

# FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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## THREAT TO MIDDLE EAST ... and the innocent victims

As we write Iraq is in the news as a potential threat to world peace. What hypocrisy. Apart from the 'illegal' world-wide drugs industry, only the arms industry comes second and, as we never cease pointing out in *Freedom*, both politicians and the arms industry have a vested interest – the former to justify their exorbitant so-called defence budget and the latter to make exorbitant profits and justify them by saying that their industry of death provides tens of thousands of jobs.

When, we anarchists ask, is humanity going to grow up? Iraq is no more than a small pawn in the political/economic game of the big powers. Iraq was just part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the First World War, and Britain was laying down the law in the Middle East. Again in the Second World War Britain, with the Americans, determined the future of the Middle East. Why? Surely only oil interested the first world guzzlers of the product. And of course American interests included the powerful American Jewish lobby which was not only involved in the creation of the Israeli state in Palestine but was also responsible for the American government not only financing the Israeli state but also the creation of the Israeli nuclear industry. It is no longer a secret that Israel has nuclear weapons (thanks to a responsible Israeli worker, Mordecai Vanunu, who for his trouble spent eleven years in solitary confinement in Israel's jails – and if the world doesn't protest to the Israeli henchmen Vanunu will either go mad or die in prison before his eighteen year sentence is served).

Perhaps by the time this issue of *Freedom* appears the Americans and the Brits will realise that they won't get rid of Saddam Hussein by bombing innocent Iraqi men, women and children. Iraq is no threat to world peace, any more than Israel, but in that small corner of the world called

### lift economic sanctions don't bomb iraq



the Middle East, of course, they can cause the kind of 'trouble' that results in thousands of innocent lives being sacrificed while those at the top go on lording it over their helpless victims.

Far from laying the blame on Saddam and all the (for this writer) nameless would-be dictators in the Middle East, when will we face up to the reality that both America and the European Union are only interested in the oil and thereby seeking to ensure some kind of cohabitation in the troubled Middle East. In this writer's opinion this cannot be, so long as Israel, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, continues to have the financial and political support of the United States. Since Israel is not one of the oil-rich nations of the

Middle East but is one of the nuclear weapons powers in the area, who knows whether Israel's paymaster the USA will decide to sacrifice Israel in favour of the oil. Much will depend, we think, on the political power of the Jewish lobby in the USA. But even so it would surprise this writer if in the meantime the US air strike against Iraq were to take place, if only because it would solve none of the real problems of the Middle East nor the financial interests of Britain and the USA.

Meanwhile millions of innocent people, Arabs and Jews, live not knowing what their future will be. Why? Because basically, under capitalism, governments are only concerned with exploiting humanity.

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CHUMBAWAMBA'S TRIUMPH

## SELF-DECEPTION IS A FINE ART



"It was all a publicity stunt!" claimed John Prescott's office, following the champagne bucket chucking incident by Chumbawamba star Danbert Nobacon at the Brit Awards. A publicity stunt condemned by the party which has produced little else but publicity stunts. From the party which has given public relations a bad name.

One insider from the pop scene remarked: "It couldn't have happened to a nicer fella!" That comment came as Mr Prescott exited, bearing the expression of someone suffering from a severe case of the piles.

Backstage observers suggest: "Mr Prescott was really flustered. His face was red with anger." Cherie Blair rushed over to cool him down, and later Ginger Spice 'comforted' him before he blew a gasket.

What did they expect, these prancing politicians, these cultural butterflies? For some time now Bill Drummond of the art pranksters K Foundation has been warning the 'pop establishment' for tangling with New Labour, and people like Alan McGee of Oasis for joining the government's task force on the arts. He said: "It is the job of the arts to stand outside the establishment". From now on any politicians who goes to a 'gig' or award ceremony is going to have to have eyes in his or her arse. From now on they must ask themselves if all that champagne and smoked salmon is worth it? Is it even worth a wank to have Ginger Spice's shoulder to cry on?

