informative leaflet *Going to a Restart* that there are some schemes the Employment Service are forcing you to go on without issuing a Job Seeker's Directive, one of which is a one-week 'Jobplan Workshop'.

When I was recently called for my Restart interview after twelve months jobless, I found

that far from having my own unique situation and requirements assessed by my 'client adviser' as the 'labour market system' promises, I was to be summarily dispatched to one of these 'Jobplan Workshops'. Now Alexei Sayle said that anyone who mentions the word 'workshop' outside the context of light engineering is a wanker. My interviewer, however, could better be described as a vampire. He kept me mesmerised for an hour attempting to persuade me why I should take up the offer of a Jobplan Workshop – the main reason being that it was mandatory. I asked him could he clarify the word 'mandatory'? Did it mean I had to do it if they told me to, or that they had to tell me to do it? The pale bureaucrat replied that if I didn't do it I would be sanctioned. I asked what if I didn't need the course, and to be made to do it would be a waste of my time and a waste of public resources? The implacable creature showed its teeth and replied that in this case I would be sanctioned. I was then shown a nice letter saying that "I am applying" for a Jobplan Workshop, and it was strongly suggested that if I didn't sign it I would be sanctioned. On the letter it warned that if I failed to turn up ... well you can guess the rest.

I can only conclude that as the Employment Service cannot carry out the requirements of a Restart interview (understaffing?) they have to farm work out at a healthy profit for the

training companies. It can take an hour to explain this to irate clients.

I would like to say here how much I enjoyed this interview, for the insights into the hegemony of ideas common in the bureaucratic mentality. My anaemic friend was keen to assert his humanity; he was only too glad to still have a job (seventeen years in the twilight zone) and in his opinion the reason most people didn't have jobs was that they didn't want to work. I myself, unemployed for a year, was obviously doing something wrong. I suggested that people didn't want to be pushed around for crap wages. But *that's* what work is all about, he opined. He had this very hour sent a malingeringer for a job stacking supermarket shelves, and if he didn't get it the jobseeker in question would be ... that 's' word again. He told me that in his opinion things were going to get much worse under a Labour government, but not to worry as everyone would be treated equally, except the under-25s for whom there was a 'no option policy' so I should count myself lucky.

Groundswell, it seems to me, are being far too tolerant and patient to think that they can work with the CPSA (civil servants' union) in resisting the JSA. The system of quotas, internal sanctions and the spinelessness of the bureaucrats means we have to put the pressure on through ever-more militant actions. Tactics such as 'three strikes', occupations and the exposure of culprits, as often reported in these pages, are realistic approaches to dealing with over-zealous blood-suckers.

Employment Service workers have taken to displaying only their first names on their badges. Are they ashamed or just scared?

Layabout

Reflections on the Anarchist Bookfair ... and notes on the 'Sunday Fare'

Those of us who were able to attend the Anarchist Bookfair at the Conway Hall on 18th October will surely have been bowled over by the organisation, the literature stalls, the sandwich department (hundreds of loaves waiting to be sliced and stuffed with goodies) but above all, for this writer (as a visitor and not in any way involved in the organisation) it was the ideal 'un-organised' Bookfair. It was relaxed, it was chaotic (in the good sense that everybody seemed to be cheerful and friendly and there were no 'problems') and imagine as one approached the Conway Hall with its paved area outside and the large entrance to the Hall itself, which were covered with young people, some selling literature, some with collecting boxes for good causes, it created the atmosphere that dominated the Hall itself. Outside, in spite of this gathering of 'dangerous' anarchists, not a policeman or a police car to be seen.

And immediately to the right as one entered the Hall, the Freedom Press stall with four tables of literature which this year were even richer than ever in both variety and standard than in past years. There were the stalwarts of the Freedom Press Bookshop, Kevin, Silvie, Charles, Donald and their assistants on these occasions such as Tony, Neil and others. This writer just spent his time greeting old friends, a more than moving occasion for him.

It was a wonderful experience, especially when the next day, Sunday, one had to see what the rest of the world had to have as its diet of news and entertainment (they are in fact synonymous). The three largest circulation tabloids (at least ten million copies) range from 'Secrets of the Moving Duvet' headline all over the *Sunday Mirror* to make you turn to four pages inside all about "evidence that will expose Piers Merchant's sex lies", to the *People's* two-page revelation of "the amazing sex lives of lovers who share partners" and the *News of the World's* "Eastenders sensation" all about "Gilly in soap bribes scandal", whoever she is, and they give the full story and pictures on pages 2, 3 and 5. Both the *Mail* and *Sunday Express* front pages are only concerned with the Queen's politically doubtful visit to India. Very modest.

The three broadsheets all have what they

must think are circulation-boosting front-page headlines (apart from all the sexy fashion features and *haute cuisine* supplements which presumably the expert advisers assure them will sell their product). Starting with the *Sunday Telegraph*, which reveals that "Prince Michael sued for £100,000 by adviser". What a miserable scandal when you think of it. His confidential adviser (presumably about money matters and not his domestic or romantic problems) is turning against him. Needless to say he has "lodged a writ", etc., but the issue is about money the Prince owes the chap. We are glad to report that the *Independent on Sunday's* main headline is that "Straw [the Home Secretary] orders review of cannabis law and enforcement". We are sending a copy of Malatesta's article on the subject.*

Last but far from least in this selection from the media alternatives to that wonderful Anarchist Bookfair is the main story from the *Observer*, "Church of England in secret merger with Methodists". Dear readers, it's not meant as a joke. After all, the churches are big business. How do they pay their overheads? (Churches, heating of same, etc., God doesn't provide!) How do they pay their preachers? (God doesn't!) As one has learned recently, their businessmen have done very badly with investments. Face up to it, you Christians, religion is also a business and business mergers are the order of the day, so why not a merger of the C of E and the Methodists and they can then close down chapels and churches, sack a few preachers and also employ the right people to combine their investments to get the best results – and there will be a few golden handshakes.

After all, business is profit. Religion is also business except for the poor suckers who do all the good work of Christianity for no material rewards. Why don't they see that the best arguments of Christianity without all the mumbo-jumbo of God and the rest have been said by socialists and anarchists for donkey's years. We want the good society and not on another planet in year X.

* In *Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (Freedom Press, 310 pages, £5 post free inland).

How we are ruled by our betters for our own good

I was moved to write to *Freedom* by two recent items on BBC Radio 4 which indicated the way in which democracy is perceived by New Labour and the way in which we are ruled. Firstly Peter Hain on *Any Questions* was asked what motivates people like himself to become professional politicians. His reply was to the effect that despite all the long hours he puts in on our behalf, despite the sacrifices his family have to make because of his chosen career, he feels it was an honour for him to serve us, the people. This is the sanitised view of representative democracy – the dominant political mode in the western world – that politicians would have us believe. They are merely our servants carrying out our instructions. It comes in various guises in different countries, e.g. 'Government of the people, for the people, by the people' in the United States. However, as anarchists point out, the state is not a benign instrument of the people's will as professional politicians would like us to think and as they themselves know. The matter was put with some clarity by Geoffrey Ostergaard in the book *The Tradition of Workers' Control* recently published by Freedom Press. "The state and especially its central organs, as all who study its functioning know and as all practical politicians realise, is essentially a power over and above the people and not one readily amenable to their control. It acts in their name but in reality it acts in the interests of the dominant groups in society" (page 100). For once some light was publicly shed on the real situation when the New Labour MP Giles Radice was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. He was being asked about a press briefing put about by the New Labour spin doctors to the effect that Britain would not be entering the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) system until after the next election despite the fact that the government had hinted recently that it was keen on earlier entry. This new briefing represented a U-turn and a problem for Radice's Party, it was suggested, especially since a large proportion of the British public

were also opposed to entry into the EMU. The reason for this opposition to the EMU, explained the refreshingly frank MP, was because public opinion had not been sufficiently prepared for entry into the EMU. He further explained that there has not been enough discussion about the EMU in British politics, an astonishing claim for an MP given that the last Parliament was dominated by just such discussions.

We see here one of the guiding principles of contemporary democratic practice. Cautious governments always prepare their populations before imposing any policy on them. The problems that the Danish government had in preparing its population over ratification of the Maastricht Treaty are a case in point. A referendum was held which, unfortunately for the government, gave the wrong result: No to Maastricht. So a further six months of preparation of the public was deemed necessary, and then another referendum was held. Hey presto! the government got its Yes vote and this time it was considered binding.

