

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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50p

Not a defence of Clinton, for goodness sake, but ...

AN ATTACK ON MEDIA HYPOCRISY

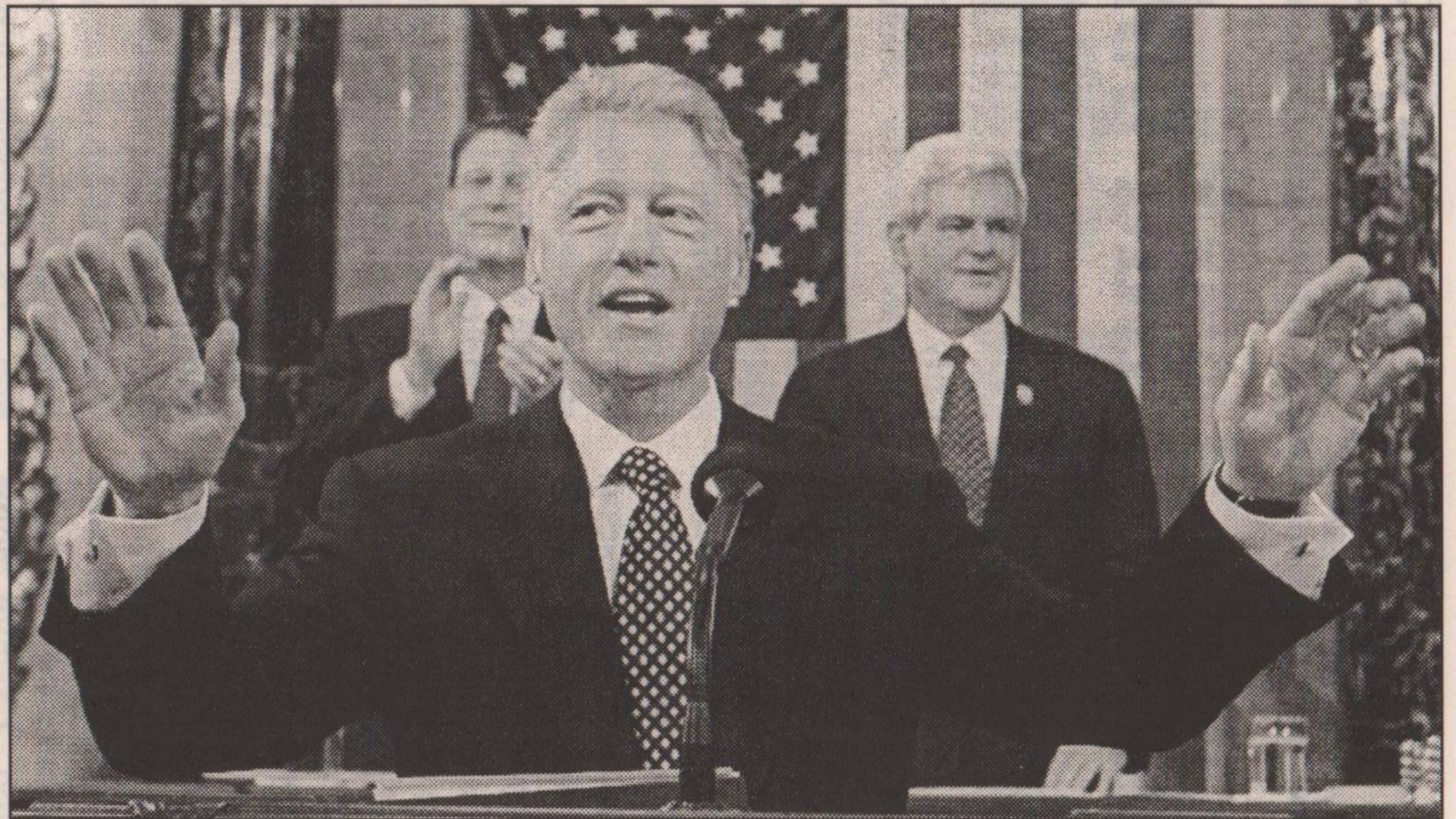
When will even the so-called (but no longer) serious press stop exposing themselves as they now are in the President's alleged 'religious' preference for oral sex with his alleged young victims (or connivers)? If they are all victims, shame on the President. Instead it seems the young ladies are going to restore their 'honour' (not only with useful publicity but also with the dollars from the media, if not from the President himself) – but they are not concerned with their honour nor their modesty because had they not sought to expose the President *who would have known of their seduction* by America's number one macho man?

If the ladies concerned are to convince the monogamous males and females of the world that they have had the courage to expose themselves to what *they* consider the ignominy of oral sex with the President of the United States, at least we should be told whether they enjoyed it or not, and also what favours they also enjoyed.

Of course we are being facetious, but in order to expose the utter hypocrisy of the media in drooling over whole pages of details, contradictions, gossip and, in our opinion, completely false suggestions that Clinton is on the way out politically.

Politicians, big businessmen and businesswomen in the capitalist society we unfortunately live in not only enjoy large salaries but are also in a position to 'help' those qualified youngsters looking for a job. And it's not just the 'male monsters' who are looking for a lovely twenty year old wanting career favours in return for a few cuddles.

When you see the front page of the *News of the World* (25th January) with its "exclusive picture that will shock the nation" you find it is of a



smiling boy holding his baby, and the headline reads "Britain's youngest dad aged 12". What we find 'shocking' is that the newspaper which professes to be the most popular newspaper – as it is with sales of more than four million copies on Sunday – gives three pages to the happy parents, so one would like to ask the editor of that Sunday why he suggests that the news will "shock the nation"?

This is the hypocrisy of the media. The *News of the World's* attitude is that it is disgusting that twelve year olds should have babies. The attitude of the media is that it is disgusting that Clinton should have had lots of lovers, even just oral ones.

It is interesting that whereas the so-called serious press is more and more involved in the human problems of sex and relationships between the sexes, they maintain a puritanical attitude to the Clinton *menage* which has nothing to do with sexual adventures. Surely any healthy man or woman, however much we may go on loving our darling one 'till death do us part', knows only too well that it

doesn't necessarily work out that way. But in a society of free individuals, so what? We are not presidents of the USA and so the media will not report what goes on and develop in our communities. Dear readers, forget about the President's problems which the media tell us will have a devastating effect in the USA if he told a lie.

The most positive news of the President's life is that he had a lot of sexual fun, not necessarily for his personal attractiveness but because of his office as Governor and then President. So what? The reaction by the media is political and the attitude of the so-called serious press in this crisis is simply disgusting.

When will serious-thinking people worldwide start tackling the serious problems that are facing us daily and forget about Clinton's amours reported as if they were world-shattering events. Why not start with not only saying what you want your life to be, but also doing something to realise that life? This is what anarchism is all about.

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Freedom

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SHOCK OF THE NEW AND MEDIOCRE

A local union branch secretary in Rochdale claimed last week that the council is using kids 'on the cheap'. Ken Mercer of the Transport & General Workers' Union says senior housing bosses on Rochdale town council 'hoodwinked' shop stewards into accepting the use of jobless youngsters to renovate council properties on the cheap.

A while ago the council got rid of fourteen full-time qualified painters, leaving just four in the building services department. After that, Mr Mercer says, "they have been using private contractors, but now plan to use these youngsters and it has got to stop".

Mr Mercer told *Freedom* last week that he was worried by the compulsion element of the schemes being brought in, like the British 'workfare', New Deal and Welfare to Work. He claimed: "this is appalling; it is exploiting unemployed youngsters". He also argued that councillors on the Labour controlled council were being misled by their own offices.

"The kids", he said, "think the work experience will help them get proper jobs. What a lot of rot. All the council is doing is using them as cheap labour".

Kenny Mercer is right to be concerned. Proper tradesmen are played-off and made redundant, 'cowboy' operators thrive, the young jobless are increasingly used as cheap labour.

HOW STATE STRANGLES WORK SKILLS

In the 1960s I was involved in apprentice strikes and campaigns to improve training standards and abolish the tendency to use young apprentices as a source of cheap labour. But at least then there was some light at the end of the tunnel. At the age of 18 the apprentices would become an 'improver' and it would become less easy to use the lad as labour. Ultimately the lad would have 'served his time' and would be accepted into the community of craftsmen.

But today there seems to be no guarantee that the lads and lasses on a 'work experience', Youth Training Scheme or the projected New Labour 'New Deal' and 'Welfare to Work' will benefit in the same way. Mr Mercer says: "To stand any chance of getting a proper job they must have CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) accreditation - a pass showing they are bona fide tradesmen".

Mr Mercer does admit that the local authority does give a good theoretical training, but that doesn't stand the youngsters in good stead either to do or get a proper job or trade.

We must wonder if what is happening here to the young is not an indication of a deeper decline. In 1939 Ludwig Wittgenstein observed: "We are living in times where a good tailor knows within a fraction of an inch how to cut his cloth. But you and I may live to see that art lost too. When people just don't know what to wear. Just as in modern architecture, they don't know in what style to design a building".

The problem with the decline, if not the disappearance, of the craft apprenticeship

under the Thatcher government is that theory and practice seem to have become fragmented. Wittgenstein once remarked "physics is what physicists do". It follows then that plumbing is what plumbers do, carpentry is what carpenters do, and toolmaking is what toolmakers do. Done properly, these various 'doings' are highly skilled procedures, no less than that of physicists, chemists and astronomers, requiring what the psychiatrist Maurice O'Connor Drury claims are years of apprenticeship. The snag is that the learning of these trades has become so cock-eyed that the theory, as Kenny Mercer's account of youth training in Rochdale seems to imply, has become disembodied from the 'doing' or from the practice.

This, according to Maurice Drury, "is as if a man should memorise a musical score without understanding that it was meant to be performed". This disembodied theory, learning of trades, under the modern system is deadly in that one learns the 'language of the craft' without mastering the skills it is meant to mediate.