### WHO DID THE DIRT ON THE DOCKERS?

The *Independent*, which scooped the others with a front-page photograph of Prescott on Tuesday 10th February, said: "Chumbawamba has accused the government of selling out the Liverpool dockers". The *Daily Telegraph* claimed that the group had changed the lyrics of their hit single *Tubthumping* to "New Labour sold out the dockers just like they sold out the rest of us".

The group has given £20,000 to the Liverpool dockers – the proceeds of a concert done last October. At the ceremony one of the group was wearing a T-shirt with 'SOLD OUT' across it.

There is also concern in artistic and drama circles that the government's New Deal and Welfare to Work programme is hitting the industry. Less successful folk in those kind of jobs have to spend time in the dole queue. Over-zealous claimant advisers, egged on by New Labour, promise to make life hell for many in the arts.

Mr Nobacon, a vegetarian and performer at anarchist events, clearly has no time for New Labour. For years the group lived in a squat in Leeds. In a statement to the press he said: "People talk about New Labour being wonderful, but they are an illusion and say the same things as everyone else, but with bigger smiles and sharper suits".

It was a sad looking saturated Mr Prescott and deputy prime minister who denounced the act as 'cowardly' and 'contemptible', but

Nobacon simply said of the soaking: "It's a metaphor for the underdog pissing on the steps of Downing Street".

### POLITICAL POSEURS

Outside the event there was no peace for the politicians either. Cherie Blair had to try and sneak past two hundred protesters angry about conditions in the record and CD industry. These demonstrators constantly tried to gatecrash the ceremony, and one vaulted the barricade to buttonhole Ms Blair. The industry is plagued by low pay and bad conditions, their agents in the private sector traffic in cheap labour.

Chumbawamba came out and shook hands with the protesters before the incident inside the Brit Awards with Prescott. Nigel Cook from Blackburn, a member of North West Against the JSA, has helped to get the CD-packers' campaign going and was present on the London demo.

Glenda Cooper in the *Independent* claimed that the New Labour government had become the kiss of death to bands like Oasis. She claimed a guilt by association was operating, and she warned that "no one will be cheering the All Saints quite so loudly if they become associated with the party that cuts benefits".

There seems to be an air of disgust growing about all these shams and charlatans in government, like Prescott, who are trying to pass themselves off as trendies. Ms Cooper writes that "the government needed a blast of icy water to remind its members to stop behaving like stary-eyed teens when a pop star swings into view".

There is something faintly obscene about these middle aged folk fancying themselves in this way. To eat my breakfast I had to avert my gaze from Prescott's corrupt countenance in the newspaper. Ms Cooper claims that "by trying too hard to be in touch with popular culture, they're not only making themselves look silly but destroying the street-cred of countless stars along the way".

### THE ART OF BEING WITH-IT

It's hard to know what to say about all this. There's always Mandelson and the Millennium Dome, of which Brian Sedgemore, Labour MP, felt moved to remark to an audience at the Tate: "Are you prepared to accept New Labour's assertion that the perfect way to sum up two thousand years of culture is through the Millennium Dome, courtesy of Micky Mouse and Ryutaro Hashimoto".

What we are having to endure is a government full to the brim with charlatanry, self-deception and intellectual shallowness. It is almost indescribable, but Brian Sedgemore tries: "New Labour want art that is as pungent as processed cheese, as soul-searching as a conversation between Po, La La, Dipsy and the other Teletubby, as original as Dolly the Sheep. As part of the politics of contentment, New Labour wants colours that do not clash,

textures that do not distort and shapes which cubists would not understand."

It seems like we are going to be overwhelmed by the most horrible humbug with this government. They can't stand the kind of mockery which Frank Field suffered from North West Against the JSA in Birkenhead last summer, and John Prescott had to put up with from Chumbawamba last week at the Brit Awards. They put a brave face on, of course, with the help of Ginger Spice and Cherie Blair, and despite Mrs Prescott's tears and the deputy prime minister's high colour, they were determined to wait and see the band Fleetwood Mac.