Chomsky has studied more than most this democratic practice in the western world and has delineated the part intellectuals – such as prominent New Labour MPs – play in upholding the myth that there can be democratic control of the state by the population. To quote Chomsky himself, western representative democracy "permits the voice of the people to be heard, and it is the task of the intellectual to ensure that this voice endorses what far-sighted leaders know to be the right course".

Grassroots structures setting out their own rules and agendas are, of course, the only truly democratic forms of organisation. Politicians, however, would like us to believe the fairy tales they tell us about parliamentary democracy and their selfless devotion in serving us. Occasionally they blurt out the truth, perhaps inadvertently, and we see how they are simply instruments in the hands of the 'dominant groups in society' who use them and us for their own ends.

TL

'Mucky Realists' Mobilise

Earlier this year someone wrote to *Freedom* complaining that the paper was being taken over by Northern working-men and syndicalists.

My view is that *Freedom* is responding to the changing conditions of British society. In this sense it has been faster on its feet in meeting social change than any other publication I know. In shifting more of its coverage from comment to news, the paper has plunged into the everyday political concerns of many, if not most, people in this country.

The result has been to make the paper racy, radical and relevant. A more 'sexy' product, while still retaining much of its original gravitas in comment and features.

Possibly the more flexible 'liberal' streak, for which *Freedom* is often criticised, gave it the edge on other groups perhaps more embedded in a claustrophobic 'class struggle' analysis. Some sections of the libertarian movement are clearly shaping up much better than others to what could be a 'post-modern' scenario: one thinks of Subversion, the Anarchist Communist Federation and some groups in the Northern Anarchist Network. All of these are trying to tackle the tasks thrown up by the Liverpool lock-out, the Job Seeker's Act, the Reclaim the Future movement and issues of everyday ecology.

Freedom's success must be measured by its

ability to investigate and reflect the new realities, and to interpret their significance for an anarchist and otherwise sympathetic audience.

CONCENTRATING ON EVERYDAY LIFE

What distinguishes these groups dedicated to radical social action and everyday involvement from the hermits and retros? There are hermits among the 'liberal anarchists' and there are retros among the so-called class struggle anarchists.

Let us consider a telling comment from a member of the Manchester Solidarity Federation to the Northern Anarchists: "NAN must be a political organisation - I don't want it to become a 'claque' for whatever campaign is on stage". A 'claque' by one definition is a group of "adulating or fawning admirers". No one expects anarchists to embrace this status, but why mention it in the context of the campaigns on behalf of the jobless or the Liverpool dockers? The answer must be 'stage fright'! People who talk like that will never get out of the 'green room' and into the serious business of the social struggle that is going on around us.

Fortunately most of the anarchist movement will not be put off by the kind of cringe politics

which jibs at getting involved in daily problems. Most don't use the excuse of not wanting to waste energies by getting into 'single issue politics'. Debates at the Northern Anarchist Network and elsewhere are dominated by the campaign against the JSA, support for the dockers on Merseyside and issues surrounding the Reclaim the Future.

There is, I think, a more fundamental aspect to our distinctive approach than one of attitude and willingness to involve ourselves in contemporary culture and events. We differ radically in our methodology. Both the lethargic liberal and the kind of stone-age syndicalist seem to start from the standpoint that they know the problem and they have the answers. Our approach, it seems to me, is to render reality and to seek solutions inside the social setting.

In some ways this leaves us looking like somewhat more roughneck versions of what Colin Ward called "persistent protesters". Essentially it involves the humility of recognising, as Derek Pattison said, "we're all on a learning curve". It is an approach which could intellectually draw on the 'dirty realists' in literature and the 'ethnomethodologists' in sociology, as well as the practices of what we used to call 'shopfloor syndicalism'.

The trouble with some of the 'liberal anarchists' and the 'stone-age syndicalists' is that they are often dreamy sleepwalkers trying to impose their fantastic models on real life situations. Consider the fearsome symmetry of another Solidarity Federation speaker at a Northern Anarchist Conference in Salford: solemnly addressing the gathering, he pointed out of a window to his left and said "Look, there you have an industrial estate" then with the agility of a ballet dancer he swivelled a ninety-degree right angle turn and indicated a block of Salford flats and announced "I'd bet my bottom dollar that the people living in those flats are working on that industrial estate - that's the community to which we should direct our energies".

This kind of dated thinking, with a kind of cobbled-together concept of community, shows what we're up against. The Salford flats are a notorious black-spot for unemployment, and it is more likely today that the workers on the industrial estate commute from other parts

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated **15th November**, and the **last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 6th November**

of Manchester and Salford. The idealised model of integrated community in Puerto Real can't be forced into a Salford setting.

GAINING STREET CREDIBILITY

So what seems to be happening is that a growing group on the libertarian left are turning their backs on 'armchair anarchism', stone-age and sectarian syndicalism, and the kind of rusty romantic school of melodrama which is a left-over from the days of the Angry brigade. This new group is much more empirical, in so far as it proceeds through everyday observation and experimentation rather than by applying abstract theoretical models.

What I think we are getting is a kind of 'mucky realism' from sections of the libertarian left, of which *Freedom* has been in part a reflection. Take the 'three strikes' strategy adopted by some anti-JSA groups in Groundswell. This seems to have been invented in Edinburgh by the claimants at the Autonomous Centre. Whoever thought it up deserves the Durruti Award for services to anarchism. The 'three strikes' action has put the dole authorities on the defensive and placed Groundswell at the centre of the debates about the JSA, Project Work and Welfare to Work.

Now compared to Groundswell the support groups for the Liverpool dockers and some of the eco groups, other libertarians and marxists seem to have no 'street credibility' or serious track record. With some misgivings, it seems to me that the proposal of Hull Syndicalists for a conference to discuss co-ordination of the kind of streetwise politics of what I have called 'Mucky Realism' may offer an opportunity for seriously active libertarians and anarchists to come together and focus on things that really matter to people.

Brian Bamford

ANARCHIST INFORMATION NETWORK

Report of Anarchist Federation 1997 Meeting on Saturday 27th September

Some 22 people came from places as far apart as Cornwall, Derbyshire, Gloucester, Dover and Manchester, though most were from London. After an informal introduction session with drinks, the meeting proceeded to a formal introduction session where we stated who we were and something of our background.

This led into a brief discussion about the defunct Anarchist Federation of Britain and a rather longer discussion, at times passionate and a little heated, about the prospects of establishing a new Federation. This discussion continued after the meal break and by the conclusion of the meeting the following items had been agreed by those present:

- We will form an organisation to enable anarchists of differing opinions and ideological viewpoints to work together.
- The organisation's title will be Anarchist Information Network.
- No formal 'aims and principles' were proposed. However, members/supporters should be willing to work with other anarchists of differing opinions and ideological viewpoints.

The organisation will provide the following:

- Quarterly newsletter for short articles, news of events, protests, demonstrations, projects, etc. The production of the newsletter will rotate between volunteer editors. The first editor is Owen Maroney. Items for the newsletter to be sent to Box EMAB (AIN) as soon as possible. The first edition proper will be mailed to AIN members at the beginning of December. The Spring '98 newsletter will be edited by Peter Le Mare.
 - The organisation mail address is Anarchist Information Network, Box EMAB (AIN), 88 Abbey Street, Derby DE22 3SQ.
- Anarchist Information Network