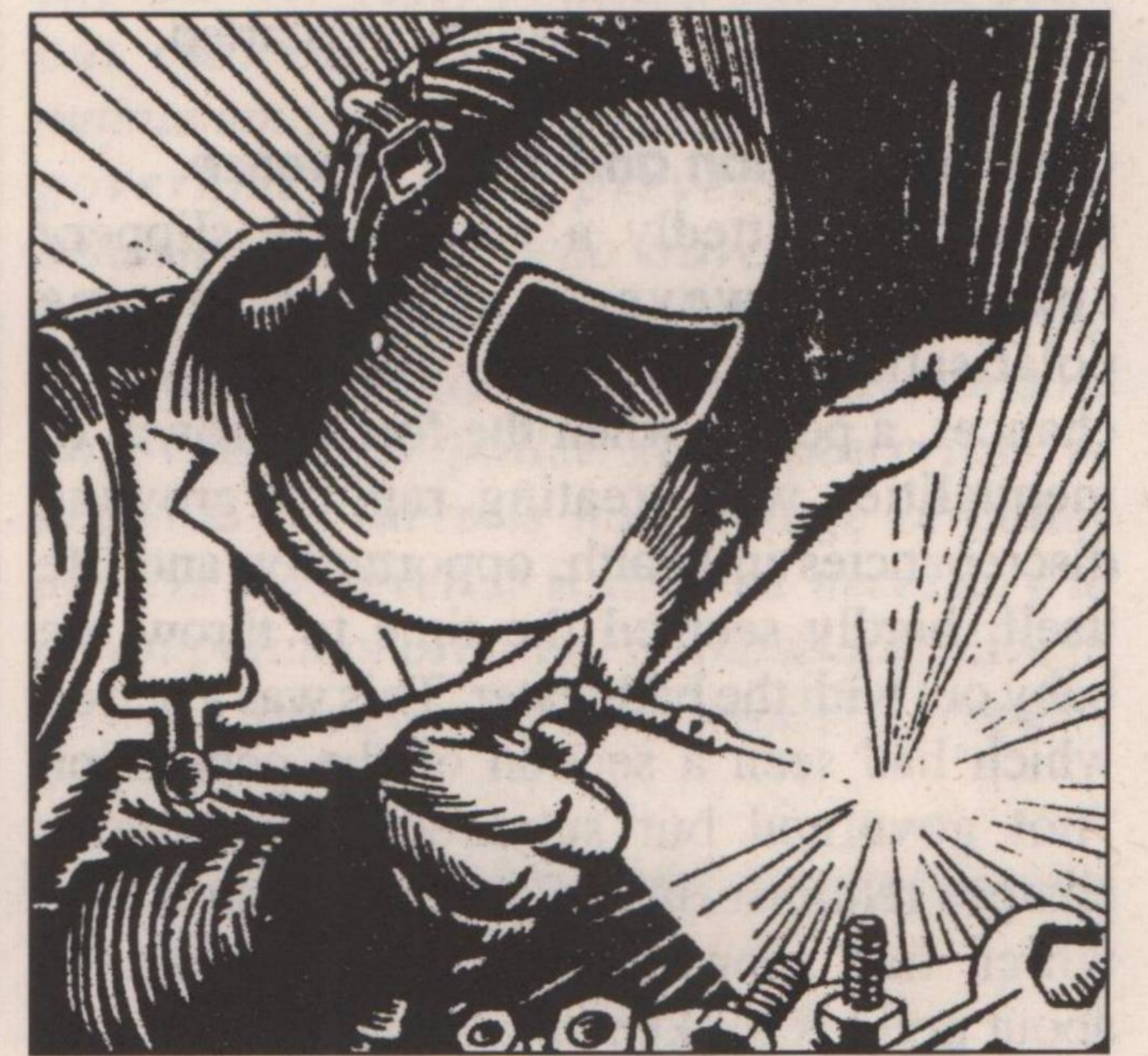
For generations the language and theory of each craft was passed on on-site on the job. This, I suppose, is what happened in the studios of the renaissance artists, as it did in the English guilds and among the stonemasons, up to the recent industrial craft

apprenticeships. To communicate its skills from one generation to another each science (craft), Drury insists, "develops its own technical language". One must learn this language to join in the activities of a trade or science, but to join in these activities and learning the 'language game' means going beyond the text book and the classroom.

RUPTURING THE TALENTS OF THE TRADE

The consequences of this rupture of the activity of doing the job, with its inculcation of the trade's tribal language, from what Kenny Mercer calls "good theoretical training devised by some modern local authority education department only to ultimately offer up to the young recruits a certificate to say that they have completed the course" is all too evident. It seems we are nearing the end of a shameful saga of a society which glories in civic ineptitude and whose institutions passionately pursue all forms of mediocrity to give us a building industry full of contractors recruiting dabblers, do-it-yourself men, 'cowboy operatives' and soon, Ken Mercer implies, callow kids to produce pre-fabricated constructions and breeze-block paradises.

The result of this is there for all to see, as Richard Girling pointed out last month in *The Sunday Times*: "don't we all know our best towns have been desecrated, that planners and



architects given their head by indolent, stupid or self-interested town councillors have spread the ugliest rash of buildings to have appeared in England since wattle first met daub?"

The destruction of the traditional trade union apprentice system under the Thatcher government can only make this worse. Ken Mercer and other trade unionists perceive this, but I can't see how the modern apprenticeship under New Labour can improve things.

The reason is that what Wittgenstein called the 'stress of life', which existed in the special craft languages of the shopfloor and the building sites, has been systematically bled dry. The tribal trades have been struck dumb. Wittgenstein discovered these special languages employed by builders while working with 'brickies' and designing his sister's house in Austria.

The loss of these languages of the traditional trade union apprenticeships has left us with deformed, dumb operatives. Educated into ineptitude by bodies like Rochdale Metro Training, to get a certificate which says they have finished a course which Ken Mercer claims gives them "a good theoretical training" but nothing more.

So in the modern apprenticeship of New Labour, we have the final twist in the saga of the 'division of labour'. But this is perhaps a false name. John Ruskin in *The Nature of Gothic* writes: "It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the men - broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin or the head of a nail".

And what is the result of all this? Morbid thinkers, degenerate art, shabby buildings and miserable workers. This, readers should be aware, is the natural outcome of the havoc imposed by ignorant governments on the handicraft culture, which to some extent trade unions kept alive in a small way through pride in craft and quality of work. Ken Mercer, and the Transport & General Workers Union, are fighting a rear-guard action against the culture of the cretins of local and national government.

Albert Shore

COURT REPORT

Edinburgh

An activist is to be sentenced. At the Sheriff's court on 21st January Michael Vallance pleaded guilty to 'breach of the peace'.

Mike, a well known campaigner, had often accompanied claimants who feared harassment from Benefits Agency workers at High Riggs unemployment benefit office.

On the 12th June he was recognised when he handed a letter to Marianne MacDonald, a 'Project Work' interviewer who has been an enthusiastic perpetrator in the government's drive to cut benefits. The letter read: "You have already received a written warning explaining our 'three strikes and you're out' campaign. Yet you have persisted in harassing claimants to the point where we have received another complaint against you. This is your final written warning. One more complaint against you and we will take your photograph and transform it into a giant poster with details of your offence highlighted. There will also be an angry demonstration held at your place of work and the Edinburgh media will be alerted. We are sure that you, like us, hope that there will be no need for a 'strike three' measure and that you will temper your over-zealous behaviour accordingly. Sincerely, Edinburgh Claimants and Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh."

The sheriff remarked that this was a "sinister offence" and he was "considering a prison sentence".

Although Mike admits to delivering the letter, he is not himself a member of Edinburgh Claimants and has not been involved in any other 'three strikes' activity. Nevertheless it seems likely that one individual may be made to pay when claimants fight back against state oppression. Sentencing is due 11th February.

Chesterfield

As predicted in our November issue, those 42 environmental campaigners arrested on 31st October 1997 when they occupied the offices of H.J. Banks the opencast mine owners in Chesterfield, have now been charged, but not, as this writer expected, with criminal damage or conspiracy, but with 'stopping work' (section 241 Labour Relations Act).

As expected, the pretext used for the arrest, burglary, has not been pursued.

Those arrested who were further 'verballed' by the coppers and were thereby connected to the occupation of nearby Doe House Hill opencast site, have been additionally charged with 'Aggravated Trespass' (Section 68 CJA). Pleas will start on 11th February.

— REVIEW FEATURE —

Class Matters

Three or four years ago, with the gap between rich and poor becoming ever wider and with the sheer extent of Thatcherism's deliberate re-creation of poverty becoming apparent I received an extraordinary manuscript for comment. Central to its thesis was the idea that class analysis had no explanatory value and that class itself was an outmoded concept in the late twentieth century, that it was best discarded in any discussion of either the dreadful present or the ghastly future. The gist seemed to be that anarchists and the libertarian left should drop the term leaving it to Marxists, sociologists and other riff-raff. The author was apparently unaware that a similar debate (along with some first class research) was going on within sociology itself. At the same time over in the camp of academic Marxism (and there was no other significant kind by this time) the rejection of the theoretical base bequeathed by the Second International had rid its theories of vulgar determinism at the expense of turning the domains of base and superstructure into a metaphor for the social structure itself. Thus nothing could be known until everything was known. We were back where we started.

Class Repression and State Violence

Class is admittedly a notoriously slippery concept. However a time of income polarisation and growing disparity of life chances, a period when the forced growth of inequalities was creating rapidly growing discrepancies in health, opportunity, and life itself, hardly seemed the time to throw the baby out with the bathwater. This was a period which had seen a section of the population "not governed but subdued" by cavalry charges reminiscent of Peterloo. It was a time which had seen peaceful demonstrations about poll tax broken up by colonial policing methods which had always been designed to stifle protest and discredit protesters.

It was a period when even Tories began turn away from what was being done in their name. Ian Gilmour followed Galbraith in attacking the government's underlying assumption that "the rich should be made richer to make them work harder and the poor be made poorer to

achieve the same result". This former Tory cabinet minister went on to say "their policies were unrelentingly divisive and discriminatory against the poor, whose human dignity was relentlessly ignored". He quoted Hume: "That policy is violent which aggrandizes the public by the poverty of individuals" and added "still worse is one which aggrandizes the rich by the poverty of the poor. Whether or not Thatcherite social policy added to national violence by provoking riots and increasing crime it was, in the sense used by Hume, undoubtedly 'violent'."

What is happening?