But one cannot help but feel as Wittgenstein did about Shakespeare: "When, for instance, I head the expression of admiration for Shakespeare by distinguished men ... I can never rid myself of the suspicion that praising him has been the conventional thing to do".

In trying to place itself inside popular culture New Labour is deluding itself and failing to recognise its own insignificance and impotence. The vanity of John Prescott and the wonky women who make up Blair's Babes is overwhelming, but they are like ageing butterflies who suddenly develop a craze for acupuncture.

Albert Shore

## WESTERN PEACE PROTESTERS ENTER IRAQ

Protesters who claim that UN sanctions have caused deaths and malnutrition of Iraqi children are attempting to breach UN sanctions by openly taking medicines to children's hospitals in Iraq.

Freedom correspondent Milan Rai, together with fellow ARROW (Active Resistance to the Roots of War) member Martin Thomas set off from Britain to Iraq, having informed the Department of Trade and Industry that they wouldn't bother to apply for export licences for the medicines, valued at £400, which they knew was in breach of both British law and UN sanctions.

On their arrival in Jordan, Rai and Thomas found a note in their baggage from Customs officials at Heathrow Airport informing them that the medicines had been confiscated.

However, in anticipation of this, the two protesters had ordered a replacement batch of medicines from pharmacies in Jordan, where they linked up with six Americans from Voices in the Wilderness, on an identical mission, and gained press and television coverage.

The group left Jordan on the morning of Thursday 12th February to go into Iraq.

— PART ONE —

# ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM: AN ENGLISH ECLIPSE

Anarcho-syndicalism is an annoying hyphenated conflation on the English tongue. You can't expect the English to take to that hyphenated confection of one Latin word and one Greek. Hyphenated words too readily remind the British working class of upper class names.

Consequently anarcho-syndicalism has historically been one of the most marginal political forces in our society. At the time of the formation of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation in the 1950s, James Pinkerton tells me that the membership was tiny. Jim Pinkerton was national secretary of the SWF until 1963. From about 1960, when I joined, the Federation experienced a rise in members, but this was part of a general upsurge of interest in the extra-parliamentary politics of the British left related to the activities of the young in the peace movement. Over all, the anarcho-syndicalists have always tended to be a small fraction of the anarchist movement in Britain in the last half of the twentieth century.

There was an upsurge in 'anarcho-syndicalist' industrial and political activity in the 1960s. The National Rank and File Movement was formed in 1961, and the anarcho-syndicalists on Freedom Press collaborated with those in the SWF and others for a period while the Movement was a going concern. An affiliated Industrial Action Movement was set up in the north of England. There were also active industrial sections attached to the Committee of 100 and the peace movement.

Of the National Rank and File Movement, Peter Turner, a former secretary of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation, has written that "it was an attempt to forge an organisation of solidarity, which would assist workers in struggle". For a year or two it had some impact in the building trade and some areas of engineering, where some of its members were based. The *Sunday Telegraph* ran a few scare stories. Brian Behan, one of the prominent figures in the movement, was threatened with the withdrawal of his union card on the building site, an engineer was expelled from his union, and I was sacked in February 1961 for my involvement in producing an apprentice rank and file journal which had been put out in Lancashire after the engineering apprentice strikes of the previous year.

In the print trade – where several libertarian activists including Bill Christopher (SWF and *Freedom*), James Pinkerton (SWF), John Lawrence (Freedom) and Laurens Otter (SWF) worked – there was also anarchist activity. This continued through the 1960s into the 1970s. Many of the disputes within the newspaper and print trade were covered in *Freedom*. Pete Turner and Bill Christopher were *Freedom* editors at this time, and they gave wide coverage to many industrial disputes.

Among the engineering apprentices through the 1960s we had anarchist participation in the two national strikes in May 1960 and November 1964. Two syndicalist apprentice papers were produced – *Progress* and *Industrial Youth* –

which ran until 1967 and at their peak had a readership of 2,500 mostly around Manchester. These papers were influenced by members of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation and the Manchester Anarchist Group. They were sold on the factory floor, at technical colleges in the North West and posted to libertarian shopfloor activists throughout the country.