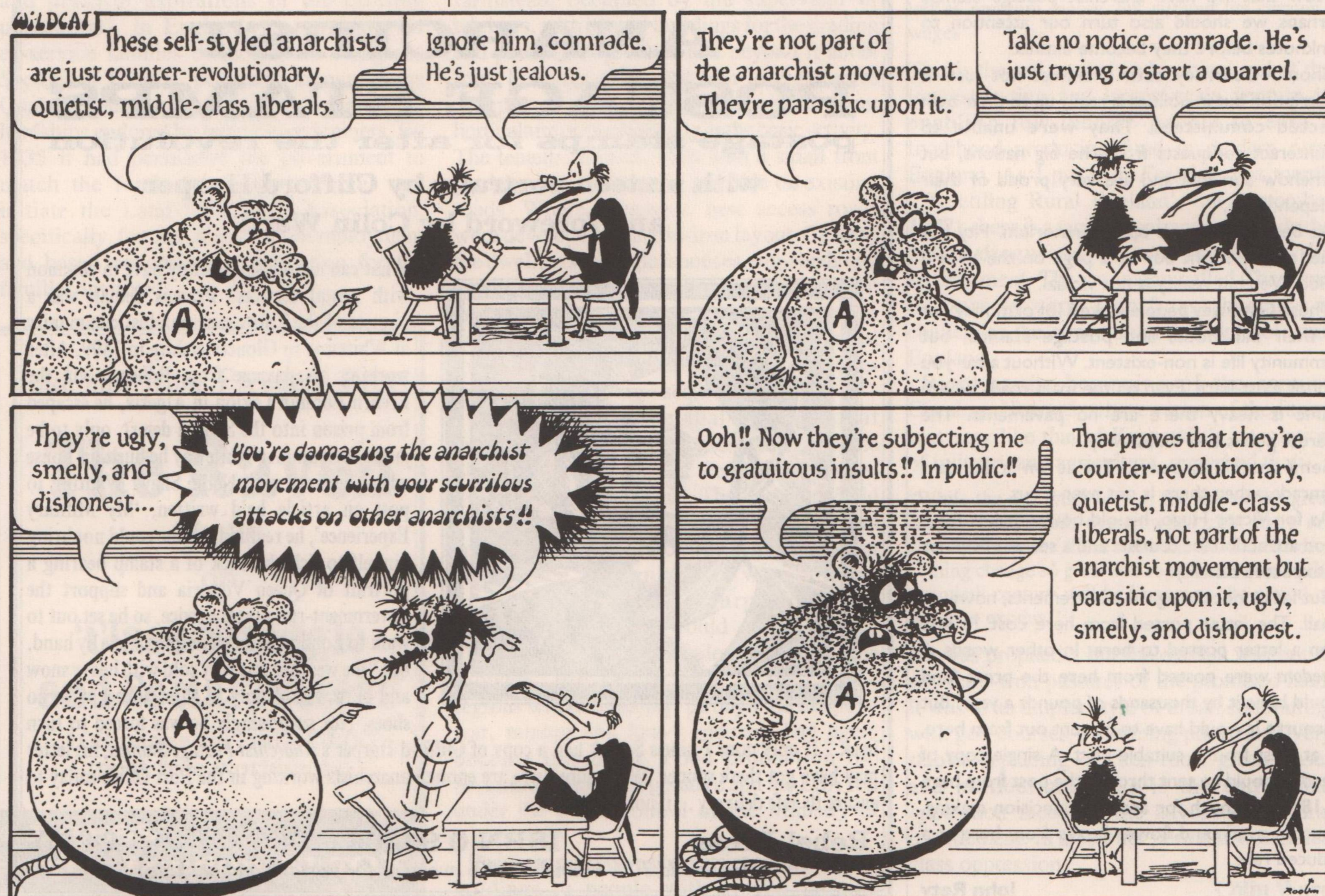
ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM: A FRESH START

On 20th September this year anarcho-syndicalists active in struggles ranging from combating the JSA to supporting the dockers met in Bury and decided to set in motion a process that will lead to a new national anarcho-syndicalist organisation.

We feel that existing groups are either too bogged down in internal wrangles and bureaucracy to take part in real activity or are stuck down the blind alley of trying to form tiny pure unions rather than getting stuck into the unglamorous present.

On Saturday 14th March a conference will be held at the 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford. The aim of the conference will be to launch a new anarcho-syndicalist organisation for doers not dreamers.

If you are interested in co-ordinating with other active anarcho-syndicalists and you are more interested in Liverpool, Sheffield and London 1998 than Barcelona 1936, contact us at this address: Harold Sculthorpe, Spring Bank, Midgehole Road, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 7AA.



Rich and Poor



When Victor Hugo came to live in Guernsey last century as a political exile and wrote *Les Misérables*, the island was, and is today, a semi-anarchist place. Not that there is a single known reader of *Freedom* here today, but I have seen some French anarchist slogans on the walls. And probably a visiting tourist was the one who wrote the A sign on a wartime bunker which the Germans had built here during their occupation of the islands in the last war.

There is a mixture here all right. The street names are in French and the inhabitants speak a reluctant kind of English. The season is nearly over and by and large it is the kind of relaxed atmosphere that you would expect in a place where the moneyed rich live and do nothing.

The bus service is expensive and tardy. Woolworths mainly sell chocolates and there is no cinema or theatre, although there must have been some jazz here in the summer. This is the kind of place, comrades, that would have become anarchist but plumped for independence through the money system.

They issue their own stamps and banknotes and pay no VAT. There is some wholesale fiddling going on but in principle they only allow ten people a year to buy a house here from abroad as long as they can put down a minimum of £750,000 each.

With the introduction of electronic banking there is a good chance of their either raking it in even more or going bust.

That the rich here do not look after their poor is evident if you walk around St Peter's Port and notice the poverty of the side streets.

The old people speak a Guernsey patois which is forbidden in the schools.

This is why I sense a bit of suppressed anarchy here, even though the English still dress like nineteenth century fashion models.

I do hope though that some of the persecuted gypsies find their way to Guernsey. There is no customs here as far as I could see. The ferry which goes from Poole also goes to Boulogne, but you must have money.

Now that we have anarchist postage stamps perhaps we should also turn our attention to banknotes before they become extinct.

Should Guernsey turn anarchist not just in description but in politics is really up to their own elected committees. They were unable to counteract conquests from the big nations, but somehow survived and are very proud of their independence.

At best it is like an open sanatorium. Pity but true, money might buy us a page on the World Wide Web but reality is not virtual.

These Guernsey people make a lot of money out of their banknotes and postage stamps, but community life is non-existent. Without a car you cannot exist here. Even on the main roads where traffic is heavy there are no pavements. The nearest pub is two miles away.

Semi-anarchist, sez I. Try it on a Sunday, comrade, when there is not even a bus.

As for Victor Hugo, his old house makes for a good attraction for tourists and a series of stamps of expected banality.

But let us not disregard achievements, however small. The letter posted from here cost 1p less than a letter posted to here. In other words, if *Freedom* were posted from here the press fund would benefit by thousands of pounds a year. But of course it would have to be sent out from here, or at least from a suitable port. A single copy of *Freedom* could be sent through the post from here at 18p – so much for anarchist decision making. You can even send flower boxes from here at a reduced rate.

John Rety

MAX NETTLAU REVIEWED

The English edition of Max Nettlau's *Short History of Anarchism*, translated by Ida Pilat Isca and edited by Heiner M. Becker, was published by the Freedom Press in November 1996. Although review copies were circulated in the normal way, no reviews appeared for several months. And when on 23rd May 1997 the *Times Literary Supplement* finally published one, signed 'AE-J', it was full of mistakes and misunderstandings:

"Max Nettlau, author of *A Short History of Anarchism*, was a Viennese-born anarchist for more than sixty years, prominent as a writer, historian and activist. He was, as Heiner M. Becker's introduction to this translation assures us, a pioneer in the historiography of anarchism. The book, which was written in 1932, aims to cover the whole history of anarchist thought and practice, throughout the world, from its earliest beginnings until 1914. Although Nettlau draws on extensive research, his evident bias against bourgeois society makes it a clearly one-sided account. The text is not easy to follow, but perhaps the process of translation has obscured the message further. A useful feature of this edition is its comprehensive bibliography, which includes recently published titles. The likely readership for the work will be the true believers, for whom it will be of interest precisely because it was written by a prominent early twentieth-century anarchist. Those who seek a clearer, less biased and certainly more informative picture are advised to read George Woodcock's *Anarchism and Anarchists* or *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* by Peter Marshall, both of which were published in 1992."

The following letter was sent by the publishers but not published:

"Your short review of our edition of Max Nettlau's *Short History of Anarchism* makes the book much shorter than it is (430 rather than 40 pages); omits to mention that it is based on his much longer nine-volume *Geschichte der Anarchie*; says that he 'draws on extensive research', when he actually did it all himself; says that it was translated from German, rather than Spanish; says that its 'likely readership' will be 'true believers' who care that the author was an anarchist, when it should be serious students who want to know what the early anarchist movement was really like; says that it is a one-sided account, which is true of virtually all books on the subject; and prefers a book by George Woodcock which isn't a history at all, and a book by Peter Marshall which is a history but is guilty of exactly the kind of mistakes and misunderstandings which would be prevented by a knowledge of Nettlau's pioneering work."