The situation has changed little, and not eased at all since the heyday of Thatcherism. Increasingly it seems, the gestures toward egalitarianism made in the last hundred years erode, vanish or are obliterated, as if welfare capitalism was an aberration, a blip, created and maintained only because of a perceived threat from the then USSR. American hegemony, the growth of multi-nationals not responsible to any control, and the increasing irrelevance of large sections of the population to the maintenance of contemporary capitalism, suggests that even the faulty welfare society of postwar Britain constituted a kind of golden age which has gone for good. Indeed the institutionalisation of insecurity generally, something new this century among large sections of the 'middle classes' makes one wonder whether Marx's vision of proletarianisation may not have been too hastily dismissed. Certainly there are problems of inequality and justice in contemporary society which cannot be ignored however much ambivalence there is about the nature of stratification, the various inequalities that most perceive, and from which increasing numbers suffer. It is the very seriousness of these issues that make it important that some

of the work done be available to those who do not read the sociological journals.

This is the professed intention behind David J. Lee and Bryan S. Turner's collection *Conflicts about Class: Debating Inequality in Late Industrialism* (Longmans, 1996). It is indeed welcome, although the technical nature of some contributions means that it is unlikely to reach an audience outside those who take sociology seriously. Which is a pity, as while some contributions have probably been written with the aim of gunning down an opponent in the learned journals, others provide good analysis and valuable ammunition. Anyone prepared to do a little serious reading will find it a useful source book.

In particular part three of the book, 'Class Research and Class Explanations', has intrinsic informative value. John Westergaard's survey 'Class in Britain since 1979: Facts, theories and ideologies' is particularly helpful. Westergaard starts from the curious situation that while inequality has widened quite dramatically since 1980, over the same period fashionable theories and influential ideologies have appeared to say that nothing of the sort is happening. "While rich and poor have grown farther apart" writes Westergaard, "both predominant ideology and social theory have set out to dismiss this; or to argue that it doesn't matter anyway".³

Yes it does

Of course it does matter. It matters because of the self-perpetuating nature of these divisions. It matters because of the crippling of health and life inequality creates. It matters because of the limitation of the sense of the possible that restricts and stunts every individual in a world where ascription defines and largely prescribes life chances. It matters because of the persistence of "power as money" (to use David Lee's telling phrase⁴) and not least it

matters because an adequate analysis is a prerequisite to changing anything for the better.

Westergaard's definition of class is a commonsense one. He uses the term to refer to a set of social divisions that rise from a society's economic organisation: for its arrangements for command over, and benefit from, the deployment of scarce resources. People may said to be in different classes insofar as they occupy – and generally continue to occupy – distinct and unequal places in that economic organisation. He goes on to suggest that the debate between Weber and Marx, or rather between Weberians and Marxists, is more apparent than real. Thus he points out that even if Marx emphasised place in production as a class determinant, he was equally concerned with distribution via his discussions of surplus appropriation and labour exploitation. Similarly Weber whose work has had far reaching effects on ideas about class – even down to market research level – emphasised distribution when he wrote about unequal life chances of people in different classes but nevertheless saw those inequalities as the result primarily of differences of place in production.

It's the economy, stupid!

Lee's position is that class – "like many other social phenomena – must at some point be understood as a property of social relationships *per se* – and is not simply reducible to the situations and actions of individuals ... It shapes and constrains, and so to that extent accounts for the individuality of particular actors be they persons or groups of persons."

The constraints of which Lee writes become ever more severe. To take only the most short term ones. In Britain at the moment at least two million children are suffering from ill health and stunted growth from malnutrition while the Treasury is awash with money it refuses to allocate to the poor. Widespread anaemia is apparent and consequently rickets has reappeared, TB is now more prevalent than whooping cough, and the appalling Blair wants to cut benefits further. The long term effects of this sort of inequality once provided us with a model to avoid. Today it doesn't appear to matter because capitalism and its wars can operate without the people it once needed. In America welfare cuts are a matter of pride while the US Conference of Mayors (hardly a left wing cabal) is warning of terrible destitution, affecting hundreds of thousands, when the new US benefit cuts come in. Meanwhile the proportion of Federal Revenue derived from corporate taxes has dropped by four fifths as the conglomerates move out of the control of national governments altogether.

This book, as one of its editors notes, is written by a contention of sociologists. It is in part a debate about concepts and the lay person may find some of that tedious. But it also illumines the nature of the debate and summarises some excellent research. It is a handbook for study and reference and is highly recommended to those who want to understand the debate and its urgency. For we live in depressingly interesting times. Globalisation, political corruption, monopolisation, immiseration, technology and human redundancy, the effects of power on choice, were all studied by Marx and his observations were translated by Bakunin. Obscured by reformist governments for much of this century they are back again as major problems. However different our solutions we ought to look again at the analysis. For the problem remains capitalism and however we define it class perpetuation is a function of capitalism's operation.

John Pilgrim

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL, BUT MEDIUM-SIZED COULD BE VIABLE

A major problem of the nation state, one among many, is that it is usually too large and impersonal to provide its citizens with any real sense of belonging or of being in control of their individual destinies. But even the most dedicated utopian anarchist would be hard put to formulate an instantaneous process whereby enormous, notionally democratic, nations such as India with a population approaching one billion or even less populous ones like Britain, France and Italy with roughly sixty million each, will somehow wither away and be superseded by small-scale anarchist communities. Nonetheless, it is possible to envisage a situation wherein even large estates could initially be replaced by groups of 'intermediate societies' which would represent way-stations on the road to the ideal community.

It is a little known fact that approximately one-third of the two hundred or so member states of the UN contain a population less numerous than that of Wales (some two and a half million). Over the past decade I have spent a significant amount of time in one of these mini-states, the Republic of Malta, and much of what follows is based on my personal observation of that society. It seems to me that Malta in its present form may represent a fair working model of the 'intermediate society'. Its greatest asset is probably its small size, consisting as it does of two islands: Malta itself and Gozo, plus two virtually uninhabited islets, together covering an area of 122 square miles. The total population of this minuscule archipelago is in the region of 450,000

roughly equivalent to that of one of the larger London boroughs, such as Croydon. Unless as a result of current explorations for oil on Gozo it becomes a kind of mid-Mediterranean Abu Dhabi, Malta's smallness dictated by the natural boundary of the sea and a general lack of material resources means that a population much in excess of 500,000 would not be readily sustainable.

Despite the pressures resulting from an increasing reliance on tourism and the concomitant process of modernisation, the inhabitants appear for the most part to have retained the instinctive anarchism of the peasant. As one foreign resident has written, "You can never get out of debt to the Maltese". A small but telling example of this in-built communitarian spirit is personified by my aged parents' Gozitan cleaning lady. She invariably turns up for work bearing garden produce and home-made wine to the rough value of the wage she will earn on that occasion. Anyone who has visited Malta will be a source of similar anecdotes.

Because it is a small and still fairly homogeneous society, everyone knows, or indeed is related to, everyone else. Thus the islands appear to be governed by a species of informal bureaucracy. While this leads to what in more formal and puritanical societies would be called 'nepotism', from a rather different perspective this could be viewed as a manifestation of mutual aid. At the same time those in power have to behave themselves because there is literally nowhere for them to hide. I'm not for one moment

suggesting that Malta is paradise on earth – the Catholic church has too much power for that – but the inhabitants are generally pleasant to one another, the crime rate is negligible and you never see young women with babies begging on the streets.

Ordinary people do seem to have a need to belong to a small-scale and well-defined community, and perhaps this is one of the contributing factors in the current middle class preference for living in rural areas.

On a broader canvas there is evidence of a global trend towards smaller societies – secessionist movements are endemic, appearing in places as far apart as Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia. Twentieth century English literature and drama emphasise this tendency: *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (although it ends badly in an outburst of rampant nationalism), *Passport to Pimlico* and a recent television series (whose name escapes me) about an autonomous republic in East Anglia, are all constructed around this theme.

So perhaps our 'intermediate society', as suggested by the Maltese experience, is not an impossible dream. Obviously this could not be achieved in one fell swoop, but perhaps Britain (having freed itself from the Irish entanglement) could sensibly and logically be divided into Scotland, Wales and the original Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia and Northumbria. A fair beginning and a move towards proving small is beautiful but medium-sized could be viable.

Adrian Walker

1. Rodney Barker, *Political Legitimacy and the State* (Clarendon Press, 1990), page 1.

2. Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma* (Simon & Schuster, 1992), pages 140-141.

3. David J. Lee and Bryan S. Turner, *Conflicts about Class* (Longmans, 1996) page 141.

4. David Lee, 'Weak Class Theories or Strong Sociology' in Lee and Turner, *ibid*.

THE REPUBLICAN GAMBLE

On 12th January, the British and Irish governments published their joint discussion document *Propositions on Heads of Agreement*, for use as a basis of negotiation. The first three words of this document proposed "balanced constitutional change". It is by no means clear that completely 'balanced' constitutional change is appropriate, justified, or sufficient to bring peace. If there is to be anything like balance, however, I suspect that the closest thing to a workable balanced proposal will come from a very unexpected corner. The day after the publication of the *Heads of Agreement* document, Sinn Fein accepted it as a basis for negotiation without necessarily approving of its contents.

Sinn Fein negotiator Michel McLaughlin made what I consider to be one of the most important statements of the present negotiations process. He reiterated the party line that it does not accept partition, but at the same time does not expect re-unification immediately. He also said that if the document was in effect "an attempt to impose another partitionist settlement, then it will not work and Sinn Fein will not be part of it". However, McLaughlin

also added: "We are much more realistic than to expect that we're going to get a united Ireland immediately. We're on the record as saying that. We have a much more pragmatic, reasonable and legitimate proposition."

This is the clearest statement yet, in my view, that Sinn Fein has a major negotiating proposal to put before the all-party talks, which will be a historic compromise between its traditional goals and present realities. If such a compromise proposal does exist, then it must have the approval of the IRA leadership, and of much of the republican rank-and-file.

It is as well to remember that the present peace process is in very large measure a republican initiative, begun not from a sense of weakness and despair, but from a re-evaluation of the obstacles to reunification, and re-direction of republican strategy. One of the roots of the present process can be traced back to a statement by Martin McGuinness in August 1993, when he spoke of possible 'interim arrangements' in the North of Ireland. In other words, the leadership of Sinn Fein has accepted that immediate re-unification is unrealistic for the last four and a half years.