Around the late 1960s there was a failure to follow through and develop this industrial activity. By 1970 most of the new generation of libertarians did not take anarcho-syndicalism seriously, even if they called themselves anarcho-syndicalists. The older, more mature militants like Brian Behan, Bill Christopher, James Pinkerton, Ken Hawkes, Tom Brown, Pete Turner and Jack Stevenson either retired or lost influence to the bubbling campaigners against the Vietnam war and the ridiculous romanticism of the Angry Brigade.

Not for the first time English anarchism chose an exotic route at a moment when history required us to bury ourselves in more boring pursuits in an attempt to participate in the ordinary lives and struggles of our fellow citizens. Thus the English anarchists threw themselves into opposing a foreign war in Vietnam, and helping Spanish political prisoners, when Britain was on the threshold of a round of industrial action such as was to shake British society as at no time since the General Strike. The consequence was a failure to come to terms with our popular culture.

## TOWARDS A BUSINESSLIKE ANARCHISM

At the end of his book *The Making of the English Working Class*, E.P. Thompson writes: "In the failure of the two traditions [the syndicalist working class popular culture and the intellectual current of the Romantic Movement] to come to a point of junction, something was lost. How much we cannot be sure, for we are among the losers."

Mr Thompson was addressing the historical situation at the start of the nineteenth century and the social segregation which plagues our society to this day.

The historian Thompson talks of the industrial revolution by 1833 alienating the common people from the political process: "Hence the workers who had been 'insolently placed without the pale of social government' developed, stage by stage, a theory of syndicalism, or 'Invented Masonry'." He claimed that the great spiritual gain of the Industrial Revolution was a collective self-consciousness which contained the dangerous tenet that production must be "not for profit, but for use".

Now Thompson ponders that the root of this formation stretched backwards for a hundred years before 1832. He adds: "From Tudor times onwards this artisan culture had grown more complex with each phase of technical and social change ... Enriched by the experiences of the seventeenth century, carrying through the eighteenth century the intellectual and libertarian traditions which we have described, forming their own traditions of mutuality in the friendly society and trades club, these men did not pass, in one generation, from the peasantry to the new industrial town. They suffered the experience of the Industrial Revolution as articulate, free-born Englishmen."

This 'inverted masonry' or syndicalism has come down to us now at the end of the twentieth century. I became more clearly aware of this while editing and writing the blurb for Geoffrey Ostergaard's book *The Tradition of Workers' Control*. While in the last century the Romantics like "Wordsworth and Coleridge had withdrawn behind their own ramparts of disenchantment", so most of the anarchists from the late 1960s onwards stayed out of the workers' movement.

I cannot help but feel that when and if they approach the common people of England, a certain section of the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement hide their social disablement behind a wall of snobbery. And yet Mr Thompson argued, and I think he is right, that the most distinguished popular culture England has known came out of the craft culture. My own father from as long as I can remember was a keen reader of *Hobbies* magazine and his work-bench occupied my bedroom of our two-up two-down terraced house. E.P. Thompson makes big claims for this tradition: "It contained the massive diversity of skills of the workers in metal, wood, textiles and ceramics, without whose inherited 'mysteries' and superb ingenuity with primitive tools the inventions of the Industrial Revolution could scarcely have got further than the drawing-board. From this culture of the craftsman and the self-taught there came scores of inventors, organisers, journalists and political theorists."

The spirit of this kind of English syndicalism or 'inverted masonry' is captured by George Eliot in the words she delivers through the mouth of Felix Holt the radical: "I have the blood of a line of craftsmen in my veins, and I want to stand up for the lot of the handicraftsmen as a good lot, in which a man may be better trained to all the best functions of his nature than if he belonged to the grimacing set who have visiting cards and are proud to be thought richer than their neighbours." The appalling standoffishness of the English anarchists and others on the left has deprived the labour movement of what it most required: a libertarian vision.