However, the *Times Higher Education Supplement* on 10th October 1997 published

a review by Nicolas Walter of Max Nettlau's book and of Colin Ward's booklet on *Social Policy* (cuts marked in square brackets):

"Max Nettlau was born in Vienna in 1865, the son of a Prussian gardener, began as an academic philologist, inherited a fortune and became an independent scholar, lived in Britain and other countries for many years then returned to Austria, lost his fortune after the First World War but continued as a scholar, moved to the Netherlands, and died in Amsterdam in 1944. He passed from liberalism through socialism to anarchism, and was an active member of the international anarchist movement from 1885 until his death, writing for many papers in several languages. He not only founded anarchist historiography, but made what are still the most important contributions to it for more than half a century, though more than half a century after his death his work is still little appreciated, especially in the English-speaking world. (Indeed *A Short History of Anarchism* is his first book to appear in a proper edition in English.)

Nettlau is often called the Herodotus of anarchism, but he was really its Thucydides. His life work was based on the omnivorous collection and omniscient study of printed and manuscript materials and also on personal acquaintance and detailed interviews (or written questionnaires) with almost all the leaders of the movement. [His enormous collection, including his own extensive manuscripts, was acquired by the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam in 1935 and ever since then has formed the essential source-material for any serious study of the early history of the anarchist movement.]

Nettlau produced the pioneering biography of Michael Bakunin, the main founder of the anarchist movement, and biographies of several other leading figures, the first bibliography of anarchism, specialist articles and books on various aspects and episodes of anarchist history, and a long autobiography. Finally, from 1925 to 1935, he wrote a gigantic *Geschichte der Anarchie* (History of Anarchy). The first three volumes were published from 1925 to 1931, the fourth and fifth volumes only from 1981 to 1984 (there are now corrected paperback editions of the first three and revised editions of the last two); the final four volumes are currently in process of publication.

This masterpiece is the starting-point for all subsequent anarchist historiography, though it has tended to be dutifully listed in bibliographies rather than actually used. Unfortunately, for most likely readers, it was written in German (and difficult German at that), and it has never been translated into any other language. However, Nettlau wrote in 1932-1934 a one-volume summary, which was first published in Spanish in 1935, has been translated into several other languages, and now at last appears in English [published by the anarchist press

which Nettlau worked with during his time in this country].

There are two serious problems with this book. The first is that it is inevitably out of date. For one thing, the narrative effectively ends with the First World War, and a great deal happened after that, especially in Russia, Italy, Latin America, and above all in Spain; for another thing, much new research has subsequently been done by many scholars on several aspects of the earlier period. The other problem is that Nettlau wrote it with a constant eye on the full version of his history, and there are frequent frustrating references to longer treatment in its relevant volumes. Nevertheless, despite all these disadvantages, this is the best one-volume account of anarchism as it actually was at the time, rather than as later historians have often imagined it to be.

This edition is also particularly valuable on its own account. The translation was originally made by Ida Pilat Isca, an American anarchist of Russian origin. An early and very imperfect version attributed to Scott Johnson was published in a clumsy and very expensive edition in New York in 1979. After the translator's death in 1980, her companion Valerio Isca, an American anarchist of Italian origin, arranged for its publication in Britain. It has taken fifteen years for it to appear [after his death in 1996]. Meanwhile the text has been edited and revised several times by several people, and has also been corrected and supplemented by Heiner Becker, an independent scholar in Germany who is now the main expert on and publisher of Nettlau. This supplementary material includes a very well-informed biographical introduction and bibliographical appendix on Nettlau himself, and a detailed bibliography of all the works and biographical index of all the persons mentioned in the text. There are almost no errors in the book, it is elegantly produced (unfortunately only in paperback), and it is remarkably cheap. What is needed now is a similar English edition of the full version, following the completion of the publication of the original German volumes. But here at least and at last is the best-informed short introduction to the subject.

Meanwhile anarchism has continued to exist, though it now seems to bear little resemblance to the militant movement described in such meticulous detail by Nettlau. Yet there are continuities. Nettlau mentions Federica Montseny, one of the few woman leaders of the Spanish movement; she died only in 1994. He mentions the Jewish movements in Britain and the United States, and the free schools they founded; the last founder of such a school, Nellie Dick, died only in 1995 (at the age of 102). He mentions the British paper *Freedom*, which was founded by a group including Peter Kropotkin in 1886; it is run by a group including Vernon Richards, who worked with Nettlau back in 1936.

Another link is Colin Ward, the best-known anarchist writer in this country, who has been involved with *Freedom* since the Second World War. Yet another independent scholar, he was appointed Visiting Centennial Professor of Housing and Social Policy at the London School of Economics in 1996. The texts of his lectures and seminars there have now been conveniently collected in a large-format booklet, which sums up his work over more than half a century. *Social Policy: An Anarchist Approach* discusses the way the welfare state destroyed the welfare society, the various ways in which people actively housed themselves and one another before they were passively housed by the authorities, the way in which the provision of water symbolises the provision of all essential services, and concludes with a personal preview of *Twenty-first Century Anarchism*. Such themes have often appeared in earlier articles and talks, and some are also treated at greater length in Ward's books – *Reflected in Water* has just been published in Cassell's 'Global Issues' series – but this is a convenient summary of his radical but reasonable libertarianism.

In the present political climate, when it is sometimes hard to know what's left of the left, some form of anarchism may yet be seen to fill the gap between all the failed orthodoxies. Nettlau has told us about its past; perhaps Ward is telling us about its future."

A Short History of Anarchism by Max Nettlau (£9.95 post free inland, add 15% overseas) and *Social Policy* by Colin Ward (£4.00 plus 10% inland, 20% overseas p&p) are available from the Freedom Press Bookshop.

ANARCHIST POSTAGE STAMPS

postage stamps for after the revolution

with sixteen portraits by Clifford Harper and foreword by Colin Ward



What can anarchism possibly have in common with postal services? Francis Sedlak was a pioneer of the Tolstoyan anarchist community at Whiteway in Gloucestershire in 1899. After working his passage from Bohemia via the French Foreign Legion in Algeria, he escaped from prison into the Sahara desert, only to be jailed in Spain. At Whiteway he built his house where he lived with Nellie Shaw. Wanting to post an article he'd written, 'My Military Experience', he realised that he could not bring himself to lick the back of a stamp bearing a portrait of Queen Victoria and support the government-run postal service, so he set out to walk to London and deliver his article by hand, but "the weather was very cold with heavy snow and he was clad only in thin clothes with no shoes. Not surprisingly he was forced to turn

back." If only poor Francis Sedlak had a copy of Clifford Harper's *Anarchist Postage Stamps*, his letter may have got there sooner. We're sure there are enough anarchists working in the Post Office today to ensure its safe delivery ... if not on time.

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(continued from our last issue)

The literature of the 1890s urging rural resettlement was astonishingly widely read. Blatchford's *Merrie England* had sold almost a million copies by the end of the century. And in 1908 the reforming Liberal government in its Small Holdings and Allotments Act had empowered county councils to acquire land and erect buildings with government funds, and rent holdings of from one acre to fifty acres. They were also enabled to promote and capitalise the organisation of co-operative societies among small-holders.

Ninety years later there are English counties where, because of that Act, the county council is the largest single landowner. Some counties have waiting lists of applicants for small-holdings and, as vacancies occur, face the dilemma of whether to create a new tenancy or to rent the holding to neighbouring tenants who claim that their fifty acres is too small for financial viability in the modern agricultural world. Other county councils, to raise revenue, sell holdings either to tenants or on the open market.

The impetus for settling families on the land after the First World War was, however, an aspect of that urban dream from the nineties that was re-shaped for post-war aspirations. A Land Settlement (Facilities) Act was passed in 1919 and its provisions ended in 1926. These included farm colonies with central farms attached, profit-sharing farms and co-operative marketing.

In his book *Land for the Small Man* (New York, 1946), the historian Newlyn Smith reports that after the First World War:

"Of the millions demobilised, only forty-nine thousand applied for small-holdings and only about a third of these had received statutory holdings by December 1924 ... All the same, as a result of this war-induced land settlement, statutory small-holdings were more than doubled in number, and the number of houses on small-holding projects quadrupled ... By 1924-25 the thirty thousand holdings of the combined pre-war and post-war estates had about eighty-two hundred houses upon them ... A further thirty-six hundred of the council's holdings were 'partially-equipped', usually with buildings only. The remaining sixty percent, or eighteen thousand, were bare land holdings without houses and buildings and were supplied close to the applicant's established residence."

