

FREEDOM

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No money for the poor, old and disabled, but ...

BONANZA FOR EUROFIGHTER

So, as a nation we can't afford to pay single mothers to look after their youngsters, we can't afford to restore the old age pension to its former percentage of the average wage, and as for the disabled, they must learn to tighten their belts. Only the other day there was a mini-crisis when it transpired that the blind will have to pay VAT on their white sticks. But as all this was going through the media mincing machine and digested, some 'positive' news emerged.

One wonders how many taxpayers in this country know that the British Army still maintains 26,000 soldiers, of which 21,000 are in the 1st (UK) Armoured Division in Germany, and this has been costing a matter of £1.1 billion a year.

How many taxpayers know that the merger, recently cleared by the Blair government, "of the last state-owned nuclear companies British Nuclear Fuels and Magnox Electric" is going to cost them "up to £4 billion" (*Guardian*, 23rd December 1997).

But all the preceding examples of wasted taxpayers money which could have been used to alleviate the problems of the lone parents, the disabled and the old, is chicken feed compared to the government's announcement that they have signed an agreement in Bonn with Germany, Italy and Spain to proceed with the production of the Eurofighter.

According to the *Guardian's* defence correspondent (23rd December), "Britain's share of the £40 billion bill will be £16 billion". Apart from the fact that it doesn't really matter one way or another whether it's going to cost the British taxpayer £16 billion or £30 billion, the whole question, about which the public ought to be swamping the politicians with demonstrations, is 'How can you say

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Blair orders 232 Eurofighters for £14 billion ... but
WHERE'S THE ENEMY?

It's not the first time that we have used this headline in *Freedom*. After all, the so-called 'Cold War' was just another excuse to bolster the war industry in the United States and in Europe. In spite of the fact that it was to be a world power) and economic (the Eurofighter is a £30 billion enterprise and, as Blair pointed out to his colleagues, involved 250,000 jobs from the new D...

THE INDEPENDENT

Tuesday 23 December 1997

45p No 3,489 **

Pretty. But £39m each, second best and with no enemy. You've just bought 232 of them

that we can't afford to look after the single mothers, the disabled and the old when there is never any problem in finding the money for weaponry?"

Of course we know *their* answer. At the Bonn meeting our 'New Labour' defence minister George Robertson more or less repeated what he wrote in the weekly *Tribune* in September which *Freedom* tore to bits.* He said that "Eurofighter was crucial not just for the RAF but the future of the European aerospace industry. Eurofighter is ideally suited to meet the new turbulent challenges that have replaced the cold war. Recent operations in the Balkans and the Gulf have demonstrated the

* 'The New Labour Warmongers' in *Freedom*, 4th October 1997.

importance of effective air power in today's more uncertain world." Can anybody other than a politician imagine even a crazy Balkan would-be dictator wishing to invade these islands.

An interesting sidelight to the *folie de grandeur* of our Mr Robertson was a remark by the German representative Volke Ruhe who, according to the *Guardian* report, "came close to cancelling the project on the grounds that the fall of the Berlin Wall made it superfluous" even though he was closer to those potential Balkan invaders who scare the pants off our Mr Robertson. But presumably business is business and Germany bought 180 and we shall be told how many jobs will be secured as a result.

These are the real issues and only the anarchists face them squarely.

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DISABLED DISCOVER PAIN IN NEW LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Can I have a pain and now know it? Ludwig Wittgenstein would, I think, say that you can't say 'I know I am in pain'. What is it supposed to mean? One either is in pain or one isn't in pain, it's as simple as that.

At the moment the government is testing the 'integrity' of some 69,000 people who claim they are disabled. On account of all this testing and measuring, last month some disablement correspondents on the radio programme *Does he take Sugar?* were claiming that up to 7,000 claimants had had their benefit cut. Perhaps 2,000 had lost their benefit altogether.

The 1.8 million on disability living allowance are being bombarded with 33-page forms to check if they are entitled to their payments. The government seems determined to cut the cost of disability benefits, which reached £23.5 billion last year.

BLACK PROPAGANDA AND THE WHITE ELEPHANT

Demonstrations by the Disabled People's Direct Action Network before Christmas in Downing Street forced Tony Blair to announce that he will chair a special Cabinet committee to tackle welfare reform. The committee will include Brown, Dobson, Harman and Blunkett. Ms Harman, who isn't on many government committees, has been a bit of a white elephant in the government. Recently the Secretary of State for Social Security refused to take a bet with Jeremy Paxman that she would still be in the same job in a year's time.

The great virtue of the Tories was their hypocrisy. Their bark was worse than their bite in social policy owing to weak enforcement. One must fear that the vice of New Labour is likely to be its over-eager sincerity. It seems that they are about to go where the Tories would fear to tread.

The unashamable high-minded attitude of New Labour to dragoning the poor has led them to issue what disability groups call 'partial briefings' to the media. Even the Department of Social Security staff are distancing themselves from what some of the disabled are describing as 'black propaganda' from Labour's spin doctors.

In December Tony Blair put his case for standing firm on welfare reform on the front page of the far right-wing paper the *Daily Mail*. He was dismissive about the direct action demonstrators: "We've seen all these people before" he said. Over a year ago the Direct Action Network gatecrashed John Smith House and stayed inside for six hours demanding that Labour guarantee to support new rights for the disabled.

DOCTORS DETERMINED TO DEFEAT DISABLED

Some suggest that the rise in people claiming incapacity benefit under the last government was related to the accountancy exercise to get the unemployed figures down. The number on the benefit doubled under the Tories. More recently, to reverse this trend, both the Major government and New Labour have gone in for

strict medicals and now the 'integrity test' for fraud.

There is some concern about the doctors operating the Benefit Agency Medical Services (BAMS). Doubts have been expressed at their level of expertise in doing medical assessments. Last August, in a reply to Dennis Skinner MP, Under Secretary of State for Social Security Baroness Hollis wrote: "I would like to reassure you that all BAMS full-time doctors have undergone a programme of continuing medical education modules on the assessment of a range of medical conditions and recent advances in treatment and management".



'A Doctor's Waiting Room', c.1920, by L.S. Lowry

ANOTHER 'X' CASE

The current case of the thirteen year old rape victim has, once again, highlighted the problems caused by the failure of successive governments to legislate for abortion in Ireland.

It was clear after the 'X' case in 1992 that similar cases would occur again. But governments have refused to legislate for the limited abortion services allowed by the 1992 amendment.

Although information about legal abortion services in other European Union countries is lawfully available, its distribution is subject to severe restrictions. Students' Unions representing over 100,000 people are not allowed to provide this information to their own members.

The Dublin Abortion Rights Group was formed to campaign for the provision of free, safe and legal abortion facilities in Ireland. Every day at least eight Irish women travel to England for abortions, and that figure is very conservative as it only includes those who give an Irish address when registering at a clinic.

Failure to provide information has not and will not decrease this number. Women will

Later in the same letter she adds: "All the doctors who are examining claimants of incapacity benefit work as independent medical advisers to provide an opinion on capacity for work for the independent adjudicating officer".

We reported Keith Rushworth's hunger strike against the 'All Work Test' in November. He ended the strike on 17th November in medical advice after forty days. Incapacity Action in a press release about Keith claimed: "Keith (an ME sufferer) is prepared to risk his life so that the real facts about incapacity benefit and the 'All Work Test' are made public".

Keith's wife told me that though the local media took up the issues of his case, national publicity was not forthcoming. It seems that all the national press is still sucking up to New Labour.

Incapacity Action, a small campaigning group for the disabled, suggests thousands have lost their incomes since incapacity benefit was introduced in 1995. Baroness Hollis assures us that the BAMS' doctors are competent, but in August 1996 Sarah Chapman fractured her arm during a benefit test. Both David Holmes and Tom Causton died of heart attacks after having their benefit withdrawn by these doctors at the end of 1996. Ralph Melvine left his DSS Arden House 'All Work Test' in Newcastle in an ambulance. He is now awaiting heart surgery. In September 1997 another claimant on Merseyside is reported to have committed suicide after benefit was stopped.

Last October Incapacity Action claimed the Leeds MP John Battle had admitted that the "Benefit Agency doctors and some officers are on performance related pay ... in other words, they are working to government cut-off targets irrespective of people's health or capacity for work".

Later John Battle threatened to sue Incapacity Action for libel for retailing the above quote. But the worry still remains about the competence and integrity of these doctors.

DOCTORS DEFINE AND DISSEMBLE

We know if someone has a toothache if he or she manifests pain-behaviour commensurate with having a pain in the tooth. I suppose BAMS doctors know if someone is disabled if they manifest disabled-behaviour which fits with their "assessment of a range of medical conditions" which they, and the government, have come to class and define as 'disabled'. P.M.S. Hacker the philosopher writes: "We learn to say 'he is in pain' when he behaves thus". The BAMS doctor may say: We learn to say 'he is disabled' when he does or does not do thus.

In her letter to Baroness Hollis, Kate Adams of Incapacity Action writes: "Reports show doctors rushing examinations, distorting claimant's statements about their health and pushing them to perform mental and physical tasks that are clearly dangerous for them". Of course, pretence and dissimulation is always possible among claimants, but the machinations of governments and doctors cannot go unnoticed. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux has published a report insisting that the All Work Test is flawed and should be scrapped. The test has also had massive criticism from disability groups and the British Medical Association.

Even David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, has called the savings from taking benefits from the disabled 'dirty money' and described the disabled as a "weak political constituency". The indications are that there will be more pain for most of us where that came from.

Aileen O'Carroll, spokesperson for the Dublin Abortion Rights Group said that "Abortion is a human rights issue and every woman has the right to choose".