Indeed, their calls to be included in the talks process could only, and can only, be based on such an acceptance, as the republicans are clearly in a tiny minority at the negotiating table (whatever they may say about public opinion in Ireland as a whole).

Brendan O'Brien revealed in 1993 that 'an interested party' (no doubt a senior republican) had proposed a "planned, stage-by-stage progression towards joint British/Irish Authority in Northern Ireland, followed by a federal format which would allow of final British withdrawal", all over a ten to fifteen year period. While there was likely to be a violent Unionist response initially, it was suggested that consultation of the Unionists, guarantees concerning their heritage and British citizenship, "the rewards of the new departure", and the isolation of the loyalist gunmen, would lead to less conflict overall, and fewer deaths, than the present impasse. Whether or not this proposal has had much influence on republican thinking, it seems that Sinn Fein is rapidly approaching a point where it must either accept the flow of events as dictated by the two governments, or it must attempt to seize the initiative and place its own "pragmatic, reasonable and legitimate proposition" before the peoples of these islands.

Milan Rai

Liverpool Dockworkers: Final Settlement

After two years and four months the Liverpool Dockworkers have decided to end their dispute following a recommendation from the shop stewards.

Over the past four weeks the shop stewards have been debating what direction the dispute had been moving in. The conclusions that we came to were that in certain key areas, the campaign had started to falter and that in order not to see good men and women lose everything or risk a collapse from within, we decided to conclude a collective agreement on the best possible terms achievable.

We felt that following the last secret ballot in October 1997, in which we gained a 70% rejection of the employers' offer, a springboard for greater supportive actions should have been launched, in terms of a political intervention from the new Labour government by the use of their 14% shareholding that they have in the company and a far more positive role from our own union leadership in calling for an increase in both the national support through the TGWU industrial branches and international support via the ITF. That support never materialised, in fact both of these organisations decided to support the line of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Co in stating that the dispute was over.

This was also compounded by the fact that the two biggest container companies that use the port of Liverpool, ACL and CAST, had not been touched by industrial action for some time. We also suffered the sad loss of two of our stalwarts from the picket line who died over the Christmas and New Year period, making a total of four during the course of the dispute.

These elements, along with the extreme hardship that the men and women have had to endure over the past 28 months and the more hard-line tactics of the police on the picket lines, were major factors in our decision to bring the heroic struggle of the Liverpool dockers, their families and their supporters to some form of conclusion.

The terms of the settlement were based on up to £28,000 redundancy payment for all ex-Mersey Docks men. We have approximately eighty of our dockers who are excluded from this process and it is our intention to raise some financial package to ease the obvious debt burden they have accumulated over the last two and a half years. A number of jobs are on offer in the port and we continue to examine the practicality of this option. A joint approach will be made in relation to the pension entitlements of the majority of dockers. We have to recognise that work in Liverpool is a rare commodity and we expect that all our comrades will experience great difficulty over the next few years.

Jimmy Nolan

Merseyside Port Shop Stewards

PRE-FRONTAL LOBOTOMY WITHOUT PATIENT'S CONSENT

It has been announced that the Scottish Health Secretary will sign an order permitting doctors in Scotland to perform the pre-frontal lobotomy operation on non-consenting patients, with the consent of a sheriff. This is to implement a recommendation made in 1996 by an expert advisory panel, the GPGN (Good Practice Group in Neurosurgery).

Pre-frontal lobotomy, or neurosurgery for mental disorder (NMD), was discovered by accident. Phileas Gage, an American quarry worker, was tamping dynamite into a hole when it accidentally exploded, blowing his ramrod through his forehead and destroying a bit of the front of his brain.

He recovered completely, but with a changed personality. Before the accident he was remarkable for his puritanical abstemiousness.

**They did it to the mentally ill
But I did not speak out
Because I was not mentally ill**

Some mentally ill patients will soon have parts of their brains forcibly removed unless we protest loudly enough against it. Pre-frontal lobotomy, now largely discredited by the medical profession even when with consent, is set to return (*The Independent*, 27th January). The procedure today may be more sophisticated and limited to removing nerve connections within the brain, but the result is the same: to turn a human being into a zombie. Drug effects can usually be reversed, surgery cannot.

This operation is due to be forced on some patients in Scotland following a decision by Sam Galbraith, the Scottish health minister, and, if they get away with it there, introduced in England and Wales as recommended by the government-appointed Good Practice Group on Neurosurgery, to the shame of the surgeons involved.

We were revolted by such practices in Nazi Germany and condemned the use of mental hospitals in Stalinist Russia to subdue dissidents, and such practices must be condemned now before they happen.

The proposal is outrageous, for are not the mentally ill also human beings? And in the future how easily can a medical decision become a political decision and how easily could it spread to include 'enemies of the state' as defined by an increasingly authoritarian labour government? We believe Pastor Niemoller would have agreed.

This may be government kite flying. If so, widespread horror at the proposal just might be enough to stop its introduction.

HS

After, he was remarkable for his irresponsible rowdiness. The case attracted the attention of a psychiatrist and neurosurgeon, who tried inflicting similar brain injuries on a patient suffering from psychotic, suicidal abstemiousness, and the patient was cured. Nobody knew exactly how it worked, but medicine is empirical: if a treatment works, use it.

Psychiatrists were excited to learn of a cure for psychosis as previously they had only been able to contain patients. NMD was tried on various different psychoses, but was only successful on depression and manic depression, where it is now largely superseded by electric shock treatment (which may soon be replaced in turn by magnetic treatment). But it is still sometimes used where other treatments fail.

L. Ron Hubbard, the inventor of Dianetics and Scientology, convinced many that the sole purpose of pre-frontal lobotomy is to make the patient tractable, a contention which is plainly untrue. Phileas Gage became *less* tractable, and so does every depressive who becomes self-assertive.

But all treatments are capable of abuse, being applied for the convenience of medical staff and not for the patient's benefit. The GPGN reports that "psychosurgery has been used in the past to treat patients with deviant behaviour". Presumably to prevent such abuses, the current Mental Health Act allows NMD only with the informed consent of the patient, and the GPGN proposal requires the consent of a sheriff when the patient is too ill to make a decision.

Although some arguments for opposition to NMD are misinformed, good arguments also exist. Alison Cobb, the chairman of MIND, told a *Big Issue* reporter: "The irreversible destruction of healthy brain tissue is no answer to mental disorder", and the psychiatrist Sashi Sashidaran said much the same.

And there is the ethical question, especially for anarchists, whether anything should be done to anybody without their consent, even if they are suffering terribly and the people doing things to them are honestly trying to make them better.

DR



— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

**TRUST AND RESPECT
IN URBAN LIFE**

Writing in *The Guardian's* 'Society' pages recently (14th January) Ken Worpole criticised a body called the Urban Design Alliance, which consists of "the heavy guns of the architectural, property and design world and seeks to persuade government that the answer to our urban ills is more and better design."

Rightly, in my view, he sees this as a glib and technocratic approach to the social polarisation of cities and the failure to tackle the "seemingly intractable issues of social exclusion, poverty, degraded living environments and the breakdown of trust". And his concluding rhetoric called for a movement towards the development of what he describes as a "deliberative democracy" in which "citizen's juries, focus groups, consensus-building or broad-based organising are all forms of widening the debate between people as to how they might take greater control over their neighbourhoods – and ultimately their cities".

I have written before in this column about Ken Worpole's recent work about the public realm of British towns and cities, an aspect of urban life that has been dwindling away before our eyes, often unnoticed, in the glorification of the market as the ultimate value. His report that became the book *Towns for People* examined town centres, "shopping and commercial centres by day and nearly deserted ghost towns at night". A further report and a book looked at the future of public libraries, starved of finance even though used by a wider cross-section of the local population than any other element in town centres, followed by a similar

study of the public park, fought for in the last century, in opposition to the glib assumption that we can all buy our social needs in the private market. There were then further studies, also with Liz Greenhalgh, of urban graveyards and of *The Freedom of the City*.

He has been working on a further study for Comedia of *The Richness of Cities: Urban Policy in a New Landscape*, and they have just issued this programme's second working paper by Worpole with the title 'Nothing to Fear? Trust and Respect in Urban Communities'. I daren't recommend you to buy it as it costs £7.50 for 24 A4 pages (from ECO Distribution, 117 Main Street, Woodhouse Eaves, LE12 8RY), but would urge you to watch out for the book version when it appears, since this report reads like a modern footnote to Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, as you will see from its opening sentence: "Lost in a strange city, we ask strangers for directions, assuming that they will come to our aid. If we couldn't in practice trust strangers to be helpful and truthful, then everyday life would quickly grind to a halt".

But paradoxically we also assume that it is worth our while to pay people to supervise public spaces and services, yet every

employer, public or private, seeks to reduce the number of people employed. Worpole cites example after example of the results of these politics: One-person-operated buses make bus travel even less attractive, and "the deserted station is a poignant signal of neglect, and for the bereft passenger the experience may range from the uncomfortable to the nightmarish" as a report by the London Regional Passengers Committee concluded.

Worpole and his colleagues had shown in their park study how disastrous for "these immensely important outdoor spaces" and he stresses the immense cost in human misery as well as money that results from the withdrawal of paid residential caretaking staff on housing estates. Noting the link between the opportunities for play, for self-expression, for childhood independence and freedom to explore, and civic behaviour, he argues from the *Park Life* that parks were still places where "the indeterminacy and inconclusiveness of daily life is suspended" and that "people's behaviour changed once they had stepped into the park from the surrounding streets, becoming much more relaxed, gregarious and sociable".

The library study taught him the same "long-

standing understanding and expectations of appropriate behaviour", and explaining that "in such settings the majority of people do still subscribe to the values of respect for other users' interests and needs, waiting one's turn, not greedily dominating particular resources, observing the formal and informal rules of quietness, queuing or sharing space, which largely stem from a sense that these are goods and services held in common.

He warns that these accumulated habits are fragile: "The success of parks and libraries (as well as town centres and other key public settings) depends on the richness of the mix of those using them. Social pluralism is one of the strongest civic glues ... diversity of uses and users appears to be a pre-condition of establishing a trustworthy space. Mono-cultures are inherently unstable and self-destructive".