In Scotland the issue of re-settling ex-servicemen on the land was given additional impetus by historical circumstances. The 'Clearances' of the crofters in the Highlands and Islands had left appalling grievances which had not been rectified by the Crofting Act of 1886 which controlled rents and gave security of tenure, but did not reinstate the descendants of the evicted. In the period leading up to the First World War there had been a series of widely-publicised land raids. The historian Leah Leneman explains that recruiting propaganda promised men who enlisted voluntarily that they would get land on their return. Those who fought and survived and wanted holdings were widely considered to deserve them (*Fit for Heroes*, 1989).

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —
**MORE ABOUT
 RE-SETTLING THE LAND**
 PART 2



About 90% of the land acquired in Scotland for land settlement between 1919 and 1930 was in the crofting counties, constituting about 60% of the 2,536 holdings created, largely in an attempt to fulfil "the long-standing cultural and political aspirations of the crofting population". In England, as provision for ex-service families dwindled, the Religious Society of Friends, popularly known as the Quakers, sought to find ways of alleviating the hardships endured by unemployed miners. By 1935 it had persuaded the government to match the funds from other sources and initiate the Land Settlement Association, specifically for the relief of unemployment and based on collective marketing for the families involved.

As sites around the country were bought, a characteristic LSA landscape emerged, recognisable even today in places disposed of by the LSA long before its final closure. There was a small home farm, usually the original farmstead, occupied by the supervisor or advisers, with central buildings for the grading and packing of produce and beyond it about forty holdings of around four to eight acres depending on the original assumptions about horticulture or stock-rearing as the basic activity. The tenants' houses, each with a small front garden, were built where possible on existing roads. Where necessary, new access roads were developed on a grid-iron layout. Close to the dwellings were glasshouses, pig-sheds and chicken-houses, followed by a patch for fruit and vegetable cultivation, and beyond that an area designed to be ploughed and harvested together with neighbouring plots. Sometimes there was also a large-scale orchard.

It was a landscape that resembled, if anything, that of the plotlands which in some districts, like the Selsey Peninsula in West Sussex, were contiguous. The Second World War both denied the LSA its triumphs and spared it the problems of its failures, for when established horticulturists were already bankrupt it was not surprising that unemployed families would do any better. Those settlers who had failed to adapt to the growers' life moved back to their home regions where suddenly, through the magic of war, mining and heavy industry had again become important. Food production too became a national imperative and the LSA fell under the direct control of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Post-war policy was to restrict applicants for holdings to people with proven farming

experience and with access to enough capital to maintain the holder and the family until they were self-supporting. In the 1960s the Ministry appointed a committee chaired by Professor M.J. Wise to report both on small-holdings established by county councils and on those of the LSA. He concluded that the concept of the Association's estates as "the first step on the farming ladder" was no longer relevant, and that its role as an experimenter in agricultural co-operation had not been fulfilled, since its board was appointed by government and not by the tenants and since they themselves were constrained by involuntary contractual obligation.

Meanwhile, the pattern of retailing in Britain was rapidly changing. The concept of local greengrocers buying in the nearest wholesale market, dominated by Covent Garden in London, was being replaced by direct purchasing by multiple chain-stores making their own deals with suppliers for high street supermarkets and out-of-town hypermarkets, with a high degree of pre-packaging and standardisation.

The LSA took the best available advice and contracted with the large multiple stores to supply a small range of salad crops in vast quantities. By the early 1970s earnings were well above the average agricultural wage, but the late 1970s brought hard times to tenants. The Ministry's decision to close down the LSA was announced as Parliament went into recess in December 1982. The decision covered the ten remaining estates, comprising 3,900 acres, with 530 tenants who were to be allowed to purchase their holdings at half the current market price. In what was known as the *annus mirabilis* of British farming, since farmers' incomes rose by 40%, it was found that up to a quarter of LSA tenants were in receipt of the social security Family Income Supplement.

There were messy lawsuits successfully getting a large out-of-court settlement from the Ministry. One Suffolk estate at Newbourn formed a new co-operative to recapture their market but were defeated by cheaper imports, and by 1994 it was reported that:

"Large areas where once a thriving community of families worked the land now look like a bomb site. Acres of glasshouses stand idle. Clearing the glass costs £10,000 an acre, and with 25 to 30 acres of glass on the LSA site this means a £250,000-plus bill. Growers want to sell up, but the council, in pursuit of its planning policy, has banned any new buildings and wants to site to retain its horticultural character. One grower for seventeen years remarked that 'There's just no future in horticulture: it is obsolete and we can no longer make a living at it. They want our holdings to be left as museum pieces, but without the curator's wages'."

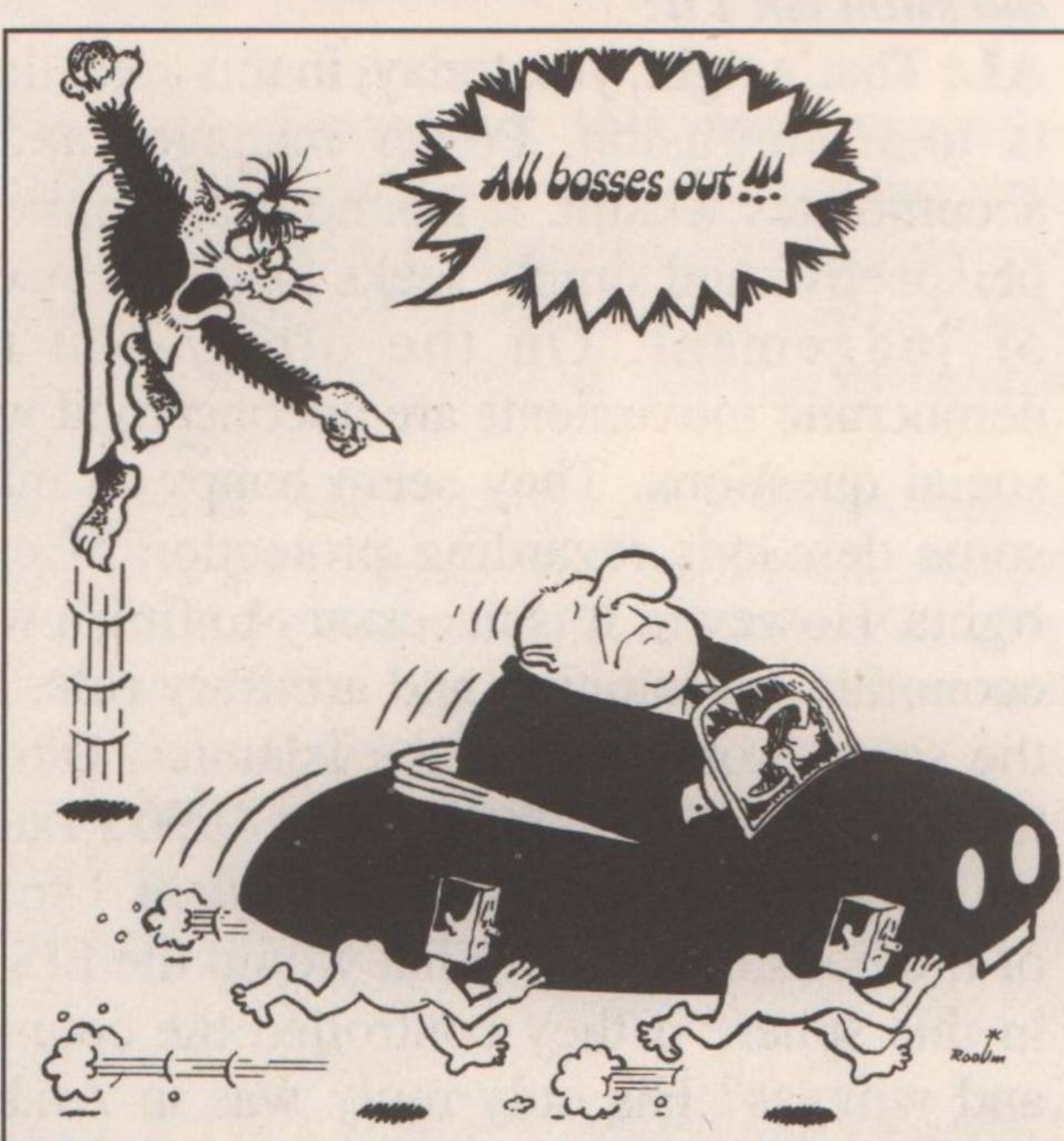
This is the sad, muted and ironical end of the longest-lasting and largest-scale venture in enabling low-income people to earn a livelihood producing food in modern rural England. As I put it in *Freedom* last month ('Resettling Rural England', 6th September 1997), there is a tacit conspiracy to exclude the poor, disguised as a concern for the environment. The campaign called *The Land is Ours* is very significant because it challenges the conventional wisdom of rural England.