Dublin Abortion Rights Group

Albert Shore

The Raven No. 36 on 'Class Struggle and Social Protest'*Edited by Harold Sculthorpe*

Freedom Press, 108 pages, £3 (post free worldwide).

Dave Douglass opens with a look at the scene today and lashes out at "people on both the anarchist and the Marxist-Leninist left" who perceive a 'new' form of class struggle. This involves everyone who is not rich themselves and consigns all former practitioners of the class struggle to the museum: third world concerns, feminism and the environment, all come under scrutiny – these are the concerns of today's activists who have eschewed more traditional forms such as mass assemblies.

Not that Douglass cribs about the subjects. His complaint is that they are a substitute for 'class action' in the traditional style. New protests against roads, animal exports and the environmental struggles tend to give the impression that 'class origin' is irrelevant. This is something that Douglass rejects absolutely; as he points out 12% of the population own 90% of all wealth and he makes the point that the worker does not own anything to make a living with, not tools or orchards, as did many of our eighteenth and nineteenth century forbears.

The working class is seen as a force to be reckoned with, not only for challenging the system by brute force, but by having the nous to take over society and re-fashioning it.

Derek Pattison deals with the role unemployment plays in the schemes of the government to control the working class. Very pertinently he points out that the way a problem is defined gives a lead to the thoughts and intentions of the definer. He then uses the words and actions of both Labour and Conservative leaders which colour the views of ordinary people against the unemployed working class, usually blaming them for their unwanted predicament. To further his point he puts forward the case of John Major's 'back to basics'. There is no shortage of details or examples to further Derek Pattison's claims and views. He details the Conservative government's attempts to control the unemployed and the socially deprived, but Labour misgovernment is not ignored and is studied for its acceptance of workfare and 'welfare to work' policies. Charles Handy's idea of "half as many people being paid twice as much for working three times as hard" is given an airing, as is Beck's argument that "global capitalism is killing off work ... and is effectively undermining its own legitimacy". In Britain we are told there are now one million fewer jobs than there were in 1979 and only a third of the population are still employed in the classic sense.

Pattison doesn't give up hope and thinks we can get rid of the system and replace it with a society based on workers' control, mutual co-operation and the common ownership of the means of production.

Pattison's second article, 'Experiences in a British Labour Camp in the 1970s', deals with the incarceration of a Dukinfield textile

worker in a labour camp in, of all places, Henley on Thames. According to Pattison, they were known as 'Re-establishing Centres' and it's the place the unemployed were sent to bring them back in to a work form.

THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS

Having set the scene of the conflict between the dockers and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company subsidiary Torside, Guy Cheverton goes on to show us why after two years of struggle the fight is still going on. If anything shows the need for class struggle, this altercation does. As usual the Trots show up badly but, by Cheverton's telling, the anarchists do not do any better. While the dispute has been run on syndicalist lines with a weekly mass meeting, counter-cultural youth has been strong amongst the dockers' support. Whilst Guy Cheverton is not amongst the best-loved of British anarcho-syndicalists, with this account of the dockworkers' struggle he exposes the parochialism and lack of vision of many of our home-grown revolutionaries, and does another service to the dockers by highlighting their plight.

MANAGING THE UNEMPLOYED

The Job Seeker's Act was condemned by an *Observer* editorial as the "most draconian and anti-libertarian piece of legislation to reach the statute book this century". Albert Shore gives an interesting account of the genesis of opposition to it. From Edinburgh to Salford, the opposition spread rapidly. He describes the provenance of the 'three strikes and you're out' tactic, an imaginative action. However, the government's determination to have their wicked way called for more extreme forms of struggle and the writer details these, as well as the government's increasing determination to punish the unemployed.

Norman Stock, in 'Greve General: surprised again by the mass strike', points out that two of the more sophisticated governments in the west have been shafted by general strikes over the last two years: France and Germany. He gives us a brief picture of the development of the strike from the French Revolution to the Gdansk strike of 1980-81. He tells us that from a "non-violent anarchist perspective" the strike meets approval. He then goes on to discuss the forces that bring about the need for a mass cessation of work, highlighting the tendency for integration in the work's culture. 'Toyotism', 'Volvoism', which is corporatism in a minor way. The greed of the system has even brought the middle classes and the bureaucrats to the very edge, faced not only with loss of wage but of position and status.

Brian Bamford, in a series of three articles that tend to be disconnected but no worse for that, brings light on the question of the infighting between the various union groupings

in Puerto Real. He gives a view of the provenance of the troubles, starting with the 1977 TU Pact and the machinations of the Bolshevik leaders, the winner being the social democratic UGT and the socialist government. In a question and answer session with a CNT militant, he attempts to ascertain the effectiveness of the CNT in Spain and its relationship with other unions including the CGT, as Bamford puts it "the other CNT". The story is continued with the tale of Puerto Real, where 100,000 people took to the streets in July 1995 to protest against the actions of the socialist government and in favour of the shipyards of Cadiz and Puerto Real. Later he brings the whole question home to Britain, claiming that anarchism here at home has no "social relevance" and that it doesn't apply itself to local culture. Brian has very little time for the left, and indeed for the local anarchist movement, and doesn't try to hide it. However, he has as much experience as most activists and more than many, so it behoves us to take note at least.

CLASS STRUGGLE?

Donald Rooum, in 'Class Struggle or Acting for Ourselves', brings controversy into the argument by rejecting the whole class action theory. He debates what anarchism is and assesses the use of the term by self-styled anarchists. Donald is positive that the term is a fall-out from authoritarian socialism. He sees 'class' as a substitute for 'nation' and points out the fate of those unfortunate individuals who followed the nationalist road to war, as well as the working people of Russia, China and Cambodia after 'successful revolutions' in those places. Finally he suggests a term be used that is less ambiguous but doesn't offer an alternative.

Jean Pollard points out that the struggles usually focus around issues and people are motivated by events. Whilst Pollard sees no harm in single issues, they do not make the struggle for anarchism. Jean sees the 'struggle' as being between the controlling and the controlled. "If we do not have a class struggle, what do we do? We educate everyone, and that includes the controllers". I couldn't object to that, could you?

Peter Neville rubbishes the idea of class struggle through an attack on Marx and Weber. He analyses the Marxian idea of the various layers of society and makes his criticisms pungently. Neville makes no attempt to take any prisoners, speaking about anarcho-syndicalists: "their way of decision-taking and their exclusivity is far closer to Trotskyism than anarchism" (thank you Peter). "In what way can class struggle be seen as anarchism?" There's a bitterness about Neville's writing that I find shocking and disturbing, a willingness to write companions off without a second thought for them. Perhaps the next thing will be to feather them out of photographs?

DIRECT ACTION

John Rety's contribution, 'In the Womb of the Old', is an update of previous writing from *Freedom* dealing with the Wandsworth land occupation of 1996. We are taken through the initial steps and read that "we must reclaim the land for ourselves". It was, Rety tells us, "anarchy in practice". In essence it was three months of careful preparations that took two coachloads of people to take over the land and set about turning it into a place to live and enjoy life. The owners were the Guinness Brewery group and the tale is told of the struggle of the people to retain their gains and of the establishment to reclaim it. Ultimately the establishment won, but for how long will their victory hold its savour we might ask?

Kate Witham tells us of the continuing struggle of the peace movement in the '90s and its relevance to the anarchist struggle, while admitting that it has been marginalised.

There are still, at the time of writings, six peace camps. At this time activists are still challenging the nuclear submarines and developing the fight against the spin-offs from the Trident campaign. Kate tells us what life is like as a dedicated anarchist peace activist. Obviously the stuff heroes are made of, three of them held up a nuclear convoy and suffered appalling consequences: arrest, trial (a surreal experience) and prison.

Another expedition, courtesy of the Socialist Workers' Party: how many buses have they run? I seem to have spent a great deal of my life on buses organised by the SWP. Of course the tiny Trots used the occasion to sell literature and spent all the time of the demonstration on the flags selling literature. Mick Cropper's experience of direct action doesn't seem to be any different from that of most protesters. The occasion was the poll tax rebellion and the scenes are still in our minds: flailing batons, police charges, running crowds and defiance from the youth. He finishes with a warning the Swampy, "the darling of the media", to watch out. Steve Cropper feels that Swampy is being set up.

Julian, in 'Runway Two', gives his impressions of the campaign against the Manchester Airport Authority and the second runway. The account is drawn with a light brush and gives a picture of one man's view.