These thoughts lead him to the need to build up unofficial forms of citizen organisation outside of politicians, "recreating democracy not as a hierarchical set of formalised agreements or power relationships but more as a continuing conversation between equals". So he sets out a series of guiding principles for "creating trust in non-compulsory settings", leading to the call for the new forms of social organisation I quoted above from Worpole's *Guardian* article. And this is precisely the same as Kropotkin's insistence that we will be compelled to find new forms of organisation for the social functions that the state fulfils through the bureaucracy, and that "as long as this is not done, nothing will be done".

Colin Ward

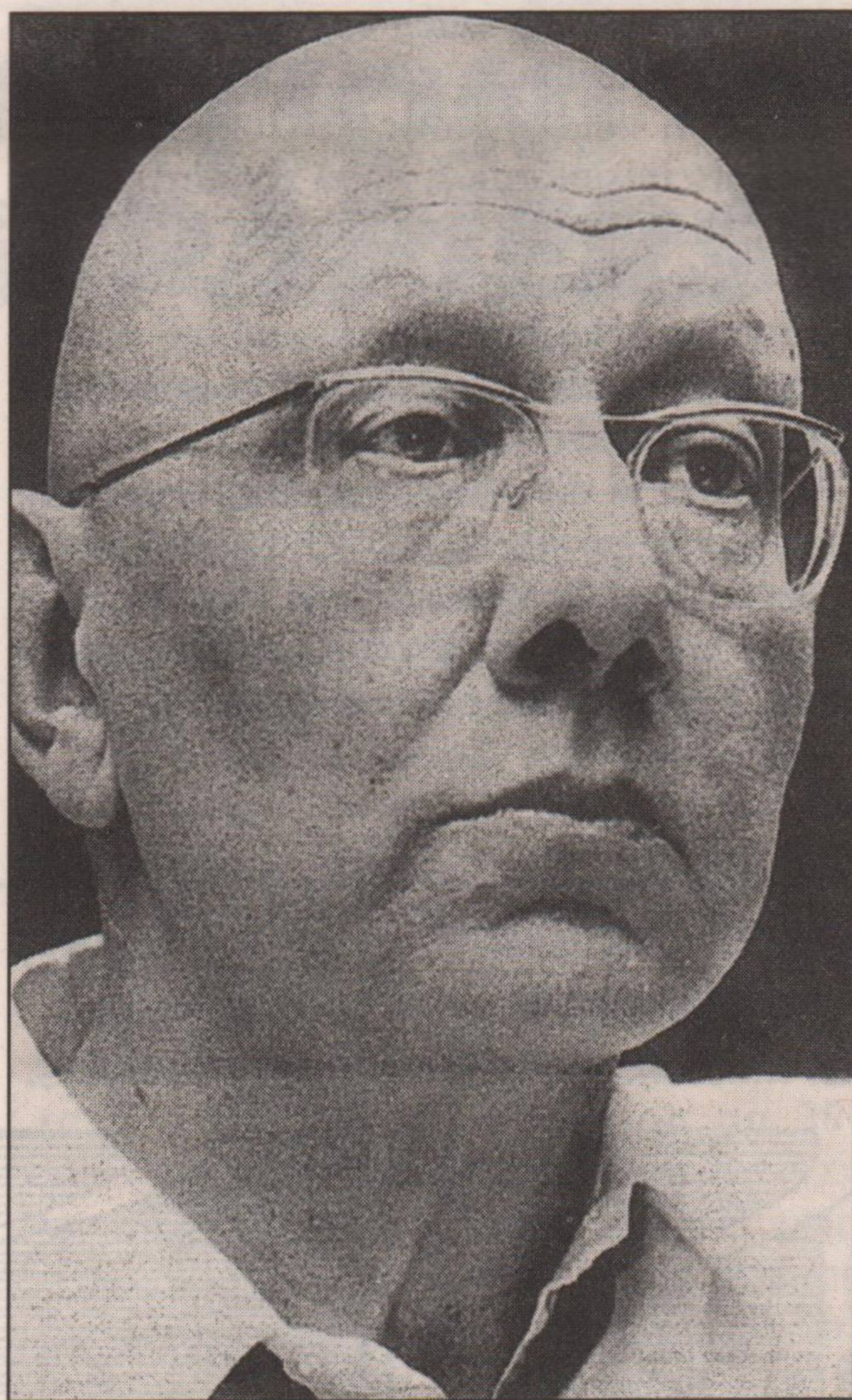
— OBITUARY —

Cornelius Castoriadis

Cornelius Castoriadis, who has died at the age of 75, was one of the most impressive and influential intellectuals on the French left, travelling over half a century from Stalinism through Trotskyism and Leninism and finally past Marxism itself, away from prevailing forms of socialism towards a more autonomous and libertarian approach to politics altogether. He was best known to English-speaking anarchists as the ideological inspiration of the Solidarity group during the 1960s and 1970s.

Kornélios Kastoriadês was born on 11th March 1922 to a francophile Greek family in Istanbul which soon moved to Greece, and he grew up in Athens where he studied law, economics and philosophy. He was drawn to left-wing politics as a boy and joined the Young Communists in 1937 and the Communist Party in 1941, but he soon turned against the party line and joined an extreme Trotskyist fraction in 1942. He was also involved in the resistance movement against the German occupation of Greece. He ran into personal danger from enemies on either side, and in 1945 he made his way to France, where he spent the rest of his life.

By profession he was a statistical economist, and from 1948 he worked as a senior official at the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in Paris. But by vocation he was a revolutionary propagandist, and during the same period he wrote prolifically for left-wing publications and held regular meetings in Paris. In 1946 he joined the French section of the Trotskyist Fourth International, the Parti Communiste Internationaliste, but he formed a dissident fraction which left it in 1948. He became a founding editor of the paper *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, which from 1949 acted as the focus of one of the most active groupuscules of the New Left, campaigning against all actually existing forms of socialism, whether reformist or revolutionary, and for a new form of socialism which would bring real liberty, equality and fraternity. As 'Pierre Chaulieu' or 'Paul Cardan' or 'Jean-Marc Coudray', he produced a series of essays which appeared as articles and then as pamphlets, were translated into several languages, and reached small but active groups in other countries.



In this country his influence was exerted through the Solidarity group, founded in 1960, which attempted to play a similar part in the British left (and whose main leader coincidentally came from a Greek family and used various pseudonyms). During a period of more than twenty years, conscientious translations of the writings of 'Paul Cardan' (often improved versions of the originals) appeared as articles in *Solidarity* magazine or as *Solidarity* pamphlets or books, and introduced his ideas to the English-speaking world – and beyond, since they were widely read not only in Britain and America but in many parts of both Western and Eastern Europe. Revolutionary and libertarian socialists of all kinds in all places were impressed by such texts as *Socialism Reaffirmed*, *Socialism or Barbarism*, *The Meaning of Socialism*, *The Crisis of Modern Society*, *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*, *History and Revolution*, *Redefining Revolution*, *History as Creation*, and were stimulated to rethink their ideas.

His key doctrines were that class society is divided not according to the ownership or control of property but according to the possession or exertion of power (essentially between order-givers or directors and executants or order-takers), that the various attempts at political and social revolution (especially by Communist Parties) have succeeded only in replacing the old bureaucracies by new ones, that Marxist analysis itself shows that all the varieties of Marxism (including that of Marx himself) cannot succeed, and that other ways must be found for individuals to take power over their own lives, based on the principles of autogestion – self-management – and autonomy.

His influence was most obvious in the 'events' of 1968 in France, many of whose leaders – especially Daniel Cohn-Bendit – were impressed by his critical approach to all old politics, though as it happened the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* paper and group had ceased a couple of years earlier. In particular his concept of autogestion had a wide appeal for the rebels outside the established political parties. Eventually he abandoned not only Marxism but socialism, and by the end of the 1970s he adopted the term 'autonomous society' instead. His line clearly converged with that of anarchism, but although he made occasional references to the anarchists, like many former Marxists he had little respect for them, and in return anarchists took little notice of him. This was probably a mistake, since many of his positive as well as negative ideas are highly relevant to the work facing the anarchist movement in the contemporary world.

In 1970 he retired from the OECD and became a French citizen. He turned to psychology and became a psychoanalyst in 1974, associated with the 'Fourth Group' of dissident Lacanians. He began to achieve recognition as a leading intellectual, was an editor of two leading magazines – *Textures* (1971-1975) and *Libre* (1976-1980) – and in 1980 he became a director of studies at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales at the University of Paris. He conducted an ambitious programme of work and, at last able to write freely under his own name, he produced a score of books. A series of cheap collections of his early writings appeared from 1973 to 1979, accompanied by *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* in 1975, and followed by a series of collections of later writings under the general title *Carrefours dans la labyrinthe* from 1978 to 1997.

At the same time he became better known

in the English-speaking world with the appearance of American translations of some of his writings – *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (1984), *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987), a three-volume collection of *Political and Social Writings* (1988-1993), an anthology of *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (1991), *World in Fragments* (1997) – and another anthology, *The Castoriadis Reader* (1997), just before his death. But he was still virtually ignored by the political and intellectual establishments in the English-speaking world.

Towards the end of his life he turned increasingly to linguistics and mathematics, ancient history and pure philosophy. He developed an idiosyncratic humanist position which emphasised the part played by individual imagination and creative culture in human affairs and which included a remarkable 'ethic of mortality', arguing that the absence of any kind of divinity above humanity and of any kind of existence after death made it all the more important to accept a tragic sense of both private and public life and to concentrate on the development of autonomous individuals in an autonomous society here and now. He always opposed all kinds of intellectual obscurantism, though he never escaped the obscurity of modern discourse in French, and his style became increasingly esoteric and neologistic. At his worst he might be arrogant and abstract, but at his best he could be inspiring and realistic. He always had a wide circle of friends, to whom he was known as 'Corneille' and with whom he enjoyed furious arguments, and he also earned increasing respect from a larger public. He will probably be remembered for his negative work, which helped to destroy some of the most harmful myths of our time, rather than for his positive work, which tried to construct a new world in their place; yet now that the former task is completed, the latter task becomes increasingly urgent. "Whatever happens", he said at the end of his life, "I shall remain first and foremost a revolutionary". Other revolutionaries still have much to learn from him.