What we are talking about here is a kind of cultural cack-handedness – a sort of civic illiteracy – by those who withdraw from society into a snobbish segregation. This cultural retreatism of some present-day anarchists was mirrored by the Romantics in the nineteenth century – their criticism of utilitarianism ran its parallel but altogether separate course from those working syndicalists who met utilitarianism in their daily lives. Mr Thompson writes: "After William Blake, no mind was at home in both cultures".

Some time ago a former editor of *Freedom*, who had an upbringing in an Italian family of Soho shopkeepers, wrote to me to say that he was retiring because he couldn't cope with the bumper tomato crop of 1995 and continue to edit the paper. He is a skilled market gardener who has produced globe artichokes for the restaurant trade. This put me in mind of what Ludwig Wittgenstein once said to a friend: "I am the son of a businessman and I want to be businesslike about philosophy". Now the problem is that many anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists have not been businesslike about their anarchism. We've been cursed with the cult of the dilettante and the weekend anarchist.

(to be continued)

## SYNDICALISM WITHOUT SYNDICATES

Syndicalism without syndicates? My contention is that we have to make a virtue out of necessity and accept that there isn't going to be a British CNT (or IWW for that matter). There are reasons why dual unionism has never taken off in this country: loyalty to existing unions and idea of fighting within these structures, and the tendency to form unofficial bodies rather than set up new radical official ones.

Syndicalists of the Solidarity Federation and IWW, who put great effort into building new unions, should look at examples in history where revolutionary unions have been launched successfully. Not once has a syndicalist union been founded through the efforts of handfuls of activists and syndicalist enthusiasts. History shows new unions can only be formed when thousands of trade unionists reach the end of their tether, or existing radical organisations decide to co-ordinate their forces.<sup>1</sup>

The American IWW was founded in 1905 by the coming together of dissident unions such as the Western Federation of Miners, Socialist Trades and Labour Alliance and the United Brewery and Metalworkers unions. The Spanish CNT, formed in 1910, was the confederation of existing local syndicalist unions sponsored by the Solidaridad Obrera Union Federation of Catalonia – a long overdue co-ordination of syndicalist trade unionism. The necessity for this was made clear by the events of the Barcelona 'Tragic Week' and the execution of Ferrer. The SAC of Sweden, long campaigned for by Swedish young socialists, could only emerge when thousands of workers were disillusioned by the betrayal of a general strike by the Social Democrats. The Italian syndicalist union in its original incarnation came about only after tens of thousands of workers enrolled in direct action committees of Camera de Lavoro (trades councils) and independent unions formed the new union in the wake of betrayals by the CGL union federation. Similarly in more recent times the Italian COBAS (rank and file committees) were born in the mid-1980s in Italy after the CGIL and other unions refused to defend the Scala-Mobile which linked wages to inflation, causing thousands of workers to break ranks with the reformist unions. These breakaway organisations are now inside this new

confederation.

So why the history lesson? Because it shows that small political groups do not form new unions, that the unions come about as a result of deeper moods within the working class and are not products of artificial constructs.<sup>2</sup>

This is all common sense. Syndicalists without syndicates work on strike support committees such as at Magnet and in the continuing Docker's support groups. They work on trades councils and in their own unions branches, in Groundswell, in Reclaim the Streets. In this country syndicalist ideas have only been influential when injected into mainstream organisations: Tom Man and Guy Bowman's Industrial Syndicalist Education League with its impact on the industrial unrest of 1910-14, the South Wales Unofficial Miners Reform Committee, the Shop Stewards Movement during and after the Great War, the shop-floor syndicates of the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> These are real traditions for this country, a practice-based ideology and one we need to embrace if we are to shed our current invisibility.

These are the British traditions which the Bradford Conference on 14th March at the 1 in 12 Club seeks to further.

Guy Cheverton  
Hull Syndicalists

1. These circumstances account for the formation of British-based breakaways from existing unions i.e. the building workers' industrial union in 1914, the break from the TGWU to form the 'Blue Union' of northern dockers in the 1950s, the change of status from the Rank and File Movement to the Independent Radical Trade Union of the Offshore Industries Liaison Committee in this decade.