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

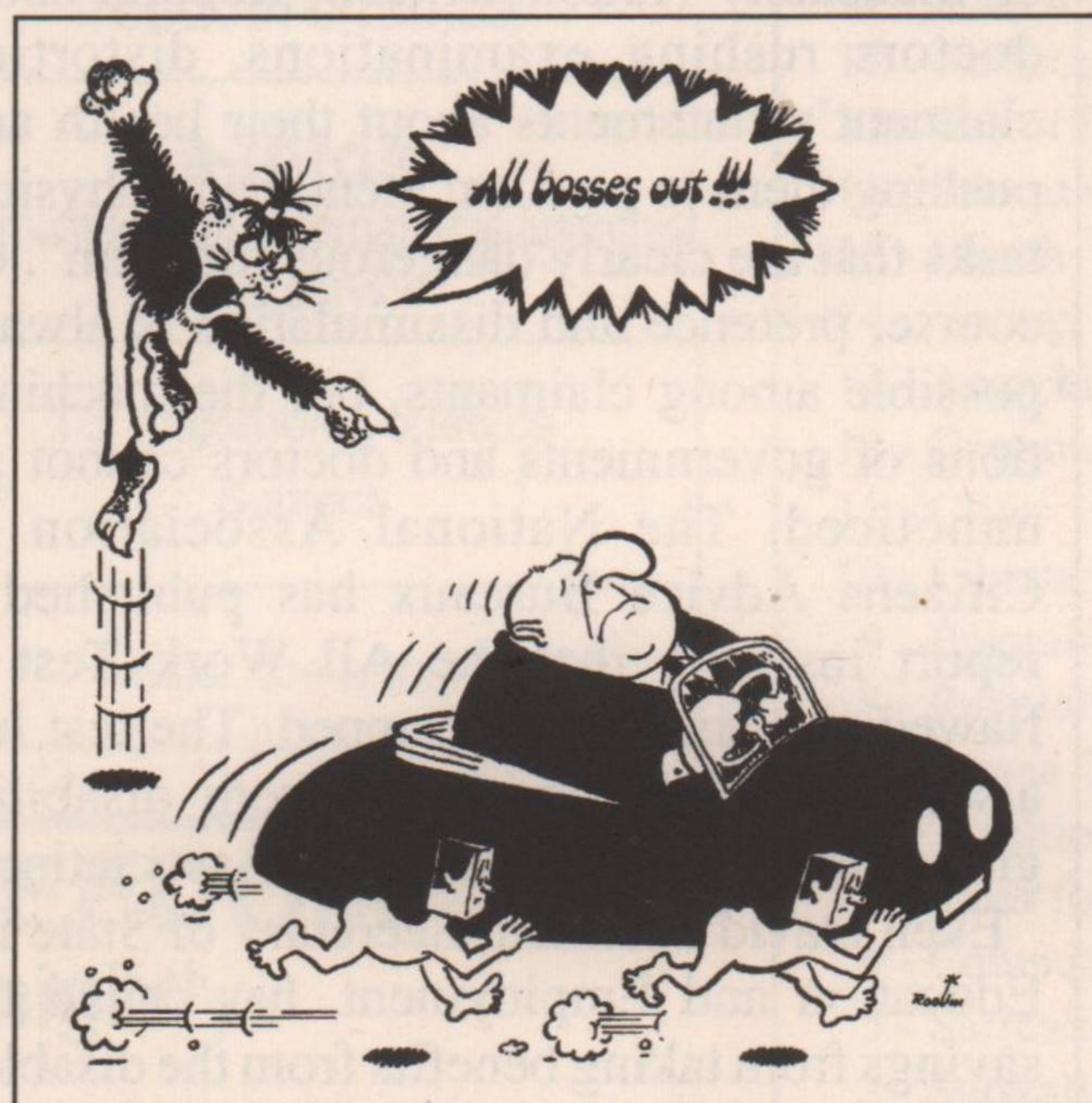
The Raven No. 36 is a must for all anarchists, for not only does it contain articles on the points at issue, but it shows what is wrong with the movement as a whole: an ever-present dis-unity, a reluctance to look at anyone else's point of view in a rational way. Certainly this applies to Peter Neville, Donald Rooum and, to a lesser extent, to Jean Pollard. They remind me of First World War British generals who could not see any alternative to a preferred assault on prepared positions, rejecting nature's way of probing every weakness in the enemy's defences. Brian Bamford has to be criticised for wasting time and space in taking an unjust swipe at DAM, especially when he was the cause of so much unrest in DAM over the CNT. This carping by both Bamford and Neville is a reminder of the weakness of the anarchist movement.

Having said that, it is obvious that there are dangers in the use of class struggle as a means of achieving anarchism and there is, at the bottom line, a need for education on the subject, not only for anarchists but for the left as a whole. This edition of *The Raven* starts on this role and is welcome as a beginning. We need, however, to delve deeper and clear out the anomalies in our collective thinking. Dave Douglass sees the unions as "defence organisations under capitalism". This could reflect his experiences in a union that was thought of by many as being basically syndicalist in structure. To my mind, his views would have been somewhat different if he had spent as long in the Transport & General Workers Union and the Municipal & General Workers Union. These are no more than working class policemen in the pocket of the state. What does Douglass mean when he talks about the 'anarchist left'? What is a left-wing anarchist?

Again it is a pointer to Guy Cheverton's thinking when he refers to the 'syndicalist movement' and to 'syndicalists'. Is this the same thing as an anarcho-syndicalist? Do they believe in the same goals as anarchists do, or are we just working with them on single issues? I can't help thinking, or remembering, that Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and Franco all had their own syndicates.

We could do with an exploration of ways and means, a development of ideas on mass meetings, of independent rank and file organisations and a study of that most interesting idea, solidarity.

Seumas Mhor



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ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

CORRUPTION IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY IS ENDEMIC

Every day one has examples of corruption in the business world, among politicians and, specially important, among those agencies created to keep everybody on the straight and narrow. The police are under investigation by ... the police of course. Are people like the police chief Sir Paul Condon naive enough not to realise that every organisation that has power over the individual or groups involved in crime, for instance, is infiltrated by *their* spies to inform on what is going on, even assuming they don't run their own rackets.

... AS ARE THE INFORMERS I would venture to suggest that one of the reasons why the widespread corruption at top levels sometimes emerges is that somebody, again with a vested interest, spills the beans. For instance, how did the scandal come out of Westminster Council that they pushed out poor tenants from council property and then sold it to potential Tory voters? Dame Shirley Porter, millionairess (Tesco heiress), was involved in this racket – not necessarily for money but for power. She's been found out by *her political enemies* and now faces, with her mates, a £27 million bill. She won't be able to pay it because she has made sure that her millions are out of reach, and I think that she is now a permanent resident overseas. As *The Independent* headline put it: "Money may never be repaid as riches are out of reach". The authorities only catch those who *have no money* – the single mothers who get a little odd job once a week.

TARGETING BECKETT AND SCARGILL? The *Sunday Times* (21st December 1997) has a two-column feature that "Beckett flat refit costs £65,000 of taxpayers' money".

It refers to her grace and favour flat which is "only a few hundred yards from her own Westminster flat". One may well ask why she can't live in her own flat.

One answer is provided by the *Sunday Times* which points out that flats such as hers in Millbank Court fetch £10,000 to add to her ministerial salary of £87,000. To the *Sunday Times* one asks, so what? What does Murdoch get? If ministers have grace and favour flats, what business has the *Sunday Times* to criticise them for taking them up. When the *Sunday Times* and Murdoch will attack *privilege*, one might not think of them as humbugs.

As for poor old Arthur Scargill, being accused to mismanaging mine charity funds, I can't believe it. Whatever one may say of him, and his enjoyment of the high-life is well known, I would never imagine that he would be involved in the "misconduct and mismanagement" of his union's charity fund. I was glad to see that the NUM at their annual conference "denounced the Charity Commission's behaviour as outrageous" and is already suing the government agency over its decision last June to suspend Mr Scargill as a trustee of the charities. The case is due to be heard early this year.

This anarchist is sympathetic in a curious way for both the targets of the media, without necessarily sharing their political views.

SO THE SPICE GIRLS HAVE WON In this column I go on attacking the media who feel they have the power to make and break the stars.

I have only seen the Spice Girls in the newspapers, and they look lovely, but they have been *made* into stars by the media and by the general public who take their opinions from the mass media. And as in *Freedom* we have pointed out time and time again, the media feel they have the power to create the stars and also, when they have another lot lined up (there must be money in it), to destroy the reigning stars. Well, they did both with the Spice Girls except that they failed to destroy

them. The Girls apparently won the Number One top Christmas spot and so even the with-it *Guardian* (23rd December 1997) had its third editorial heading: "The Spice Girls: an apology. There is too much evidence that we got it really wrong".

Wouldn't it be nice if the Girls also read *Freedom*?

Libertarian

— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of
Freedom will be dated
24th January, and the
last day for copy
intended for this issue
will be first post on
Thursday 15th January

CICELY HOUSING CO-OP

Cicely women's housing co-op bought its first house in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, eighteen months ago and, after a hectic year of renovation and campaigning, we are seeking new members and short-term tenants.

We are a women's co-op working for social change through our lifestyle and by campaigning around issues relating to disability, equality, peace, gender and sexuality, non-violence and the environment. We try to live sustainably through an organic and animal-free diet, active recycling, energy efficiency, and growing food on our allotment. We also aim to provide resources for local women and campaigns.

We are taking control of our own housing and providing rare accessible accommodation as well as constructing a different way of living, providing a stable domestic unit for activists and working by consensus.

We bought the house with loans from Radical Routes (a national secondary co-op supporting radical housing and workers co-ops), the Co-op Bank and supportive individuals who invested money in us through our loanstock (ethical investment) scheme.

We have totally re-wired the house using easy-to-use light switches and all sockets at a universal access height, installed central heating, fitted a lift to the first floor and created a wheelchair-accessible bathroom. We've done much of the work ourselves and so have acquired many new skills, as well as getting to know the insides of the house. The initial work is now nearly finished except for

completing the decoration.

We have incorporated our politics into the renovation in an effort towards eco-sustainability: the gas central heating has a super-efficient boiler and the water tank can be easily adapted to solar heating. We are using non-toxic vegan paints, organic dry rot treatment, and are hoping to insulate the attic rooms and all external walls when finances allow.

We're friendly and easy going and look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in joining us, needs a room or would like to invest in our loanstock scheme.

Please get in touch with us at: Cicely Housing Co-op, 34 Byrom Street, Todmorden, OL14 5HS. Tel/fax: 01706 812663 or e-mail: peacehouse@gn.apc.org

LIBERTARIAN PLAYGROUP

Readers with small children in London: anyone interested in gathering for a libertarian playgroup once or more times a week? No questions asked like 'and when is he/she starting school'? A pre- no-school group.