Cornelius Castoriadis died in Paris following a heart operation on 26th December 1997, and was the subject of long obituaries in the French press. Obituaries appeared in this country in *The Guardian* and *The Times* (the latter being an abridged and expurgated version of the present article).

NW

SAINTS OR SADCASES

Within the British Isles (or any isles if you want to argue) it has always been accepted that one treats with unqualified respect the aristocratic amateur armed only with his own regiment, telescope or five square miles of rolling parkland to try out the newly arrived potato, for here is genetic intelligence flowering into – untarnished by commercialism – brilliant discoveries. At the other end of the social scale is the lower middle class and/or labouring class amateur given over to racing pigeons, growing the biggest marrow on that drear council-rented allotment and/or the non-shit-provoking new bottled jam. Despite those unfortunates who state that they 'do not believe in class, god or the pleasures of Guinness', Guinness, Tony Blair (as stand-in for God) and class are economic social-gourmet observable facts. There was an employed shade within the anarchist bookshop who over the too-long years would have turned my hair white were it not that I was bald, for I grew to hate his poisonous tongue that like an open sore festered daily, and we hate because we fear and I feared that drear disregarding tongue that 'he is not a real artist or critic, he is only a bus conductor', but he is worm-refusing ashes and the 72 buses still run from EA to ROE.

The amateur is one who creates for their own personal pleasure despite their talent, and the professional demands a price for 'the work in hand'.

In the Wodehouse canon Lord Emsworth, who owns the vast estate, potters alongside the hired gardener pruning the rose bushes and the gardener is the employed professional doing his full wage-earning working stint while Lord lovable Emsworth is the happy amateur who owns the gardener's paid time and can drift off when bored with the roses. Is it a crime? Only when the blood of the exploiters turns the white roses red with their tainted blood or until we win the football pools.

The captain of the Titanic was a professional seaman and, despite one small mishap iceberg-wise, one would never have put an amateur in command of that magnificent

unsinkable ship which, let us face this fact, is the difference between the solid professional and the gifted amateur.

The 1920s was the happytime for the British murder and its passing was mourned essaywise by George Orwell as the 'British news-grabbing working class domestic murder' when a husband in some working class terraced house cut his late wife's throat and buried her in the seven foot square of dead damp soil euphemistically called 'the garden' wherein a rose never flowered. Knacker of the Yard always solved those cases. But the professional killers have now taken over wherein price is important and the killing and the subject unimportant. The old-time anarchist fairytale wherein the sexist female comrade murders, nay assassinate, the small-town Siberian Chief of Police, or her dancing partner throws a bomb into a crowded café and mutilates an unfortunate waiter 'who ordered macaroni on the bone with chips', is no more a giggling matter, for religious and political self-elected judges and executioners now murder by the hundreds for the cause, for the cause, and every day we can see the photographic images of the mutilated and the dead in the tabloids or on television so where is the excitement in one hysterical pseudo-romantic killing for the cause, for the cause? The American-style hired contract killer, as with the late American Murder Incorporated, brought casual professional murder for hire onto the supermarket shelf in that you paid your money and got your clean-hands killing, while the happy 'son of a bitch' American-style serial killer slaughtered his way across America's broad highways and the Land of the Free and the excitement of the killing, not the victim, was the self satisfaction of a drear emotional problem. These are the professionals – cold, clean, calm but rarely collected – while the amateur commits his solitary murder in a vain attempt to solve the unsolvable material or economic problem.

Churchill as a war-lord was a professional who on a worldwide fighting front achieved his and others aims, but in the arts he was the



happy amateur who not only built brick walls but painted over five hundred paintings. This week they were placed, or some of them, on sale for charity's sake at Sotheby's. It is fashionable for the élite to sneer at Churchill's paintings, but he made no claim for them for, as with all amateur paintings, it was the calm pleasure that the paintings gave one that Churchill found in that exercise. He began painting as a soldier in France in 1916 and throughout his life he painted. Slight, cheerful, naive work, they made no claim to greatness and it ill becomes those who choose to sneer at them to hurt the man who held the brush. Hitler, in that he painted commercial

postcards, one could assume to be considered a professional, but when he decided to try politics for a way of earning a living, as a painter he reverted to the role of amateur. Again the sneers that he was only a corporal, but unassisted he did manage to lose one of the greatest wars in human history. I hold that he made it as a lesser artist and can anyone ask more?

I also hold that as long as there is the languid aristocrat the arts are safe, and this is never more so than that – pickled in aspic – is the six foot five inch body of Patrick Proctor. In his twenties he was a member of the Communist Party, but with simple grace he glided into the world of the charming English eccentric who dallied with watercolours. Always overshadowed by the 'Oh what a gay day' large-scale pretty pastel paintings of David Hockney, his friend, Proctor produced his gentle non-provocative watercolours. In my humble room, on my humble wall, beside my humble bed, I have a large pen and ink drawing given to me by David Hockney, and alongside that a 1980 invitation to the Redfern Gallery for Proctor's exhibition 'A Chinese Journey'. Hockney is a cause for admiration in that in his small way he created a change in the direction of visual art, but Proctor's black ink sketch of Chinese small craft after twenty years on de ol' humble wall is still a matter of pleasure for me. On rice paper with freehand brush produced with black ink, it is still my invitation to my past and the pleasures of the creative and amateur arts.

Maybe the days of the gentleman amateur are gone in New Labour's middle class world, but the fictional old world wherein aristocrats, always in full evening dress, saved the world from some ethnic undesirable while Babs, in full evening dress and crowned with a helmet of pure blonde hair, was tied to the post in the dark Underground cellar as the deadly waters rose. With only Bobby, late Eton and Harrow, Sergeant 'Mush' his First World War batman and Colonel B'yate of t'Yard and ex-Bengal Lancers to help him, we knew as we stood in the Labour Exchange queue under the protective glare of the police on duty that the middle class world was safe until the next publication. Only Proctor remains for me, at 83, for Babs has got varicose veins.

Arthur Moyse

The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism

Janet Biehl and Murray Bookchin
Montreal, Black Rose Books, £13.95 (plus
£1.40 postage and packing)

Paul Valéry once wrote: "Politics is the art to hinder people to take care of their affairs". Janet Biehl and Murray Bookchin certainly would strongly disagree, and their new book, which is going to be published by Black Rose Books this autumn, is mainly a defence of politics in opposition to 'statecraft'. "Politics, as we normally think of it, is an essential component of representative systems of government. It is a set of procedures and practices by which 'the people' choose a small group of individuals – politicians – to speak for them and represent them in a legislative or executive body ... To label this system politics is a gross misnomer. It should more properly be called statecraft". In opposition to statecraft, for Biehl (and Bookchin) politics is the activity of citizens in a public assembly, in direct-democratic, participatory institutions. Here again 'direct democracy' doesn't mean the introduction of so-called 'direct-democratic' means into the system of statecraft – most often people name the referendum – but a democracy, "in which citizens in communities manage their affairs through face-to-face processes of deliberation and decision-making, rather than have the state do it for them".

The *Politics of Social Ecology* is a good summary of the concept of 'libertarian municipalism', which was mainly developed by Murray Bookchin in his book *Urbanisation Without Cities*. The strength of Biehl's book is its briefness. Biehl managed to point out the most important lines: politics versus

THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY

statecraft, democracy in the towns and cities of ancient Greece and the middle age, state and urbanisation, the city and how to build a municipalist movement.

"The project of libertarian municipalism is to resuscitate politics in the older sense of the word – to construct and expand local direct democracy, such that ordinary citizens make decisions for their communities and for their society as a whole. It is not, it should be understood, an attempt to expand citizen involvement in the process of the republican state ... Libertarian municipalism, in fact, is antithetical to the state since the state as such is unassimilable with community self-management and a thriving civic sphere".

Briefly said, libertarian municipalism means the self-management of decentralised cities (or neighbourhoods) by citizen assemblies, in which all adult citizens after a free discussion make decisions by majority. These decentralised municipalities federate with other municipalities in order to co-ordinate common tasks and to exchange resources. Libertarian municipalism includes the municipalisation of the economy, which puts production and distribution under control of the citizen assemblies.

I think the concept of libertarian municipalism has much to offer for today. And it is Biehl's honour to present this concept in an understandable, somehow 'popular' (in

the good sense of the word) way. However, briefness tends to bring out shortcomings and contradictions, and I think there are some I don't want to cover with silence.

The first one is Biehl's opposition to the concept of consensus decision making. I tend to think that Biehl doesn't really understand how consensus should work, maybe because of bad experiences with how it doesn't work. Although Biehl's criticism is not as simple as Bookchin's, who understood consensus as making decisions unanimously, Biehl sees the option of "standing aside" as "nullifying the dissenter as a political being". Standing aside "resolves the problem of dissent essentially by removing the dissenter from the political sphere – and eliminating the dissenting view from the forum of ideas" (page 62). Why? Standing aside doesn't mean that the arguments don't count in the discussions. That wouldn't mean taking consensus seriously. Just the opposite: the arguments don't lead to another decision, but they should be heard and taken into account.

I don't want to make consensus decision making a dogma. Of course some decisions can be made by majority – or using the lot – but to put down consensus decision making so easily doesn't serve the concept of libertarian municipalism. There are other points to criticise and I just want to name them: to participate in local elections is certainly an

issue that provokes much disagreement (and I think we carefully have to look into the possibilities of local councils in different countries to judge a position on this issue), and while the criticism of the state's monopoly on (armed) power is correct, the perspective of citizen militias to me seems more like an inconsistency of the concept than a logical conclusion. However, Biehl's book offers many ideas, and I hope it will lead to a discussion not only among libertarians and anarchists, but also among grassroots movements which much too often look for better decisions by the state instead of working for a truly democratic – and therefore anti-statist – society.

Andreas Speck

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EYEWITNESS REPORT ON THE ATTEMPT BY THE MEXICAN ARMY TO ENTER MORELIA

The rocks rained down on the soldiers in their trucks as the women and children called them murderers, devils and sons of whores. The women and children of Morelia, armed only with sticks, rocks and determination, chased over a hundred US armed Mexican Federal Army soldiers from the outskirts of their community on Thursday 8th January.