2. The Italian syndicalist union would seem an exception to this rule. Re-founded as a split from the Italian Anarchist Federation in 1979, it only reaches its current strength of three thousand as a beneficiary of the general ferment within Italian trade unionism in the late 1980s. This gave us COBAS and other new union federations.

3. See the introduction to *The Tradition of Workers' Control*, page 24, a collection of essays by Geoffrey Ostergaard (Freedom Press, £6.95).

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## Technology & Unemployment

When I was a boy back in the 1950s most fellows quit school at age 16. They weren't interested in going to university or even a technical college. Most wouldn't even bother with an apprenticeship. These were simple fellows with simple interests: buying a car, especially a loud and powerful one with a V8 motor like a Ford or Chevy. A few years later they got married, bought a house, had kids, went bowling or fishing on weekends. Intellectual snobs might look down upon them, but they were decent hard-working salt of the earth types. They were able to realise their simple desires by getting high-paid jobs as miners, factory and mill workers or loggers. Back then no one ever saw a big strong young guy on welfare. It was unheard of.

As everybody knows, these jobs have tended to disappear. In 1960 the forests employed 94,000 workers in Canada, today the figure is 64,000. The 161,000 miners of 1985 are only 128,000 ten years later. During the same time period more than 100,000 factory jobs have gone. The popular scapegoat for this job loss is so-called free trade and other variations on that theme, such as job-flight and unfair competition from low-wage third world countries. No doubt there is some truth in these explanations, but these are not the most important reasons for the decline in employment.

First off, only about 10% of the economy is based on imports and about 90% of those come from other wealthy countries. While Adidas from Indonesia and VCR's from Malaysia are very obvious, in reality such trade makes up a minuscule aspect of the total economy. But this is not the clearest evidence. For 'free trade' to be a serious job destroyer it must be successful in undermining the primary and manufacturing industries. In other words, growth in these sectors should be seriously impeded by cheap foreign competition. This is not the case. Mining, forestry and manufacturing have, in reality, doubled the value of production (inflation adjusted) in the last forty years. Total value of manufacturing in 1960 stood at \$50.1 billion and in 1995 was \$103.4 billion. Industry is producing far more with far less workers, and many of the remaining industrial jobs require skilled technicians or trained machine operators, not simple labourers. Had the unskilled industrial workforce expanded

at the same rate as production, there would be extra *one million* high-paid industrial jobs and virtually zero unemployment among the less educated sector of the workforce. The real culprit is mechanisation and cybernation – the replacement of workers by machines, not 'free trade' or the third world.

Not that we didn't know this was going to happen. Way back in 1962 I read articles in the mass media saying that within thirty years technological unemployment would reach crisis proportions. Presumably politicians, businessmen, academics and union leaders read these articles too. What did they do about it, given they had almost a generation to prepare for it? Nothing of lasting duration. They expanded the state sector and threw everyone who couldn't work as a paper-pusher onto the welfare rolls. This helped create the fiscal crisis of the state which ushered in the present neo-conservative era. (Thanks a lot, guys!) They destroyed a whole sector of the working class, turning unskilled industrial workers into marginals and lumpens. This created a division in society between people on welfare and the remaining workers – a division which did not exist in 1960 since everybody, but a few widows and the handicapped, worked for a living.

One could say of corporate state capitalism that everything that should be planned isn't and everything that shouldn't be planned is. Thus on one hand we have endless regulations controlling every aspect of your life, and on the other hand technological unemployment gets an ad hoc last minute treatment. Am I being unfair in thinking the blame placed on globalisation is simply a way of covering up the failures in dealing with this problem?

While it is true that the economy has generated many new jobs, not all of which are low-wage 'McJobs', most of these are not suitable for the sort of fellow who was, or would have been, a logger or a miner. Not everybody can be a yuppie, a university graduate, a technician or even a waiter. Why should people who are happy doing a simple useful task not be allowed to get on with it? I don't have any answers, but I do know that work-fare or forcing the poor to work at a minimum wage is *not* the answer. What they need is what this sector once had: unskilled work at reasonably decent wages.