There is already space to use in Kentish Town. Please contact: Emily Johns on 0181-444 1605 or at 1 Hertford Road, East Finchley, London N2.

Emily Johns

THE CASE OF THE MANCUNIAN GOAT-HERDERS

In May last year a contingent of the EuroMarch – an Englishman, an Irishman and a party of goats – became embroiled with rail officials and transport police on Victoria Station, Manchester. The dispute involved the law of contract under English law and the 'conditions of carriage' on North West Trains.

Following a disputation between all concerned, the Englishman was arrested and charged with a number of offences, the Irishman ran off and the goats retired overnight to a rest home for goats and other animals in Cheshire.

Finally it seems that the prosecution intends to bring the case before Manchester magistrates court on Monday 12th January. The defence will not be calling the goats as witnesses. The Irishman is expected to attend, but has been told to go easy on the blamey.

All of those involved in this case have been described as 'political animals'. Earlier last year the incident was a source of some speculation and curiosity in green, libertarian and Groundswell publications.

Freedom Reporter

TESCO TURN DOWN SOUP KITCHEN

When Bury Unemployed Centre set up a soup kitchen for the local poor over Christmas, it expected nearby Tesco to give some support. The supermarket giant, which supports New Labour's 'New Deal', never bothered to reply to requests for food from the Centre. Instead the local Co-op gave food to the value of £50.



Rich and Poor



Readers will remember the week of anarchist festivities 'Anarchy in the UK' organised by Ian Bone, which was a tremendous success.

News has just come in that a very similar event has spread to Bogota in Colombia, South America, where there is going to be a fortnight of activities in May 1998. Comrades there want to invite all men, women and groups, and "they will find the way to make it possible for people to attend".

The group Alas de Xue-AIT will offer lodging and food to groups and libertarian people during the Working Days if they book before 30th March 1998. The address given is: Group Alas de Xue (Sonia Torres), Carrera 6a No 40-06, Bogota, Colombia. Tel: (57-1) 288-22-36 or 288-42-14. You can also contact them at e-mail addresses: smtorrer@bachue.usc.unal.edu.co or fajardo@der-pu.uc3m.es

The preliminary programme is as ambitious as Anarchy in the UK was and is supported by the whole continent's anarchist fraternity.

They are trying to re-create the "many ways of anarchism in our America" and the effort will require the contribution of all "men and women to make of this a meeting point. America is pregnant with utopia!"

They are asking for all possible help, such as video tapes on anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-feminism, the history of anarchism, ecology and social geography so that they can include it in the libertarian cinema and video showings.

I notice that among the speakers is the name of Luis Garcia Rua, who during the Franco regime lived in exile in London and was the international secretary of the AIT. Amongst other taking part are Noam Chomsky, Murray Bookchin and Leopoldo Munera.

It is hoped that there will be a day of discussion on the freedom of the press with regard to the imprisonment in England and Chechnya of anarchist editors and writers for no other crime but the truthful reporting of events. It is hoped that the Undercurrents video which was shown on Channel 5 on 7th December in a programme called *What's the Story* will also be available to the organisers. This video should have been shown to the mass meeting of protesters at the Conway Hall, but a copy failed to arrive.

This is a freedom of the press issue. Shame on British journalism for their silence. Have they forgotten their principles. Better that they retire than to keep quiet.

Anarchy in the UK, seven days that shook the West, now showing in South America.

John Rety

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Proudhon and Anarchism

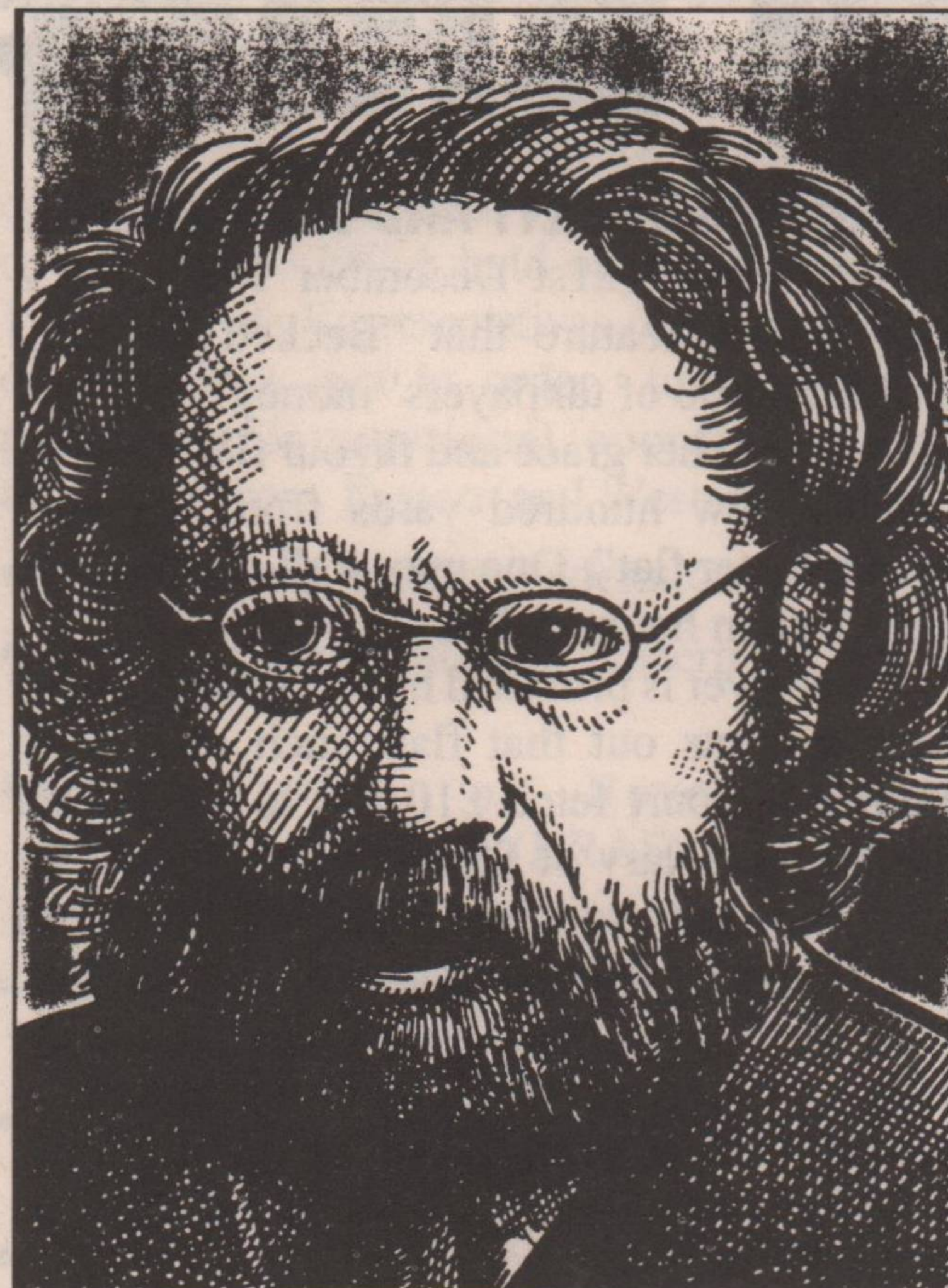
Proudhon and Anarchism: Proudhon's Libertarian Thought and the Anarchist Movement

by L. Gambone

Red Lion Press, 12 pages, £1.10*

The pages of *Freedom* are regularly enlivened by the letters of Larry Gambone. His short, generous epistles are always lucid, engaging and provocative for he seems, as Denis Pym writes, to be a "bloke with plenty of ideas and passion". His letters, like the writings of Colin Ward, are refreshing – so different from the intellectual musings of the post-modern and ontological anarchists who tell us, in pretentious language, that the 'map is not the territory' as if anyone, apart from pseudo-intellectuals, had ever confused the two. Gambone is much more down to earth and is critical of many current trends within the anarchist movement:

- the utopianism and primitivism of those who deem the only true anarchists to be pristine foragers, a way of life which, alas, is no longer a viable option;
- the elitism of guilt-ridden intellectuals who advocate an apolitical stance, or an aesthetic rebellion that has little connection with the lives of ordinary people;
- the nihilists who assume that capitalism and state powers are so all-pervasive and all-powerful that they cannot be challenged by organised protest, and that the only



Pierre-Joseph Proudhon
(picture by Clifford Harper)

alternative is to create 'autonomous' zones and chant mantras.

The way many people write you would think that 'true' anarchist thought never existed until they came upon the scene, having immersed themselves in the literature of theosophy, surrealism, aesthetic theory, anthropology and post-modern philosophy.

— VISIBLE HANDS —

Visible Hands in the Market

Western European integration (in the shape of 'European Monetary Union'), and 'globalisation' in general, constitute a new stage in the struggle between those who own and manage the private empires that dominate economic life, and those who are permitted only to rent themselves to dominant economic institutions. In other words, transnational corporations are gaining a degree of freedom and power in relation to workers and consumers, and the State, which a few years ago they could only have dreamed of.

This new level of domination and exploitation is cloaked in mystique. The workings of the international economy are deliberately obscured, and much noble rhetoric has been piled up over the ugly realities. Less and less is known or understood by the ordinary citizen of the economic giants which control much of social life. An unending stream of propaganda is directed to convincing us that freedom of the 'market' is synonymous with other basic human freedoms (is perhaps the most basic freedom of all). We are to know as little as possible of the actions of our masters, and that little which we do learn of is presented to us as (firmly-administered) benevolence.