Right at the beginning of the century Ebenezer Howard, whose vision of the future was very like that of Kropotkin's integration of industry and agriculture, remarked that:

"While the age we live in is the age of the great closely compacted, overcrowded city, there are already signs for those who can read them of a coming change so great and so momentous that the twentieth century will be known as the period of the great exodus."

He was prophetic, but the exodus was not to any hard-won pastures of the promised land. It was to an ampler style of urban commuting with golf courses, swimming pools and livery stables replacing chicken-runs, greenhouses and horticulture. This is the entrenched opposition faced by the advocates of rural resettlement. In an earlier period it was called class oppression.

Colin Ward



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TERROR IN ALGERIA

For over five years the people of Algeria have been suffering a nameless terror. With censorship and manipulation it is hard to get information. The French anarchist paper *Le Monde Libertaire* did the following interview in order to get a picture of what is happening. The initials 'AL' are those of an Algerian who has been a militant in the French trade union movement for some time and who has kept up relations with Algeria which he visits regularly. Politically unaligned, anti-capitalist and atheist, AL is not an anarchist.

ML: What overall analysis would you give of the conflict in Algeria?

AL: In 1986-87 in discussions I had with some militants I got the idea that if this all came out in the open the result would be a huge and widespread 'settling of accounts'. So much hatred has built up, so many people have been rejected, despised, crushed and the level of depoliticisation of the people is such that people have become incapable of acting in a rational manner. This depoliticisation leads them to commit acts of revenge rather than collective action.

That's how things are at the moment. Unfortunately there are perhaps some ten years of account settling to come ...

ML: Do the Islamic groups still enjoy the support of the people?

AL: They enjoy an understanding, not support. Support would indicate a significant change in the attitude of a section of the population and therefore a strong force in their favour. But there is state repression which strikes hard at innocent families of Islamic militants who have no rights of redress. This is why they enjoy an understanding. An absence of credible information and censure reinforce this feeling.

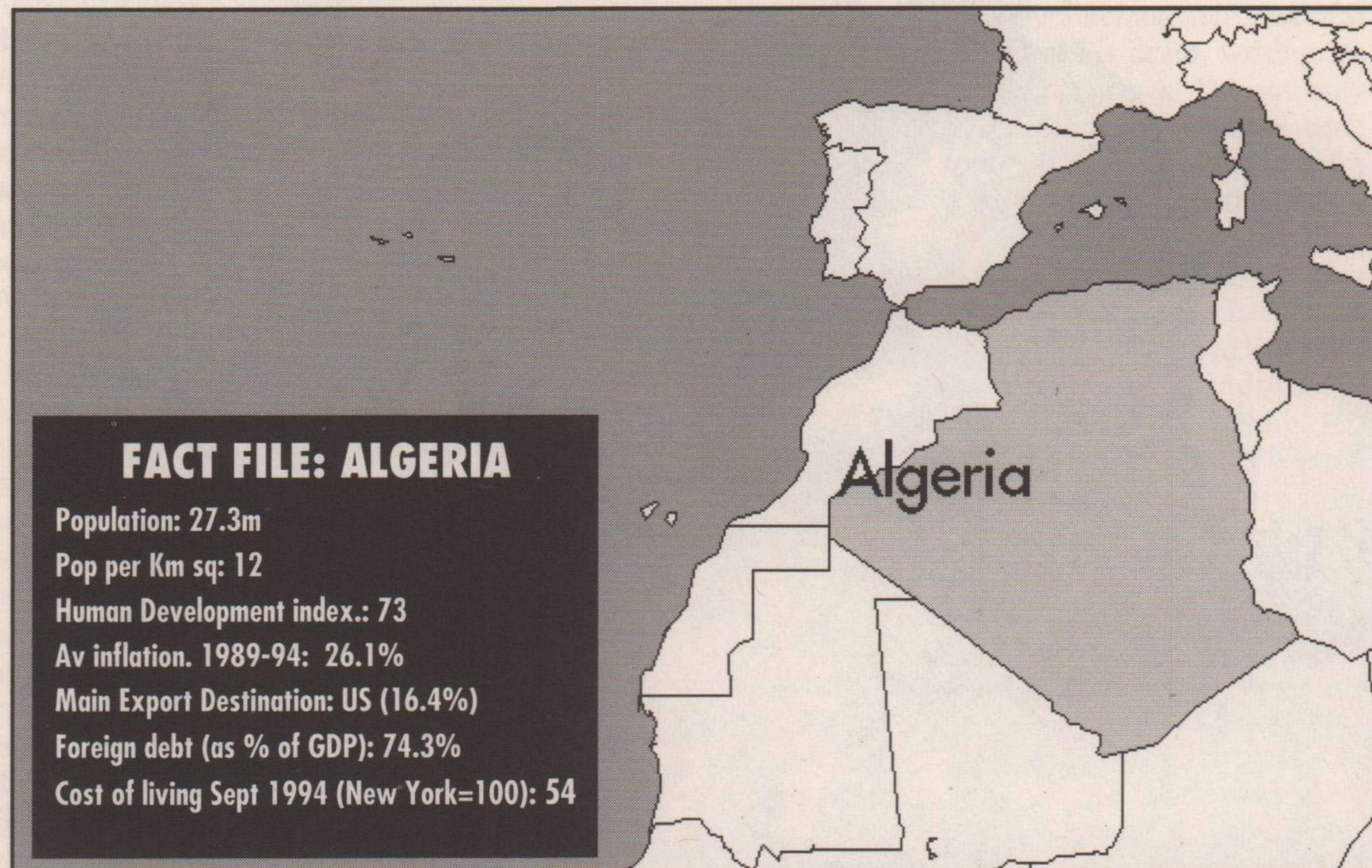
For five years people have been going underground because of their Islamic sympathies or because of the personal repression they have suffered. Others sign up for the army or the police simply to get a job.

When talking about the conflict in Algeria I never speak of civil war which means that one section of society is pitted against another. This is not the case. What we are witnessing is a war between political cliques in order to gain the upper hand over people in general.

ML: You are very critical of one section of the democratic opposition, in particular the RCD which supports the position of eradicating the Islamics.

AL: In the mouths of those in Algeria who call themselves democrats this term has no meaning. What kind of democrat tries to justify assassination and torture? An attempt to legitimate a military dictatorship against a religious totalitarianism cannot be a solution. What is necessary is a definition of some basic rights which are guaranteed. If the powers that be use torture why shouldn't the Islamics do the same?

In Algeria those in power want to stay there and they have stacked up on their side all the means to achieve these ends. One of those means is terror. It was the state that began the spiral by embarking on a policy of mass arrest



of Islamics – often sympathisers who got caught up in the net. The opposition democrats deserve the title in words only not in deeds: they have never opposed these practices.

ML: Many Algeria specialists – in the universities and in the press – suspect that those in power are directly responsible for some of the massacres and assassinations. What is your opinion?

AL: Those in power have been involved in all this shit for about thirty years. Today it is all too easy to incriminate the Islamics. They also seek to impose themselves by violent means and have no hesitation in slaughtering civilians in order to 'punish' them. But in some cases, where there is no proof but rather political intuition, I think we can see the hand of the establishment at work. For a while the press used to give the names of those assassinated for political reasons. Many of

them were militants who I knew personally; not democrats allied to those in power but, on the contrary, those who had opposed this structure for a long time; people involved in the FFS or the far left. Many random killings (in cafés or markets for example) took place in areas infiltrated by Islamics. It's the same story when it comes to what is known as 'the triangle of death' accounting for almost all the civilian massacres reported in the Algerian press. What is more, this area is flat in geographic terms and as such does not lend itself to guerrilla activity but is an area where the military are deployed in force.