Morelia is a Zapatista community and the site of one of the five 'Aguascalientes' constructed by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) as a centre for popular democratic assemblies of the Zapatista communities as well as for regional, national and international gatherings. Since an incursion by the Army earlier in the week most of the men in the community have fled to the mountains leaving the streets quiet and the women in charge of defending the community from further incursions. There had been a false alarm the night before. 7th January was the fourth anniversary of the summary execution of three members of the community by the Army in 1994. The people have good reason for calling the soldiers of the Mexican Army 'murderers'. The community was gathered in the Aguascalientes for a sombre commemoration when it was announced that the soldiers were approaching. The Zapatistas have an effective communications system that gives them considerable advance warning whenever the army approaches. Within minutes a crowd of about seventy women and children armed only with sticks and stones was gathered at the entrance to the town where they blocked the road and prepared to face down the army.

After a couple hours no soldiers had appeared and it was announced that they had turned around and returned to Altamirano. People returned to their homes and went to sleep.

The second alarm that soldiers were approaching Morelia was sounded at about eight in the morning. Within minutes the women and children had gathered again at the entrance to the community. For two hours we all waited for the seven trucks full of soldiers en route from Altamirano that had been spotted by the Zapatistas. Finally it was announced that they had stopped their approach and parked in a soccer field outside Altamirano. The women and most of the children returned to the community, leaving the observers from the Civil Encampment for Peace on the road with a handful of young boys. Shortly before 11:30 we were told that the soldiers were approaching again. The boys ran back to the community. While they were gone the military trucks arrived and stopped about 100 metres from the entrance to Morelia where we were standing.

Within minutes the women and children of Morelia were running down the road. Their fury was palpable. Women no more than four foot eight inches with babies on their backs waved sticks of all sizes. The children gathered stones. They cursed the soldiers in Spanish that would make a sailor blush. Their eyes were filled with rage. The army would not be entering Morelia without a serious fight. As soon as they had all gathered at the entrance to the community the trucks began to turn around. This was a victory but the people of Morelia were not going to let the Army get

away with this naked provocation so easily. They immediately began to charge the trucks, waving their sticks and throwing their stones even though the trucks were well out of range and beating a hasty retreat.

The road into Morelia is in terrible shape and the military trucks could only move so fast. They were faster than the people but they remained in sight for a very long time. For about a kilometre and a half the women and children of Morelia pursued the trucks filled with soldiers, all the while cursing them at the top of their lungs and waving their sticks. Then the military convoy stopped. It took a while for the women and children to regather their forces, but once they had a group of about thirty the assault on the soldiers began. The women began to surround the trucks at the rear of the convoy and beat on them with their sticks while a barrage of rocks came down on the soldiers. As more and more people from the community arrived the assault continued.

At about this time some representatives of the Zapatista-sympathetic PRD municipal government in Altamirano arrived. They sought to calm down the people of Morelia while attempting to get the Army to withdraw again. It was at this point that we were first able to determine the rough size of the convoy. It included three large trucks with 21 soldiers each and six smaller trucks with seven soldiers a piece. There was also a Seguridad Publica pick-up truck with a member of the Federal Judicial Police (PJF) and about four other men wearing civilian clothes but carrying rifles. The PJF officer was wearing a jacket that read 'NARCOTICO' on the back. After a brief stand-off period the military convoy began to drive off again. For a second time the women and children pursued the trucks, shaking their sticks and pelting the soldiers with rocks. They pursued the convoy for another kilometre and a half where it stopped again. The scene repeated itself. By this time a small group of men from Morelia who had come out in trucks were taking up the rear of the crowd, but it was the women who carried out the offensive. Again municipal officials from Altamirano (apparently including the municipal president) attempted to calm the

situation. Finally it was agreed that if the Army withdrew the community would stop pursuing them down the road. But the crowd chased the departing trucks a few dozen yards before stopping their pursuit.

Exhausted and with half a days worth of work to catch up on, the crowd turned around and began the long trek back home.

The attempt by the Army to enter Morelia is part of an intensifying campaign of military harassment of Zapatista communities that began on 3rd January. The army has entered many Zapatista communities in blatant violation of the Federal law on the peace process that strictly prohibits such actions. These actions seem designed to eventually provoke some sort of military response from the Zapatistas that would then serve as a pretext for even more aggressive military action. It also seems that international human rights observers are being targeted by these actions. On 7th January the Army entered the community of La Union and attempted to take two human rights observers with the Civile Encampment for Peace into custody. They were only prevented from doing so when the members of the community came out with sticks, stones and machetes and expressed their determination to fight to keep the observers in their community.

The presence of a PJF officer wearing a NARCOTICO jacket is also significant. The government is attempting to construct some sort of grounds for defining its actions against the Zapatistas as anti-narcotics actions. For example, they claim to have found a small quantity of marijuana along with a supposed Zapatista arms cache in Altamirano. Since much of the new weaponry, vehicles and other equipment being used in these actions is from the US and may have been provided exclusively for use in anti-drug operations, the presence of Mexican narcotics agents in these actions should be seen as serving propaganda purposes. As anyone who has visited the Zapatista communities knows they are probably the most drug free areas in the western hemisphere. In addition to demanding an end to all US military assistance to Mexico, activists in the US should demand an investigation into the use of equipment provided for anti-drug operations in the current military operations against the Zapatistas and a return of all such aid if evidence of misuse is discovered.

Christopher Day

IMMIGRATION: THE 'SANS-PAPIERS'

The condition of *sans-papiers* on hunger strike in Lille is now 'alarming' according to MRAP. Hunger strikers are "on the edge of the irreversible", according to one of their doctors.

Paris, 16th January (AFP): The association MRAP (Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples) is protesting against the 'indifference' of the French authorities to the paperless immigrants (*sans-papiers*) on hunger strike in Lille and has notified Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement of their 'alarming' condition on the 61st day of their hunger strike.

The MRAP is asking the minister to "do all in his power to open a process of negotiation".

Eighteen *sans-papiers* have been on hunger strike since 17th November in support of their demand for legal residence permits. According to the MRAP, nine of them have received an official notice 'requesting' them to leave French soil.

Since the start of the hunger strike, which originally concerned 21 *sans-papiers*, one hunger striker has received a legal residence permit and two have stopped their hunger strike for medical reasons.

Installed in the Cordonnier outbuilding of Lille central hospital, the hunger strikers are examined daily by a voluntary group of fourteen doctors who take turns to monitor their condition.

The hunger strikers are of various nationalities - Moroccan, Algerian, Senegalese, Guinean, Gambian and Laotian - and accept only tea and sugared water. Their weight and condition of health are scrupulously noted every day in an individual file. According to Dr Bertrand Riff, member of the small group of doctors monitoring their condition, the eighteen hunger strikers are now approaching "the edge of the irreversible ... a third of the hunger strikers have lost between 20 and 25 % of their original weight, or 15 to 20 kg, and they are

now approaching an extremely dangerous point and are reaching a stage where they ought to be hospitalised", he informed AFP. "The hunger strikers are accepting only water and tea, and we have had to fight to prevent some of them going even further and refusing all liquids", explained Dr Riff.

To prevent the health problems normally associated with a prolonged fast (neurological, ocular or renal disorders and paralysis of the lower limbs), the hunger strikers have accepted to take B vitamins.

Representatives of the hunger strikers met with the Nord county police authority responsible for immigration on 29th December and demanded that a mixed working group of *sans-papiers*, voluntary-sector support associations and representatives of the immigration authority be set up in order to break the deadlock and stop the hunger strike.

The MRAP has reiterated this demand in a letter to Mr Chevènement, saying that it is convinced that a more open-minded reading of the Circular of Regularisation Conditions issued on 24th June 1997 is possible, "as has been proved by a number of other county immigration offices, which have applied the same conditions with leniency and understanding".

It is urgent to send letters and faxes of protest to the Interior Minister/Home Secretary: Monsieur le Ministre de l'Intérieur Place Beauveau, 75008 Paris, France Fax: (+33) 1 43 59 89 50

Fax a copy of your message to the hunger strikers: (+33) 3 20 86 15 56

For further information, please contact: Coordination Nationale de Sans-Papiers, 22 rue Pajol, 75018 Paris Tel/Fax: (+33) 1 46 07 16 19

Bank a/c: CMDP No. 80187841

PUBLIC WORKERS RAISE THE STRUGGLE IN TURKEY

On 24th January more than 25,000 public workers came together in Ankara (the capital of Turkey) to once again show their determination to obtain the right to establish their trade unions through strikes and collective bargaining.

Public workers in Turkey have been fighting for trade union rights within last eight years, standing out as an outstanding part of working class struggle. Although the existing Constitution and labour codes don't mention the right to establish trade unions, they have established their trade unions through highly militant struggles. Throughout the years of struggle, they have filled the squares of the capital again and again, and once occupied the Kizilay Square during two days. Each time they have been severely attacked by police; thousands of trade union activists have been sentenced to disciplinary fines; thousands have been exiled from one city to another. Some have been tortured. Their trade unions were brought to courts to be closed down, and the union in the telecommunication sector was closed. But they never gave up, and ultimately the state was forced to accept their right for establishing trade unions. The draft law of the government, however, doesn't accept their right for strike and collective bargaining. This is why the public workers were once again in Ankara yesterday. They know that any trade

union right without the right to strike and collective bargaining will not make any sense.

One of the most important aspects of the struggle of public workers (widely called 'civil servants') is that these struggles have put an end to the theoretical discussion whether they should be considered as a part of the working class.

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Rich and Poor



Curiously enough, and starting from different premises, I agree entirely with a recent contributor to *Freedom* who bemoans the fact that among the hundred most popular books which were listed by the *Unobservant*, not one of Freedom Press's titles, excellent as they are, have been included. This has not come as a great surprise to me, although it annoys me nevertheless. Instinctively in the past I have warned comrades that we have no other choice but to work through the anarchist press.

Obviously readers will have to supplement their news diet by the simple method of keeping their ear to the ground and by taking part in anarchist activities and by discussing matters with anarchist comrades. There are also, for those who have the equipment, the new electronic methods of communication which were not designed for anarchists but are usable through the devoted work of the International Section, its address prominently printed on the back page of this journal.