This year this column will be devoted to stripping away some of the illusions which have been implanted, and which have helped to disarm resistance to corporate exploitation and destruction. The title of the column comes, of course, from the classical concept of the perfectly competitive market, in which the 'invisible hand' of the free market wisely allocates economic resources into the correct channels without any central directing authority to govern it. The 'invisible hand' is the uncontrollable and unforeseen outcome of the self-interested actions of millions of individuals, seeking only to satisfy their own wants. This impersonal force is, according to standard economic theory, a benevolent force, shaping society into its best possible configuration. Greed is good.

It is arguable whether there has ever actually been a perfectly competitive market (something for a later column), but it is

absolutely certain that for several centuries now the world economy has been shaped by powerful economic institutions created by rich elites, powered and protected by nation-states, and whose influence has depended to a very large extent on military force and other radical violations of the 'free market'. Modern history (including modern economic history) is, to a considerable extent, the history of the growing power of the 'visible hands' of transnational corporations, allocating resources and distributing wealth without a trace of democratic accountability to workers, consumers or citizens.

The function of economics during this period has largely been one of rationalisation. Joan Robinson, the only great woman economist, writes in her book *Economic Philosophy* that "It was the task of the economist to ... justify the ways of Mammon to man ... It is the business of the economists, not to tell us what to do, but to show why what we are doing anyway is in accord with proper principles". However, Robinson also remarks, "Economics is not only a branch of theology"; there is a science struggling to escape from the mass of justification. True, most economists are engaged in shielding the eyes of the public from reality, and in helping to salve the consciences of the rich and powerful, but there are fragments of insight embedded in this mass-produced stupidity and deceit.

Robinson also wrote, "The point of studying economics is not to find ready-made solutions to economic problems, but to learn how to avoid being taken in by economists". In an era when the religion of the 'free market' is resurgent, when Western welfare states are being dismantled, and workers all around the world are under renewed attack, it seems timely to pick apart some of the propaganda fictions that help to demoralise the weak and strengthen the powerful, to reveal the visible hands which have been cloaked by mainstream economists and which are tearing at the social fabric of our societies and threatening our continued existence as a species.

Milan Rai

Gambone has a more positive vision, and in his letters has stressed that anarchism is not a 'thing' that is possessed by some initiated intellectual elite, but a process involving an attempt by humble mortals to maximise voluntary relationships; that anarchism is not something that disappeared after the 'fall' of humanity (the advent of agriculture), or is only to be discovered in some autonomous zone by developing higher states of consciousness or by aiming to 'quintessentialise' an aesthetic through alchemy, sufism, neo-pagan rituals, or joining the church of the 'Moorish Orthodox' (as Hakim Bey seems to advise us), but rather is a permanent 'programme' that is to be found wherever social life exhibits local autonomy, mutualism, direct democracy, human solidarity and decentralised power.

In his recent pamphlet on Proudhon's libertarian thought and the anarchist movement, Larry Gambone draws out many of these ideas through an examination of Proudhon's political philosophy. Gambone emphasises the more positive aspects of Proudhon's anarchism, and what we can learn from him, and certainly in attempting to confront the central problems of government and property Proudhon has more to teach us than the 'American Samizdat network' with its esoteric reflections on surrealism and Rene Guenon (a reactionary theosophist). There are, of course, problems with the 'sage of Besançon' – his lamentable chauvinism, anti-semitism and strident patriotism (which Peter Marshall cogently explored in his history of anarchism) – but Gambone clearly emphasises what he thinks is important about Proudhon, and of contemporary relevance. And these are the following:

- that anarchism should be based upon a potential within actual existing society rather than being a utopian doctrine or ideology imposed by alienated intellectuals;
- that social transformation thus entails a peaceful revolution involving the development and expansion of relationships and institutions that engender mutualism, self-government, federation and human liberty;
- that economic life should combine both the ownership of small-scale property and co-operative associations which together form an 'agro-industrial federation';
- that national sentiments and identity are not to be deprecated, and that a distinction has to be made between the nation and the state, which are not coterminous;
- that all forms of absolutism are dangerous, and that we need to retain a realistic perspective and distinguish between concrete realities and the abstract products of the human mind.

Gambone concludes by reflecting on the fact that towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a shift in the membership of the anarchist movement away from self-educated artisans and peasants, like Proudhon, to bourgeois intellectuals and in many instances this led anarchism away from the concrete and the practical to the abstract and the utopian. Gambone writes: "It is the nature of upper class radicals, so distant from the realities of working class life, to look at the world through abstractions and self-created ideologies. This is also the very group which tends to glorify and romanticise violence".

This might as well apply to many contemporary anarchists – although the romanticised violence they express is largely of a cerebral nature, like the 'crooners of the apocalypse' they profess to despise. Gambone's little tract is well worth a read.

Brian Morris

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IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER THE WORLD

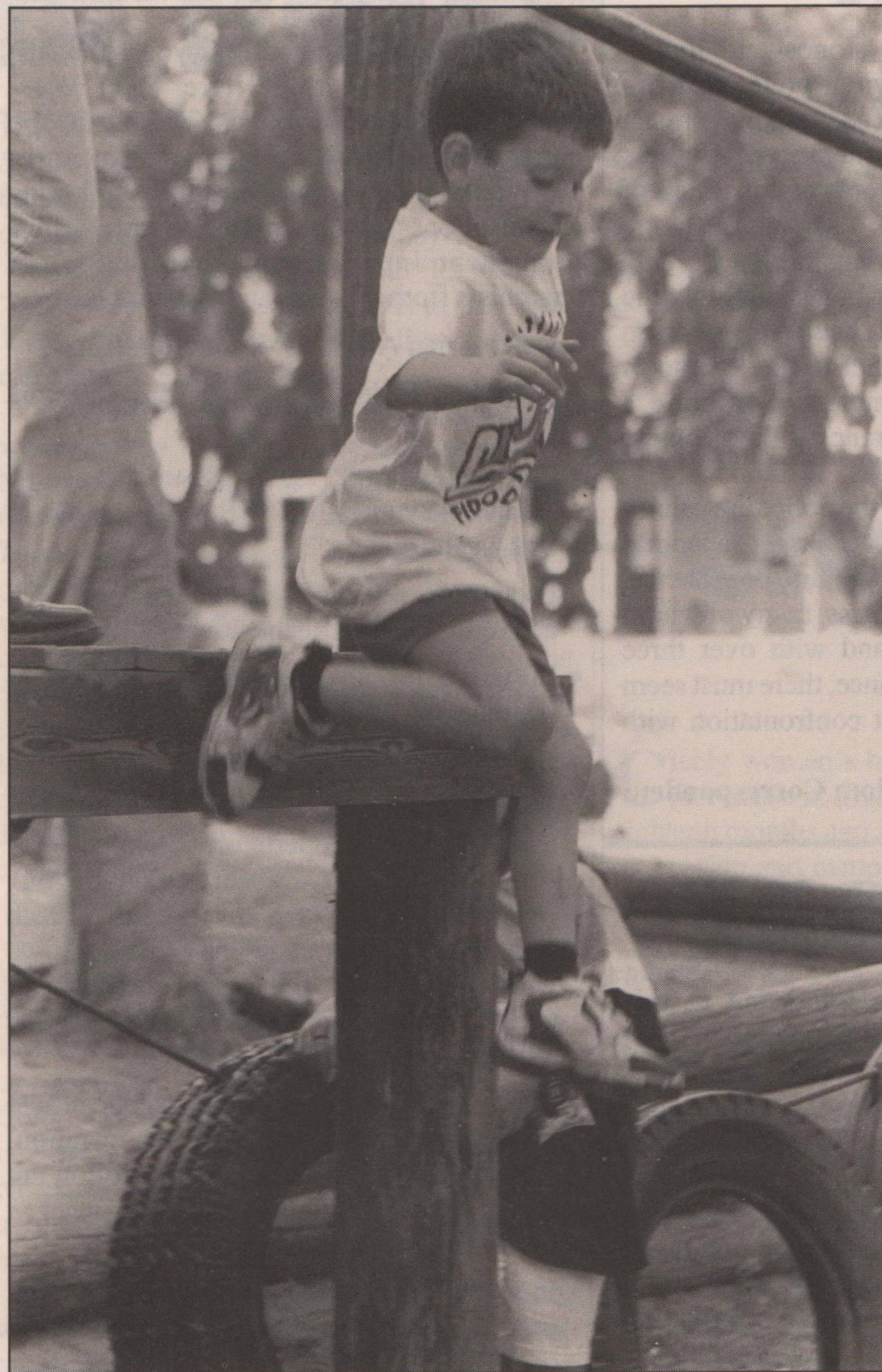
It has been good to see Summerhill getting a positive response from the media. Even *The Times* carried a supportive article by Libby Purves on 13th December. However, it has become plain that many of those who are in sympathy with Summerhillian ideas still believe Summerhill to be unique. In fact there are scores of schools all over the world with similar ideals, and some of them offer different freedoms to Summerhill, and some of them work in tougher social conditions.

Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts, USA, for instance, with two hundred students between the ages of four and twenty, has no timetable of lessons at all. Children who want to learn to read or to study chemistry do it on their own or with friends, or find a staff member who is willing to help them. More than half of the students who have spent all their school years there have gone on to get university degrees. Many other children, who had suffered humiliation and failure at other schools, have recovered their self-respect at Sudbury and gone on to lead happy and purposeful lives.