ML: Tell us something of the self-defence militias set up by the military.

AL: By setting up the militias the army hoped to push the people into their camp by co-option and hoping that they would attract the attention of the Islamics. With regard to

some more recent massacres this has proved a success and with the militias having drawn the fire the army has been left with a free hand to protect vital economic installations – not the schools of course. Also these militias were set up in a legal vacuum with no formal control. The army holds the purse strings and can do away with them when convenient in the same way that they set them up i.e. at their own whim. These militias have taken Algeria back to a tribal stage of development. Every village, every region tends to be organised around its tribal chief who rules the roost surrounded by his family. Thus these militias represent a danger as they reinforce a logic of armed struggle where reason and debate have no place.

ML: What did those in power hope to achieve by freeing Abassi Madani and other leaders of the FIS?

AL: This is no attempt to end the violence. Up until now the FIS has not renounced armed struggle. Today Madani is ready to give this undertaking. This suits those in power who can thus isolate the more radical elements. In turn the FIS hopes to regain its lost audience. This is why Madani is making promises. The FIS is in a position to set itself up again quickly with new leaders. To an extent they have already done this.

ML: Do you feel the following compromise is a possibility: the military continue to control the state apparatus and revenue from oil and gas while allowing the rampant Islamisation of society?

AL: But Islamisation isn't just the FIS! Islam as a state religion wasn't invented by the FIS. This total control has weighed on the people for thirty years. Then it was decided that they'd had enough and they blew the lid. Now the military seek to put themselves in the saddle by putting themselves forward as 'saviours'. Now if others want to come and give them a hand whilst leaving power intact in their hands they will be only too happy. For thirty years power has proved its willingness to integrate by imposing rules from above: the one party state, no opposition movements, state religion with, like the Islamics, its own interpretation of the rule book. Let's not forget that they imposed the Family Code in 1984 when the FIS didn't exist. When it suits them the military are very happy with the radical Islamisation of society.

ML: What of social struggles in Algeria?

AL: The horror of this war has impeded mobilising against privatisations. Those in power thus have a free hand to impose IMF diktats and throw thousands of workers onto the streets on a daily basis. Because of the situation on the ground the social movement has been muzzled by power. The only union of significance, the UGTA, has been linked to the state apparatus for thirty years. Officially the UGTA was made independent in 1989-90 but its leaders have remained with the FLN. Over the last five years spontaneous and sporadic struggles have occurred in many sectors: education, transport, health. But there has been no co-ordination of all this.

ML: For you this is the most important social question isn't it?

AL: That's right, yes, today, in this area, there is total confusion. Power manages and it accumulates wealth. It has no programme or perspective and simply seeks to avoid the day of judgement. On the other side the democratic movements are unconcerned with social questions. They seem happy to make some demands regarding protection of civil rights. However, it is necessary to finish with economic exploitation and arbitrary rule. It's the same problem with the Islamics. During the local election campaigns in 1990 I raised the matter at a meeting with Mandani. I spoke of the housing crisis. What would the FIS do in this sphere if they controlled the councils and wilayas? His only reply was in Arabic: 'Only God knows'.

In their speeches the democratic opposition, the Islamics and those in power want these social questions relegated to second position. They are all in agreement there.

TROUBLE IN THE EMPIRE?

China, perhaps more than most, induces a willingness in commentators to exaggerate perhaps in proportion to her size. To insinuate therefore, in any way, that the country is unsettled by terrorism would be out of order ... in many ways. Perhaps though it is safe to say that state terrorism is on the increase. The regime has recently laid down rules whereby, when they come into effect, there should be less in the way of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. However, before we get the chance to see if it will be honoured, the Chinese execution machine is going out with banners flying as they say.

Amnesty International recorded an average of about 20 executions a day in China last year. The figure may well be a fragment of the total because the actual figure is a state secret. The recorded figure – minus the 'secrets' – is still an impressive 4,367 giving the regime the distinction of having murdered, last year, three times as many as all the other states in the world put together. Second place went to the Ukraine with a meagre 167. China wins hands down. Terrorism indeed.

In Shanghai last year the death sentence was given for stealing ball point pens and badminton racquets and a 'hooligan' met his maker for sticking thorns and pointed sticks into the backsides of female cyclists. Not too pleasant granted but, well, I ask you.

THE NEW DOMINION

Truth of the matter is that it is the poor who get it in the neck and 'justice' is often pretty summary with one week trials perhaps something of a luxury. Nor are 'separatists' treated with kid gloves: 42 in Tibet last year and 160 in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang (literally 'the new dominion') is perhaps another area of the Empire open to exaggeration. Covering one sixth of the biggest country in the world and lying on the Chinese/Asian fault-line, it is also significant in other ways. It has coal, copper, gold and iron and, although its oil reserves are less important than at one time thought, plans are in the pipeline (geddit?) to link the area to surrounding areas which may prove more useful. Meanwhile the Taklamakan desert is a more than useful nuclear testing ground.

It is therefore annoying the Chinese authorities to find another of those troublesome separatist groups springing up and causing all kinds of trouble. These people have staged riots in the capital Urumqi and other towns from Khotan in the south to Kashgar in the west. A riot in Gulja left ten official and possibly more than 40 unofficial dead. A railway bridge and an armaments store have been blown up and there is a claim that an oil refinery has been attacked. Add to this the bombings in Beijing reported by FPI earlier this year and you might conclude this is a troublesome spot for the Han administration.

We may be wary of over reaction but less can be said of the Chinese who, it is reported, have stationed 1,000,000 troops in the area. But there are others who may be reacting too.

It has been Chinese policy since the region was annexed in 1949 to 'add sand' to the local population by encouraging Han Chinese to settle in the region. 5% of the population in 1949, today the figure is 38% – a policy also pursued in Tibet. However, the February riots at Gulja encouraged 1,200 to pack their bags and flee under army escort.

WHO ARE THE UIGHURS?

Of course since 1989 and the end of history we are all good capitalists now. The big bad post-commie bogeymen are the Islamics and so that is what they must be.

In fact the Uighurs see their protest as more anti-colonial rather than Islamic. Their flag – a white star and crescent moon on a blue field – is more like secular Turkey rather than Iran or Saudi Arabia. Turkey indeed sets the linguistic parameters of the culture to a degree. However, the term Uighur is one that went out of fashion for centuries before being re-introduced earlier this century.

The area, rather than being an area of Turkic expansion, should be seen as one that was Turkified under medieval empires which included a Muslim wing and a Buddhist one.

The Uighurs are a more disparate bunch than the label would suggest. Indeed they do not represent the only other grouping apart from the Han. 1m Kazakhs live on the mountain slopes of Dzungaria and there are other groupings such as the Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Hui and Xibe with their own languages and cultures.

The aims of the Uighurs are doomed from the start due to those strategic and mineral reasons we have already spoken of. In a recent statement Erkin Alptekin, a Uighur leader, said: "The Uighurs wish to be able to choose their destiny. We had our sovereign state before the Manchu conquest and we wish to see it re-established". This might suit Mr Alptekin and his cronies over the border. The people who live in the area may want to dance a different dance if the situation destabilises further.

LABOUR MARKET FLEXIBILITY

Labour market flexibility is good, isn't it? Well, Tony Blair says it is and if the way the Great Leader's pronouncements were repeated by ministers and delegates at the Labour Party Conference – as if they were statements of self-evident incontrovertible fact – is anything to go by, how could anyone think otherwise? After all, does not such flexibility mean that the economy can grow at a higher rate, generating wealth from which, in time, the whole workforce will benefit? And does it not deliver lower unemployment than is experienced in countries with greater regulation? The consensus says yes, but some of the facts suggest a different answer may be closer to the truth.

As far as the growth argument goes, the statistics simply do not back it up. Writing in *The Guardian* Larry Elliott, in posing these questions, remarks that the economies of the UK and the US – the countries with the most flexible labour markets – have not seen consistent growth to match increasing flexibility. Economic growth in the '90s has been slower than in the '80s, which was slower than the 'inflexible' '70s. The counter argument to this stark discrepancy between rhetoric and fact is, no doubt, to say that the reason such growth has not been experienced is that the labour market has not yet been made flexible enough. So we'd better get ready for the changes in working practices which will result in the desired escalation in growth.