Perhaps people will listen to me seriously for a change, in spite of the fact that all my writings have been couched in the politest terms possible. It is with the greatest reluctance that I have stopped reading the main newspapers, for however talented their staff may be their entire product is meant to brainwash whatever is left in your skull. But then we do publish books which do not get into the list of the hundred most sought after titles in the *Unobservant*.

You may have seen on books published since 1969 the curious letters ISBN. They stand for International Standard Book Number. Freedom Press's prefix is 0 900384, where 0 stands for English-speaking countries and next is the publisher's prefix. The next bit is the title identifier. *Through the Anarchist Press* has the ISBN 0 900384 85 9. The number 85 means it is the 85th book in Freedom Press's title list. Nine is a check digit, for the whole number (always ten numbers) will divide by 11. Respect the opposition. They may be wicked but they are not fools. It might amuse readers to see how this system works. All the numbers in the ISBN are multiplied by the numbers successively: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, x.

Really you might ask what has this cunning calculation involving modulus 11 to do with the 100 best circulated books. After all, it may have been designed to bring some order into book publishing and to accommodate all the millions of books published each year with the computer system, so that by typing in the ISBN number you may get each individual title and publisher. As Sherlock Holmes would say, it is elementary arithmetic – just watch those prefixes, Watson.

I am trying my best to make this matter as simple as possible. Nevertheless, there is still one more hurdle ahead of us: the group identifier will tell you at a glance that the book is published in good old Blimey, or at least a kosher equivalent, but what does the publisher's prefix tell you? The less digits for the publisher's prefix the more room for their titles' numbers, so the total of ISBN's available to each publisher in the range of 00 to 19 (the two digit prefix range) is one million – such as, say, Fontana/Collins whose prefix is 00.

Great elation all round, for we have almost reached the end of this story. At the beginning we referred to the 100 best circulated books in the *Unobservant*. I haven't looked at this paper for a long time, although I used to admire its typography in the past. I am told that its typography now is not what it was and its contents are as lousy as the way it looks. I don't have to be a clairvoyant to deduce that every one of the 100 best circulated books will have one thing in common.

Horrible consequences await those "who would take the whole world to tinker it as they see fit" said Lao Tzu in his *Tao Te Ching*. The humble philosopher would be pleased to know that he has become one of the mentors of the English-speaking world and was published by an eminent three-prefixer with 62,674 other titles on their list. Poor old Lao has lost his rights all right, the worms eat his heart.

To summarise what the 100 best selling books in the *Unobservant* list have in common: the prefixes will either be two, three or four digits. The rest of them will not be listed or reviewed. The subeditor will make sure of that. For the prefix holders 00 to 19 not only control what is best in British publishing, they also own the paper mills, the advertising agencies, the bookshops, the wholesalers – they have cornered the market.

John Rety

Sex, sincerity and politics

Dear Editors,
At last: a female contributor to *Freedom*! I know it's only one, but at least it's a start. If anarchism is ever going to be more than intellectual escapism for unsuccessful dissidents at the male end of the gender spectrum it must try to address and 'embrace' the female persona.

Yes, men are one-track minded and have always used power to indulge their libidos. The human being is still – despite delusions of intelligent grandeur – the human animal. Polygamy may no longer be politically correct, but veiled in frilly lace it is still rampant in the corridors and bedrooms of power.

The popular presidential guise these days is for the powerful man to have an anchoring mother figure as his primary relationship, and essential facilitating launching pad for his continuing expansion into the precarious vicissitudes of the world at large, peopled by competitors, some of whom are sexually attractive and seductive too. A secure 'home base' is a vital condition for progress toward dominance. Nothing succeeds like success and as the process snowballs enslavement – nowadays usually wage enslavement – of other males and colonisation of other females becomes commonplace.

Such behaviour has underpinned human history and continues, East and West, to this day if we care to admit it. Joy Wood (24th January) expands upon the male adaptation of psychology deployed in pursuit of this genetic imperative. If all this sounds one-sided, it isn't: it takes two to tango. In fact more than two: there are often many willing female participants trying to sure up the future by responding to and eliciting the attentions of a dominant male. The drive for secure protection – for herself

and future offspring – underpins the female pursuit agenda. Fortunately (anthropocentrically speaking – other species might count it unlucky) the two strategies dovetail (sic) successfully and ensure that the human animal thrives. For while his pursuit of power yields him access to many women, her pursuit of security yields her access to powerful males of whom there are very few, which explains the willingness (albeit reluctant) to settle for a share. The women even the score by having liaisons with sexually energetic male opportunists who slip in when the dominant male's back is turned (none of this behaviour is consciously motivated, which is why we can pretend it isn't true and invoke romantic fairytales to sublimate it). It is interesting to speculate whether women's liberation may eventually reverse the behaviours and introduce widespread disguised polyandry.

When there are no suitably protective males available, such as now with mass emasculation by redundancy (or by oestrogenics in the environment) and with others rendered feckless by social deprivation, they can always try turning to that big daddy, the State. Nowadays an even bigger daddy solicits bondage: the multi-national business conglomerate to whom vast millions worldwide prostitute their lives.

It is no good denying or glossing over the instinctual nature of our attitudes and behaviour. As long as we continue to do so they become the samsaric trap of perennial projection onto others – a rationale for distrust, antagonism and conflict – the excuse to call out the lynch mob. Far better to admit, own and embrace what is beneath the surface in each and every one of us, and begin to use this awareness as a basis for mutual recognition and understanding.

Tom Merrington

Can only anarchists be ethical?

Dear *Freedom*,
Only anarchists can be ethical? (*Freedom*, 24th January). I think not. To accept Colin Johnson's absurd logic is to accept that only anarchists are free and only anarchists think for themselves. What utter rubbish! Being a non-anarchist does not mean accepting religion, Marxism, liberalism, paternalism or any other form of dogma. Thinking for oneself is about looking at an issue on its merits (even in the light of one's own precepts, but rejecting them if they do not fit the case). Such a thought process can be undertaken by anarchists, socialists, liberals (of all sorts) and even conservatives. Indeed some religious believers are better at this than some anarchists.

Being ethical means acting ethical, and it is daft to suggest that only anarchists can do this. I don't even accept that there is anything in the anarchists' creed (I can't think of a better word) that leads one to act ethical. Let me be even more provocative. It is possible to act in deference to moral rules set by some religion, or other dogma, and act ethical, if the rules you follow lead to ethical behaviour – what you would do if you followed Colin's 'rational' thought process. If doing 'X' is right, it is right whatever one's motives and even if one happens to be a non-anarchist or even (horror of horrors) opposed to anarchism – though one might add, 'whatever that is'.

Edmund McArthur

Dear *Freedom*,
I hope Colin Johnson will forgive me if I suggest that his article 'Only Anarchists can be Ethical' (14th January) is very wrong.

Ethics cannot be "based on reason and rational or logical thought". As Hume famously wrote: "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger".

Kant's Categorical Imperative is useless as a guide. It says: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law". A

suicidal misanthropist with a bacteriological weapon could wipe out the human race without contravening that.

Johnson writes: "Ethics, basically, is about making choices in life". That begs the much disputed question, what does it mean to make a choice? Do we ever really choose, or are all our 'choices' determined by factors outside our control?

My hunch is that we are not autonomous choosers (for arguments against the very intelligibility of the notion of autonomy see Thomas Nagel's *The View from Nowhere*). If we are not autonomous choosers then ethical questions, though they may be 'unavoidable' are not answerable by ethical theories based on the assumption that we are.

I'm inclined to say that ethical questions disappear when we deeply understand that everything that takes place in life, including every 'choice', is part of a single unitary flow; and also to say that this understanding is the essence of love and compassion.

So those who "consider that freedom itself answers all ethical questions" may not be so dumb, if what they mean by freedom is love. Ethics is an intellectual activity. Love is on an altogether different plane, and with it comes a great sense of freedom.

Francis Ellingham

— COPY DEADLINE —
The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 21st February, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 12th February

What a way to run a railway?

Dear Friends,
Re 'What a way to run a Railway' (*Freedom*, 24th January), the article quotes 1. "nothing was done by the British Transport Police to stop the stone-throwing"; 2. "a private security force ... couldn't do worse than the British Transport Police".

The writer here seems to be advocating police intervention and defending the use of private security firms in an anarchist paper. Have I missed something? The writer is discussing a serious issue, but oversteps the mark in seeming to advocate intervention by the authorities – a totally untenable position in an anarchist paper.

Jim Huggon

[We leave it to our correspondent 'Northern Reporter' to reply in detail, but would point out that the usual justification for the maintenance of a police force, the mainstay of government, is to prevent anti-social behaviour. Anyone who travels on railways knows of the problems in urban areas ranging from vandalism to attacks on railway workers, and which the police seem powerless to prevent. Yet there is no shortage of police officers whenever it is deemed necessary to arrest political protestors, whose acts have in no way caused damage to persons or property – Editors]

please keep sending in
your letters and
donations ...

Class struggle and social protest

Dear *Freedom*,
My thanks to NW for his comments on my article in *The Raven* No. 36.

I accept the rebuke. I should not have suggested that the term 'class struggle' originated with authoritarian socialists and was taken up by anarchists later. The founding fathers of the anarchist movement would have regarded 'class struggle anarchist' as tautology, since they saw the proletariat-versus-bourgeoisie struggle as part (at least) of the struggle for a classless society. It is only since other anarchists have questioned this that the term 'class struggle anarchist' has become current.

The trouble with 'class struggle' is that it is often used to mean 'individual workers may have to suffer, to bring about the triumph of the workers as a class'. Thus it has led many well-meaning people into supporting murderous tyrannies like that of Lenin. Of course that is not what self-styled class struggle anarchists intend by the term 'class struggle'. But it might save misunderstanding if they called themselves something else, for instance 'old style anarchists'.

Donald Room

Are you attending the Conference in Stockholm?

Don Pedelty would like to contact any comrades planning to attend the conference on syndicalism at Stockholm University on 13th to 14th March 1998. His telephone number is 0982 560389.

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- PROGRAMME 1998 -

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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 (or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW, tel: 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

OLDHAM ANTI-JSA

Tel: 0161-628 6182 for details

MANCHESTER ANTI-JSA GROUP

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

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