At the Fundacion Educativa Pestalozzi in Ecuador, staff have to accept that instructing, pointing out, motivating, persuading and anticipating are not adequate interactions between an adult and a child. Children are allowed absolute freedom of choice within a carefully prepared environment. The school provides no lessons, and if parents are discovered arranging lessons for their children after school they are told to take their children away.

At Bramblewood, a country community in the USA, children live with their families or on their own as they choose, and arrange lessons with adults, singly or in groups when they feel they want to.

I have been to all these places and everywhere I have met relaxed, confident, friendly young people concerned about each other's welfare and the welfare of the world in general. I have also seen some remarkable examples of



The Democratic School of Hadera, Israel

academic success, but in most places that seems to me to be of secondary importance.

At Sumavanam, though, in Andhra Pradesh in southern India, success in examinations is

the children's prime objective. The school is in a poor rural area where poverty means a one-room mud house – with no furniture and the threat of starvation. Children come to the school when they are able to walk there on their own. Even the very youngest come to school to learn, so that they may pass exams and escape from the poverty that surrounds them. The teachers treat the children with kindness and respect and in break times they play with radiant freedom, but lesson times are serious. All the children work independently at their own level, and they help each other as a matter of course.

At Sumavanam the education is free; none of the children's parents have any money. The same is true at Moo Ban Dek, the school on the river Kwai for abused children from the slums of Bangkok. Moo Ban Dek

follows a Summerhillian pattern enhanced by Buddhist principles. Children who have had to fight for food in the city live together in peace and security.

I could write about a dozen more schools, each different in its way but each demonstrating that children's self-respect guides them more effectively than adult authority. Adults can be appallingly unimaginative – how could anyone seriously put forward the idea that every child in this country needs to cover the same curriculum? – and children are innovative and individual. Schoolteachers and governments tend to strive to keep the world the same, and to keep it under control: children want to change the world and make it free.

In the west it is usually only children who have failed in conventional education who are allowed the experience of freedom at school. Parents who have the money can send them to Summerhill or Sudbury Valley, but children whose parents have no money only get the chance if they live in an area where there is a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) like the Oakley

Project in Surrey. Liz Noble and Helen Nelson, who run it, work on the principle that "if the self-esteem of the individual is enhanced then the unwanted behaviour pattern will cease". The system works, but the authorities cannot believe it; they insist on sending the staff on courses in physical restraint.

Physical restraint is of course inevitable in the end if you want to run your school like a dictatorship. Those with ideas of their own have to be controlled by force. Conventional education violates children's originality instead of nurturing it. It is only when they behave badly enough to be sent to a PRU like Oakley that at last they are respected for their ability to think for themselves.

Summerhill shows that children develop when they are not forced to conform; Sudbury Valley shows that children learn when they are not taught; Sumavanam shows that children may strive for conventional objectives when they see a purpose behind them; Oakley shows that children can redeem themselves when they are given the chance.

I worked for five years at Sands School in Ashburton, Devon, which also demonstrated these truths. I used to think that it was the only school in the world, apart from Summerhill, that was taking children seriously. Since retiring five years ago I have been around the world and seen how wrong I was. A new understanding of education is beginning to emerge from a hundred different sources in dozens of different cultures.

I know of schools in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Holland, Israel and Japan – and that's just the beginning of the alphabet. I have also visited or communicated with free schools in New Zealand, Australia, India, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States, and I have heard of many more in other countries. There are state schools, private schools and schools dependent on charity; there are boarding schools and day schools, schools for rejects and schools which select their pupils with care, schools with rules and without rules, with punishments and without punishments, each schools with an individual way of sharing the responsibility for its affairs. What unites them is the understanding that children need freedom to think for themselves if they are not to lose their natural eagerness, sociability, curiosity and self-respect.

It happened early this century with Ferrer in Spain, it happened in the early '30s with Summerhill and Dartington Hall in Britain, and it is happening now all over the world. Surely this time the message must get through.

David Gribble

David Gribble's book on the schools he has visited, *Real Education: Varieties of Freedom*, is due to be published early this year by Libertarian Education, priced at £8.95.*

Balloon Lagoon

Balloon Lagoon and the magic islands of poetry

by Adrian Mitchell (illustrated by Tony Ross)
Orchard Books, 96 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4RH. £9.99 hardback.

Balloon Lagoon is Adrian Mitchell's new book of poems for children. For this review I tested it out on my son, three years and three days old, and he was very enthusiastic about the poems, but wavered on the pictures by Tony Ross.

Me: Do you like the pictures in this book?
Arkady: No.

Me: Why don't you like them?

Arkady: Sorry.

Me: Sorry about what?

Arkady: Sorry about the pictures.

Now I enjoy Tony Ross's free drawing and dazed children, so Arkady is developing his own aesthetic judgement.

At first I thought these poems would be too old for him, even though I've been taking him to poetry readings since the age dot, but in fact he has been asking for the book a couple of times a day. Many of the poems are referential to adult culture (such as *The Battle Hymn of the Ice-cream Connoisseur*: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of Pink Fudge Sundaes ..."), but it seems that such humour will be appreciated when the time comes, and for the moment the rhythms and rhymes and sounds and stories are fulfilling in themselves.

Learning to enjoy the sensuousness of language and the sense of poetry is crucial to our literacy and illiteracy (or aural thought) and I was glad to find that Adrian Mitchell is safeguarding a small haven of poetic freedom from the clutches of the inquisitors by placing

an 'Educational Health Warning' on the first page – "None of these poems or any other work by Adrian Mitchell is to be used in connection with any examination or text whatsoever. But I'm glad if people who like them read them a loud, sing them, dance them, or act them in schools. And even happier if they choose to learn any of them by heart".

This book contains poems that are the Lears, the Bellocs, the Blakes of our generation. Beside the many light and humorous verses there are those that are profound using very simple images and language:

Non-Event

If an elephant could meet a whale
their understanding would be huge
and they would love one another for ever

It's not often that good poetry is offered to children, and it's heartening that big publishers are printing literature promoting freedom.

Emily Johns

Adrian Mitchell

To celebrate his 65th birthday, two books of his poems have been published:

HEART ON THE LEFT
Poems 1953-1984

is a handsomely produced paperback with illustrations by Ralph Steadman
(Bloodaxe Books, 320 pages, £9.95)

BALLOON LAGOON
and the Magic Islands of Poetry

is a collection of poems for children, in a large format, lavishly illustrated by Tony Ross
(Orchard Books, 110 pages, £9.99)

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Tamariki Free School, New Zealand

FRANCE'S 'SACRIFICIAL VICTIMS' REVOLT

On New Year's eve jobless activists took over fourteen dole offices across France. The young unemployed in Strasbourg in the east rioted, causing serious damage throughout the city. An editorial in *The Times* says "gangs ... overwhelmed hundreds of France's tough riot police to burn vehicles and wreck bus shelters and other public buildings". In Marseilles jobless demonstrators blocked the railway lines.

In Paris the homeless invaded the five-star Royal Monceau Hotel on the Champs Elysees. They scorned the manager's offer of 10,000 francs and threw the notes on the floor refusing to leave, until the police came and broke up the protest after a scuffle. The later occupation of the famous Fouquets restaurant ended peacefully when the management promised to send forty meals to a nearby welfare centre temporarily occupied by the homeless.

In the capital's poorer suburbs of Yvelines

and Seine-Saint-Denis, stones and home-made bombs were thrown at police and fire fighters. There are plans for a national protest and Laurent Guilloteau, a member of a jobless solidarity group, called for a national day of protest on 16th January.

The unemployed are demanding a 3,000 francs (£320) end of year bonus, and that the government (socialist) keep its election promise to give more relief to the long-term unemployed. The government is offering a rise in welfare of two francs a day. Jobless groups see this as an insult.

In cities like Strasbourg the police are calling for blanket curfews to tackle the social breakdown and rise in the culture of violence. To many of the young jobless, many of whom have never had a job, and with over three million out of work in France, there must seem little alternative to direct confrontation with the agents of the state.

Freedom Correspondent

PLAY FAIR EUROPE!

From the 23rd to the 25th of February 1998, six hundred representatives of peoples' movements will meet in Geneva to establish a platform for worldwide action against trade liberalisation: the Peoples' Global Action against 'Free' Trade and the WTO (PGA).

The PGA will work as a tool for coordination, exchange of information and mutual support for the struggles of all those hit by neoliberal globalisation. It calls for non-violent civil disobedience and the construction of local alternatives by local people, as answers to the action of multilateral institutions, governments and corporations.

The first big-scale action in the calendar of the PGA will be a wave of decentralised mobilisations and protests all over the world parallel to the Second Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which shall take place on 18th to 20th May 1998.

The meeting in February will be the founding conference of the PGA, since it will lay down the basis of the alliance in the form of a manifesto. It is being convened by a committee formed by some of the most representative peoples' movements of all continents, including peasant movements (like the Brazilian Movimento Sem Terra, the Indian KRRS and the Peasant Movement of the Philippines), indigenous peoples (like the Mexican Zapatistas, the Nigerian Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, the Indigenous Women's Network of North America and the Pacific and FIA, a Maori organisation from Aotearoa), unions (like the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores from Nicaragua) and women's organisations (like Mama 86, an organisation of Ukrainian women affected by the Chernobyl disaster, and the above mentioned Indigenous Women's Network).

Other events will take place around the first PGA conference. From the 18th to 21st of February there will be several information and discussion roundtables on topics such as gender, food production, culture, economics, etc., prepared by organisations participating in the conference. On February 22nd there will be a one-day intensive seminar on the WTO, the MAI and trade liberalisation. On February 26th there will be a number of coordination and planning sessions in small groups, divided according to the topics treated in the roundtables. Finally, on February 27th there will be a European meeting to launch a Europe-wide movement of civil disobedience against 'free' trade.