Larry Gambone

## Counsellors in the Careers Advice Service

The other day I had recourse to my local Careers Advice Service, or rather the local 'Career and Business Partnership' as it has been called since my local county council privatised its Occupational Guidance Service. This formerly free public service now charges £50 per hour to people looking for a new job to replace the supposed 'job for life' that they were thrown out of (dock work, the motor industry, local council direct labour) recently.

I handed over my £50 in advance as requested, sat down and produced my CV, but before I could say 'Here are my qualifications, here is my experience, I want you to know on the basis of this information what sort of job you think I should be going for and who the employers are that I should apply to' my counsellor started to go into an hour-long lecture on the importance of maintaining eye contact in an interview and the benefits of various relaxation and confidence-building techniques. After an hour of this I had had enough.

"Look", I said, "Employers don't like to be stared at by an interviewee, it makes them think you're some kind of nutter. And they don't like them to show too much confidence either – they interpret it as cockiness and arrogance. I came here to find out what sort of job I would have most chance of success in trying to get".

"That's not my job" replied my counsellor. "Then please tell me whose job it is" I replied.

"You will get nowhere unless you acquire a more cooperative attitude" retorted the counsellor.

At that point I realised that I was getting nowhere and that I didn't need to pay £50 to have my intelligence insulted, I can get that for free just by turning on the television – So I walked out.

It should be quite clear to everyone that Careers Counsellors are not there to help you find work, they are nothing but bullshit artists whose job is to make you feel that it is *your fault that you are unemployed*. The idea is that you will be so consumed with shame and self-disgust that you won't even go out of the house (that is presuming that you actually have somewhere to live) and that you will crawl into an obscure corner and drop dead, preferably somewhere where Blair, Brown, Field et al, won't have to step over you on their way to the opera.

There is nothing to be gained by going to careers advisers and counsellors. Their heads are full of unscientific clap-trap, like the interpretation of body language. They might just as well advise people on the basis of their star sign, their palm print or their feng shui.

Quite honestly, anyone seeking a way out of poverty and unemployment would be better off rounding up a couple of hundred people in a similar position and having a damn good riot instead.

Keith Ackermann

## EDINBURGH: 'Three Strikes' campaign to continue despite sentence

On 11th February Michael Vallance of the Edinburgh Claimants' Centre was sentenced to 150 days community service for his involvement in the issuing of warning to Marianne MacDonald, a Project Work interviewer. This was for his part in the 'three strikes' campaign of the jobless against over-zealous employment service staff. The Procurator Fiscal had considered a custodial sentence.

This threat did not save Ms MacDonald, however. That very afternoon twenty activists

wearing masks in the image of the Macdonald woman, issued her with her third strike.

Apparently Ms MacDonald is a bit of a tartar with local claimants in Edinburgh and there have been nine complaints about her treatment of the jobless.

The Edinburgh Claimants' Centre has declared that they will not be intimidated by the courts and that the 'three strikes and you're out' campaign will continue.

Edinburgh Reporter

## Who remembers Emanuel Michaels of Workers' Circle?

I am researching the history of the Workers' Circle, a Jewish friendly society based in the East End which brought together many different strands of radical opinion.

Jewish anarchists were very active in the early years of the society – indeed, Rudolf Rocker and many of the Yiddish-speaking group around him were founder members before the First World War.

Another of those who remained active in the Circle was Emanuel Michaels, and I am writing in the hope that readers may be able to help me learn more about him. I believe he was active in Jewish and general anarchists circles in the '20s and '30s, but that's about all I've heard. Any information that you may be able to provide about his political activity, occupation, etc., would be of great interest. I am also keen to contact any children or other relatives of his.