Where unemployment is concerned, the bare facts seem to bear the consensus argument out. The UK and the US do enjoy lower unemployment levels than European countries such as France and Germany, where unemployment rates are twice as high. However, the last few years have seen a growing recognition that the government's official claimant count, as a guide to the real extent of unemployment, does not represent the complete picture.

Since 1979, of the thirty changes in the rules of eligibility for unemployment-related benefits, all but one have had the effect of reducing the claimant count. As a result, the official figure is increasingly coupled in the press with the unemployment rate estimated by the Labour Force Survey, which is invariably higher since it includes all those who have been looking for work in the last four weeks and not just those eligible for unemployment-related benefits.

While certainly an improvement on the raw claimant count, the authors of a recent report, *The Real Level of Unemployment*, suggest that this can also be criticised because it fails to take into account the problem of what they call 'hidden unemployment'.

The report isolates four groups of people

who make up the 'hidden unemployed': those who are unemployed but ineligible for benefits; those on government schemes, because many of them consider themselves "as unemployed and only temporarily off the register, and would take a 'proper job' straight away if one were available" and because in areas of high unemployment a larger amount of the workforce is accounted for by such schemes; some of those who take early retirement; some of those who are 'permanently sick'.

The latter two groups are dominated by people over 50 who, particularly if they live in areas where there is a "marked shortage of jobs ... are realistic enough to recognise that they will never again find meaningful, decently-rewarded work". As a result they consider the available options, which include the two mentioned above.

The report states that the permanently sick category is "the single most important mechanism through which unemployment becomes hidden". The number of people claiming benefit for sickness or invalidity for more than six months has seen a startling rise in the last sixteen years. In April 1981, 574,000 people fell into this category, a figure which, by April 1995, had risen to 1,809,000. Once those on severe disablement allowance and those incapacitated for work due to sickness for less than six months have been added, the total number of people of working age who are claiming sickness-related benefits, based on Department of Social Security statistics for August 1996, rises to 2.48 million.

Although access to incapacity benefit, or its predecessor invalidity benefit, requires confirmation of incapacity for work from a medical practitioner, the report suggests that many people have been able to make the side-step from means-tested unemployment benefits to the non-means-tested incapacity benefit because of injuries they may have picked up during their working life, or simply because of getting older. In normal circumstances such injuries may not disqualify a person from work but, in a situation when another job seems an increasingly distant prospect, are significant enough to get the individual through the relevant medical test.

The report suggests that it is 'inconceivable' that incapacitating illness can have increased so much in the last sixteen years, especially since the general standards of health show a steady improvement. The authors state that "what can be observed in the rise in long-term sickness claimants is above all not health but the operation of the labour market and the social security system". This suggestion is given further credence by the fact that there is a direct correlation between high levels of sickness-related benefits and high levels of unemployment.

To calculate the "real level of unemployment" for January 1997, the authors take the official claimant count and add to it the number by which the Labour Force Survey unemployment figure exceeds the claimant count (so as to include those seeking work but not eligible for benefit), the number of people on government schemes and the "excess numbers" recorded as 'early retired' or 'permanently sick'. The excess in relation to the latter categories is calculated by taking the proportion of people who were 'permanently sick' or 'early retired' in the South East in April 1991, treating that as probably representing the levels of these categories which would be expected in a "reasonably fully employed economy" and then taking any excess above these levels as representing hidden unemployment.

In this way the report's authors come up with an estimated real level of unemployment for January 1997 of 3.9 million, or 14.4% of the

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workforce. This is compared to the 1.7 million unemployed according to the official claimant count. In comparing these figures for unemployment levels estimated for April 1991 the authors note that while the claimant count has fallen by 250,000, the "real employment" level has risen by 500,000. This suggests that while the economy has seen a steady recovery following the recession, the benefits of this recovery have not been felt throughout all sections of the workforce and, even, that a certain category of workers with particular skills – those who worked in the declining large-scale industries – have been excluded from the recovery. The recovery only looks as good as it does (to economists at least, things don't look so rosy on the ground) because the official figures which back it up fail to reflect what is really happening.

If, then, labour market flexibility doesn't obviously improve employment levels or promote higher economic growth, whose interests does it serve? Or perhaps more to the point, whose interests are a government committed to such market flexibility serving? Is it those who live in poverty and who, through a lack of employment, are excluded from being able to realise their potential or participate fully in the lift of society – those who the government apparently want to help through its Social Exclusion Unit (which, it is worth noting, hasn't met yet)? Or is it perhaps those of business who, while wanting the right to 'hire and fire', are, according to Sussex Enterprise's 1996-97 report, unwilling to provide training opportunities for their workers which would enable them to move more easily between different jobs? The answer doesn't need stating. Suffice it to say that representatives of this interest group have spent the last five months settling into their comfortable positions at the head of various policy review bodies, no doubt eager to be able to help make government even more an extension of their interests than before.

Duncan Hunt

Ideas and Action

Dear Friends,
Re the statement from Hull Syndicalists, it is unfortunate that it refers to a 'conference' which suggests more formality than has actually occurred.

In November 1996 in Bury, Lancashire, about nine comrades got together to see how the job of supplying *Freedom* with news might be expanded.

Most of those present are anarcho-syndicalists. It was only a coincidence that we mainly live in the north. The meeting was quite informal and made no pretence of being representative.

The second such meeting took place in September 1997, with more or less the same people present. Discussion widened to agree on the points mentioned in Hull's letter. It will be for the Bradford conference (14th March 1998) to put flesh on the skeleton of a discussion that began in Bury. Its basic ideas, however, have been floating around for a long time.

A week after our second meeting a large group of comrades met in London to talk about re-forming the Anarchist Federation of Britain. Mainly individuals attended, rather than representatives from groups. They decided to set up the Anarchist Information Network rather than re-launch the AFB.

There is no danger of duplication as a result of the two bodies being set up as described above. One is likely to have more support from people who emphasise syndicalist ideas, the other will have a broader anarchist platform. The agreement on basic principles is very encouraging. However, I would caution against us trying to speak with a national voice.

It is best to network with people who live in your area or at least find it accessible. There is then more chance of the ideas discussed at meetings being put into action/publication. The alternative is likely to produce morale-boosting get-togethers, which we all need, but not much else. This was the main problem with the AFB. People were committed to action at the time of exciting conferences, but were diverted to other tasks once home hundreds of miles away.

Martin S. Gilbert

Hitler's Heir

Dear *Freedom*,
A couple more thoughts on the New Labour/Fascist crossover. Has anybody else been noticing mentions of Mr Blair's 'Third Way' cropping up in the mainstream media? Correct me if I'm wrong, but wasn't this the very term used by either Mussolini or Mosley (himself a Labour minister) to describe their own particular brand of politics (capitalism and communism being the other two)? A National Front splinter party using this name also put up a couple of candidates at the last election.

The BUF's views on unions were also quite similar to good old Tony's – they wanted them to work 'for the good of the nation', with the aim of producing a corporatist state like contemporary Italy. Blair seems to want something similar, judging by his constant carping about modernisation.

Quite disturbing really. How long before Jack Straw forms a band of Mauveshirts or Pinkshirts to make sure all kiddies are safely indoors by 9pm for compulsory Blair worship and vigorous mental arithmetic?

Also, nice to know that it's Polaris missiles before hospital beds, isn't it?

Ezekiel Watts

Bouquet

Dear Friends,
If the local fish-wrapper's 'foreign currency' report this morning is correct, the British pound is worth \$1.62. Thus, a year's subscription to *Freedom* calculates at \$64.50, a hefty price but for far better content than, say, the *Wall Street Journal*.

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- 1997 PROGRAMME -

7th November General discussion
14th November Post-Modernism: A Personal Perspective (speaker Steve Ash)
21st November General discussion
28th November Inside the 43 Group (speaker is a member of the old 43 Group)
5th December General discussion
12th December Symposium on Technology
19th December Christmas Party and General discussion
26th December NO MEETING

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion please contact Carol Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW (telephone number 0181-847 0203 subject to caller display and an answerphone, which means if you withhold your telephone number you will be ignored or disconnected) giving subject and prospective dates and we will do our best to accommodate. Donations are accepted from those who cannot attend regularly but wish to see the continuation of these meetings.

Carol Saunders / Peter Neville

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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.

December 21st: Lower Airedale.
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**Telephone for further details
01756-799002**

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