If you want more information about the PGA and its first conference, please visit the web page <http://www.agp.org> or send a message to playfair@asta.rwth-aachen.de or contact Playfair Europe! on Tel: +49-241-80 37 92 or Fax: +49-241-88 88 394 52072.

IMPORTANT: If you are interested in this conference and come from Africa, Asia, Latin America or Central and Eastern Europe, please get in touch with the conference secretariat *right now*, even if you are not sure about your participation. The Swiss visa procedure is probably the most difficult one in the whole world. There will be limited funds to support the travel expenses of some delegates; you will receive more information about this at the beginning of 1998, but you should anyhow send your application now.

Play Fair Europe!
Aachen, Germany

DEMO NEWS FROM FINLAND

On 6th December the Finnish syndicalist organisation 'Solidaarisuus' (Solidarity in English) organised demonstrations for equal social justice, a six-hour working day, and decent income. The demo was held at the front of the president's castle and about four hundred people showed up. Some of them from all around the Finland.

Because 6th December is the independence day of Finland, the main function of the demo was to show our anger to the visitors invited by the president (who include almost all Finnish national level politicians and the richest elite). The demonstration was success and the maintain of police also pointed it out. There were the largest number of riot cops to be seen at the '90s in demonstrations.

During the demo there were few confrontations with the riot police, but mostly it went calmly – only six people were arrested – a couple of them for 'agitation of people' according to the police (according to Finnish constitution 'agitation of people' is everyone's basic civil right). The newspapers wrote about the demo quite objectively and some of the articles told that a few bottles and hundreds of snowballs were thrown towards the riot cops. Mostly the writing about the demo in Finnish media was positive.

Later that evening there was supposed to be a militant anti-fascist demonstration, but the cops prevented the anti-fascists going to the bar where the neo-nazis held their gig. A few people were also arrested at this time.

In summary, the main demo was success, and more will be coming in the near future. There were many different types of people on the demo, not only anarchists and syndicalists. I noticed that the middle aged unemployed and some old ladies were the most angry people there!

Miikka

International of Anarchist Federations: CONGRESS REPORT

We would like to inform you about the results of the little East-West conference, which took place during the 6th congress of IAF/IFA held on 1st November 1997 in Lyon. Representatives of the following organisations met in order to establish a permanent international coordination of anarchists from Eastern and Western Europe:

- Belorussian Anarchist Federation (FAB)
- Anarchist Federation of Eastern Ukrainia (AFEU)
- Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists (KRAS) – active in Russia/Belorussia
- Federation of Social Anarchists (FSA) – active in former Czechoslovakia
- Initiative for an Anarchist Federation in Germany (I-AFD/IFA)
- Bulgarian Anarchist Federation (FAB)
- The associating comrades agreed to build up a euro-regional cooperation of anarchists in the Central and Eastern part of our continent. According to the libertarian principles of federalism and mutual aid we want to combine our resources and help each other in one common struggle against all forms of hierarchy and power.
- In our coordination we want to concentrate on the practical aspects of the cooperation. Actually we have collected the following topics of major interest, which we want to evaluate in the future:
 - In order to exchange propaganda material, media and literature, the associated organizations will prepare lists of their resources, which can be exchanged. So all the material will be available for everybody.
 - Regarding the fact that communication by mail within and between our countries is getting more and more inefficient, we will raise the necessary funds to provide especially Eastern groups with electronic means of communication, such as faxes, computers, printer machines etc.
 - All participants agreed to promote as soon as possible a public campaign in favour of Belorussian anarchists, fighting the semi-fascist dictatorship of president Lukashenko.
 - We are planning to fully revive the tradition of the annual East-West meetings as usual

in the past as practical workshops rather than theoretical conferences. The next one will take place on the territory of former Czechoslovakia in summer 1998.

- We will publish bi-monthly, informational bulletins which will cover the practical development of the projects and organizations. The editorial staff of this bulletin will rotate. The first responsible group is the Czechoslovak FSA.

All anarchist groups, especially in the Central Northern and Eastern Europe are invited to join these activities. UNITED WE SHALL WIN!

East-West Cooperation Addresses

So far, the following organisations are participating in the East-West Cooperation:

Ukraine: AFEU – Anarchist Federation of Eastern Ukraine
AFEU Ukraine, 244030 Sumy PB 132

Belorussia: FAB – Belorussian Anarchist Federation.

Yuri Glushakov, FAB c/o Center for Indigenous Anarchists, Belorussian.
American Indian Society PO Box 114, Homel 246049, Belorussia.
e-mail: FAB@amerind.bsdr.gomel.by

Russia: KRAS – Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists
Julia Gusseva 44-71, ulica Niznekrasnasirskaja Moscow, 107066 Russia
Fax.: 7-095-292-65-11 (write there: Box 8020 for STRUGGLE)

Czechoslovakia: FSA – Federation of Social Anarchists
FSA, PO Box 5, 15006 Praha 56 Czech Republic
e-mail: fsa-praha@usa.net funk@af.czu.cz

Bulgaria: FAB – Bulgarian Anarchist Federation
SVOBODNA MISL Sofia, z.k. Mladost-2 pos. klon 1199, pos. kutija 1 Bulgaria

Germany: I-AFD – Initiative for an Anarchist Federation in Germany
I-AFD Hamburg I, c/o Soziales Zentrum Ultzburgerstrasse 6, 22850 Norderstedt, Germany
Fax.: +40-4220684
e-mail: i-afd_2@anarch.free.de

Finland: SAL – Finnish Anarchist Federation
PO BOX 102 00801 Helsinki Finland
e-mail: ravelre@dlc.fi

Polish Anarchist Federation

At the Polish Anarchist Federation meeting held on 8th November some of the most important topics were:

- The coordination of the postering action against the police curfew for people less than 18 years.
- The project of an international protest camp next summer near Mogilewin Bielorussia, where Lukashenko wants to build a nuclear power plant – no more info for the moment, I have to wait Stanislaw Gorka comes back from Russia, and tells me what info can be disclosed in public. What is clear is that it is something that can open Alter-EE to the east, to our benefit, and to the benefit of the action.
- Admission of a new section to FA from Ostrowiec Swietokrzyski.
- Introduction of a group from Tychy (Silesia) – the group has to wait one year to be fully admitted, as with every new group (this is to see what those people really are).
- Invitation to workshops that will be organised in Rozbrat squat in Poznan, with activists from Earth First from England, who will show how to make tree houses and ground tunnels (in spring next year, probably the construction of the first highway in Poland will start – we want to be

ready to block it). They will also show the squatters how to install wind and solar generators for the energy needs of the squat (they have to pay for electricity – they were stealing it for some time, but it's no longer possible).

- Project of other workshops in Rozbrat concerning our idea of creating a network of worker collectives – we want to invite a shoe making collective from Cracow, and other people who know artisanry or have some useful technical knowledge.
- For the moment we decided not to join the International of Anarchist Federations (IFA), not because we are not interested in making contacts with western comrades, but because we are trying to make smaller, regional federations, and not bigger and bigger ones. (There are already two regional micro-federations in Poland: in the region of Poznan, and in the region of Radom-Kielce, we're trying to make one in Warsaw and small cities around it – maybe with Lodz, and Krakow and Rzeszow are trying to make their 'Black Galicia'). We sometimes feel that our Polish federation is already too much centralised.

The next meeting will be in May in Podkowa Lesna, near Warsaw. **Zaczek**

— OBITUARY —

Abraham (Abe) Bluestein

Abe Bluestein was born in Philadelphia on 1st November 1909. He was the son of immigrants Mendel and Esther Bluestein, who helped organise the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). Abe's parents had to flee the Tsarist controlled zone between Russia and Poland after Mendel killed a Tsarist soldier, and revolutionary literature was discovered in their attic. They made their way to the US, where they helped form the ILGWU.

Abe attended public school through the third grade, and was then withdrawn by his parents to attend the private radical Modern School of Stelton, New Jersey, whose precept was centred on 'living life' rather than learning by rote. Abe recalled: "This school was part of a worldwide movement which originated in Spain where an important political fight, lasting fifty years or so, occurred. There were the liberals and the conservatives. The liberal elements founded schools which were manned by secular teachers with PhD's. The American version was called the Ferrer Modern School, transplanted from London to Philadelphia. Eventually a branch of the Philadelphia School evolved into a branch in Stelton, New Jersey. I attended this school to the eight grade, matriculating from public high school in New Brunswick, New Jersey. A hundred per cent of those who passed through the Ferrer Modern School with me went on to college."

Abe graduated from City College of New York as a teacher, having majored in history, maths and languages (Latin, French, Spanish and Italian). At 21 he met his life-long love and partner Selma Cohen. Selma attended Cooper Union and became a fine artist. Through Abe she became politically aware and active. Together as a team they journeyed



photo: John Sotomayor/New York Times, 1982

to Spain in 1937 in support of the Spanish loyalists during the Spanish Civil War – he as a reporter for the Canadian Broadcasting Company and she as an artist. Abe had a letter of introduction from Mark Mratchny, editor of *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (the free voice of labour), the Yiddish anarchist weekly of New York city, and served informally as an information officer for the National Confederation of Labour (CNT). Abe made radio broadcasts for the anarchist movement, stationed for the most part in Barcelona and Catalonia. They returned to the US in mid-1938. Abe translated Augustin Souchy's

description of the peasant collectives in Aragon, entitled *With the Peasants of Aragon*, into English. "The collectives in Aragon probably reached the highest level of libertarian communism in Spain during the Civil War 1936-39."

Abe and Selma settled down to family life, eventually moving to Croton, New York, where they raised three boys and one girl. Abe became active in the Jewish labour movement and worked as a reporter for the *Jewish Daily Forward* and the *American Labor Union*. "I considered myself an independent labour educator not restricted to the AFL or CIO. I had high standards of honesty and tried to live up to them". Meanwhile Selma continued as an artist with numerous one-woman shows to her credit, as well as raising her family.

Abe's career turned to management when he became executive director of the Sidney Hillman Health Center (union affiliated). In the early '60s he became executive director of the New York Diabetes Association. By the late '60s he became manager of the United Housing Foundations, which includes Co-op City in the Bronx and the Amalgamated, union developments as they all were. Selma, his partner of more than fifty years, died in 1985.

Abe counted Emma Goldman among his friends and remembers her as a woman of brilliance and courage. "Here was this woman in London, all alone in a one-woman office, desperately trying to raise money for the anarchist cause. What did she do? She persuaded Paul Robeson, a communist, to give a benefit concert for the National Confederation of Labour. In spite of his political beliefs, he did it for Emma". During the summer he often went swimming with Rudolph Rucker in Mohegan Lake. "He doggy-paddled ... but well". Abe was an editor of the newspapers *Vanguard*, *The Challenger* and *News from Libertarian Spain* and was also an editor with the Libertarian Book Club.

Abe Bluestein died on 3rd December 1997.

Ed Stamm

Post-modernism: the celebration of impotence?

Dear Freedom,

I am hoping you will give me space to reply to Brian Morris's letter (13th December 1997) so that I may respond to the charge that post-modernism is little more than "the celebration of impotence".

Let me begin by agreeing with Brian that a distinction needs to be made between post-modernity and post-modernism. Certainly the former is related to new modes of capitalist and power formations, whereas the latter can be understood as a response to the failure of the master narratives of stalinism, fascism and liberalism to restore (sic) meaning to the world. Also, as Brian correctly points out, knowledge cannot be separated from the social and material conditions in which it is produced, so that, in some sense, post-modernism is related to post-modernity, but how? To escape the relativism implicit here, Brian implies a concrete causal mechanism in order to give history coherence and meaning. As such "the so-called 'post-modern' condition – with its alienation, fragmentation, consumerism, cult of the ephemeral, cultural pastiche, relativistic theory and de-centred subjectivity – does not describe a new epoch but is rather a cultural effect of capitalism". Strong stuff indeed, and suspect because of the implied causal relationship between modes of production and social thought. This rather crude and reductive marxism, which totally contradicts any notion of an autonomous subject, is surely the kind of determinism that has helped various political formations engineer particularly brutal and unpleasant social experiments usually involving large numbers of dead/dispossessed people. If Brian accepts that knowledge is historically and culturally contingent, then he seems to want his cake and eat it; difference cannot be transcended by any over-arching code – the point that there are no absolute answers does not imply that one cannot ask questions, but rather it demands that we acknowledge that any form of social homogeneity, be it capitalist, socialist, religious or utopian, involves coercion, violence and exclusion. I don't recommend the onanistic 'musings' of Derrida to anyone. Nor do I understand why Brian should so fiercely oppose a set of ideas which grew from the recognition, in anthropology at any rate, that 'traditional' theory was rooted in a particular set of geo-political relations which privileged western academics in the act of representation. The changes brought about in writing and working practices among anthropologists as a result of post-modernist and post-structuralist critiques of, for example, the ideals of the Enlightenment, suggests not impotence but quite the reverse. Anarchism offers a potent critique of particular social practices, but to insulate ourselves from other critical ideas seems pointless, especially when the thrust of these ideas share so much. If I can recommend the writings of anyone, then let them be those of Michel Foucault. If I am "intellectually incoherent and political vacuous", he certainly was not.

Paul Tremlett

Why Work? Arguments for the Leisure Society

has just been reprinted for the fourth time. It contains classic essays by Bertrand Russell, William Morris and Peter Kropotkin, contemporary articles by George Woodcock, Dennis Pym, John Hewetson, Tony Gibson and many more, plus six double-page drawings by Clifford Harper, edited by Vernon Richards with an eighteen page introduction and fifteen articles on 'Production for Use versus Production for Profit'.

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Democracy in danger!

Dear Freedom,

A recent article by Roy Hattersley in *The Guardian* began "Democracy is in danger". Needless to say he went on to completely miss the point. As he saw it, the Tories were failing in their role as Opposition for not condemning New Labour's economic policy of cutting benefits, and a weak Opposition means bad news for democracy. Call me stupid, but which Opposition party is going to oppose the very same economic policy it just spent eighteen years perfecting?

Andrew Harmer

Controversy! What Controversy?

Dear Freedom,

Over the years there have been a number of attacks on the Manchester Branch of the Solidarity Federation, which is affiliated to IWA/AIT, the anarcho-syndicalist international. The Manchester Solidarity Federation replied to two of the most recent published in the columns of *Freedom*. One, in the issue dated 5th October 1996, contained extremely abusive personal attacks by Brian Bamford under a pseudonym, as is his style.

In this instance we naively expected the right of reply, which is respected by liberal bourgeois newspapers even if it is just in the form of a letter. However, this was not to be.

Later, on 19th July 1997, *Freedom* published an article by Guy Cheverton (at least he dares sign his articles) attacking the anarcho-syndicalist AIT in general, and a number of our sister organisations in particular. This article was replied to by the Manchester Solidarity Federation contesting the basis of Cheverton's article and making a number of points defending the CNT and the IWA/AIT. Cheverton's article appeared under the heading 'Controversy'. This reply has not to date been published! Some controversy.

The main and high point of Cheverton's article seemed to be some march or other in Holland which was deemed to be of great importance and attended by a number of reformist syndicalist organisations.

These organisations included the CGT in Spain, which has a police union section, and which is conducting high level secret negotiations with the CCOO (former Stalinists) and the UGT (socialists) of PSOE unions with a view to amalgamation.

The SAC Sverige Arbeters Central Organisation (reformist syndicalists) has received 1,400,000 kroner from the Swedish state. Also the SAC administers unemployment benefit

and other benefits for the Swedish state. What would Mr Bamford and his anti-JSA campaign think of that, if they only knew?

Freedom frequently adopts a haughty tone when it comments on the lies of the press and trumpets its own commitment to press freedom. It seeks to give the impression that it stands for controversy and open discussion, but in reality it is no better than the bourgeois press. Whatever its attitude to others (and this is debatable), its attitude to the Solidarity Federation, anarcho-syndicalism and the AIT/IWA is one of hostility while claiming to be impartial.

We do not expect a reply to this open letter, however we do intend to have the right of reply. No compromise with the state in any shape or form.

**Manchester Solidarity Federation
PO Box 29, SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW**

[We had no responses to either of the articles until, on 17th November 1997, one letter of some 1,500 words was received from Anthony Crowther of the Solidarity Federation. We decided that to devote the larger part of a page of *Freedom* to a lengthy response to features which had appeared four and fourteen months previously would puzzle most of our readers, who would have forgotten the original points made.

In common with most journals of opinion we welcome prompt replies, but this correspondence is now closed – Editors]

please keep sending in
your letters and
donations ...

Richard Boston STARKNESS AT NOON

Those of our readers who remember Richard Boston's feature 'Anarchy Among the Anarchists' that appeared in the *Guardian Weekend* magazine a year ago, may like to know that it is now available in permanent form in a new collection of his essays published by Five Leaves Publications (218 pages, £7.99).

We shall be pleased to take orders for this title. Please add 10% p&p inland, 20% overseas.

OLDHAM ANARCHIST DISCUSSION GROUP

Wanted: anarchists, anarchist communists, libertarian communists to set up a discussion group in Oldham. First meeting will be in January. Write to:
PO Box 127, Oldham OL4 3FE

Manchester Solidarity Federation

Public meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 8pm at **The Brow House, 1 Mabfield Road, Manchester M14**
For further details contact:
PO Box 29 SWPDO, Manchester M15 5HW

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– PROGRAMME 1998 –

9th January Class Struggle (speaker Peter Wilkinson)
16th January General discussion
23rd January Symposium on ‘Women in Anarchism Now’
30th January General discussion
6th February Satanic Abuse Hysteria in Britain 1990-91 (speaker Donald Room)
13th February General discussion
20th February For Anarchism or For Leftism: a non-aligned response to class struggle anarchism (speaker Peter Neville)
27th February General discussion
6th March Is Anarchism Anti-Radical? (speaker Steve Ash)
13th March General discussion
20th March Symposium on ‘Anarchism and Violence’
27th March General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion please contact Carol Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings 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
for London Anarchist Forum

OLDHAM ANTI-JSA
Tel: 0161-628 6182 for details

MANCHESTER ANTI-JSA GROUP
meet every Wednesday fortnight at The Vine, Kennedy Street, Manchester
contact: Dept 99, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW

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

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Saturday 21st February: Crimford to Bole Hill. Meet 11am outside Scarthin Books, The Promenade, Cromford. 5 mile circular walk.

Sunday 22nd March: Ambergate and Shining Cliff Woods. Meet 11am at The Hurt Arms Pub car park, Ambergate, Derbyshire. 5 mile circular walk.

Sunday 26th April: Upper Lathkill Dale. Meet 12 noon at The Hobbit Pub (formerly The Bull’s Head), Monyash, Derbyshire. 5 mile circular walk.

Sunday 31st May: Loughborough Countryside. Meet 11am outside Forest Gate Pub, Forest Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire. 5 mile circular walk.

Telephone for further details
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