David Mazower

(Readers with any information should write c/o Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX)



**Ecology and Anarchism: essays and reviews on contemporary thought\*** by Brian Morris, Images Publishing. A smart-looking hardback which gathers together the best of Morris's writings over twenty years. They range from anarchism in relation to the ideas of figures as diverse as Chomsky, Tolstoy, Marx and Lao Tzu, through critical reflections on eco-feminism, deep ecology, ecological humanism, eco-socialism and social ecology, to perceptive critiques of individuals of varying importance and their achievements – Flores Magon, Ayn Rand, Erich Fromm, Ghandi, Baden-Powell and others. In addition there are pieces on the Bolshevik traditions, the Sans Culottes and the Enragés, and many more. The articles are highly informative, wide-ranging, economical in style and easily accessible. Morris is a sympathetic writer who can be critical of an individual without indulging in personal abuse, and whose early life as a manual worker has clearly informed his later literary and academic career. 192 pages, currently at the reduced price of £9.95 while stocks last (normal price £14.95).

**Small Communal Experiments and Why They Fail\*** by Peter Kropotkin, Jura Media. We have limited stocks of this collection of three articles on a self-explanatory theme, out of print for a century or more, which throw a fascinating light on one of the pre-occupations of the time. Still relevant today, they may even still be so in another hundred years. Indeed the publisher may want to consider sending a copy to NASA, for the editor's preface informs us that despite Kropotkin's warnings "these articles contain much good and practical advice to those who are still tempted to found small communal experiments in the wilderness, or perhaps those tempted to colonise space". 24 pages, £1.

**Workers' Self-Management in the United States\*** by Christopher Gunn, Cornell University Press. This is at the same time an academic yet highly practical examination of the technical and financial aspects of workers' control. It also serves as a survey of worker-controlled enterprises, which Gunn admits are relatively few and scattered in the US at the moment – indeed it may be news to some people that there are any at all in the temple of capitalism – and as a guide for those thinking of setting one up. It explores what little research there is into possible formulas and conditions for the success of worker-run firms, and lays down the common criteria which must be taken on board from the beginning if they are to learn from past mistakes and failures and avoid re-inventing the wheel. To this end there are in-depth studies of several groups such as the Forest Workers' Cooperatives, the Plywood Manufacturing Cooperatives, and workers' take-overs of existing firms such as that achieved by the Denver Yellow Cab Cooperative Association. Gunn discusses the problems inherent in capitalist society, but rather than waste time and space on ritual denunciations – superfluous for those already committed to worker control – he shows how such companies deal with issues such as decision-making and democratic control, shares and finance, including borrowing, and other aspects of the use of capital. But he does emphasise that for such operations to become more widespread and able to function in a stable and sympathetic environment requires, in the long term, fundamental political, economic and social change, and shows how such firms can themselves contribute towards that change. Examples of workers' control precedents globally are also examined. Readers competent in algebra can amuse themselves with Appendix II which includes equations quantifying value

## Food for Thought ... and Action! Ideas for the Intrepid Intellect

'labour', 'capital' and so on, reminding one of those on 'profit' in *Modern Capitalism and Revolution\** by Paul Cardan (£2, and very useful complementary reading). 252 pages with bibliography and index. Formerly £10.95, now just £4.25 but limited stock.

**Saint Che: the truth behind the legend of the heroic guerrilla, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara\*** by Larry Gambone, Red Lion Press. Published on the thirtieth anniversary of Che's death, this pamphlet amounts to a de-throning of one of the left's 1960s martyrs who was posthumously canonised – at least in virtual reality – courtesy of some enterprising poster production company, thanks to whom dodgy plaster-work on the walls of bedsits and student digs all over the world has lain undiscovered for decades hidden by Che's ubiquitous image. A timely de-throning, this, as Cuba, in whose revolution Che Guevara was a key player, has recently been the subject of media attention, mainly due to it having just been blessed by a visit from His Gormlessness the Pope, whose predecessors all pointedly failed to canonise the old jungle fighter. No doubt Their Hopelessness found him too much of a lefty People's Liberator. But Gambone strips away such myths like plaster from a wall, exposing Guevara as a Stalinist, a bureaucrat and – shades of the Holy Inquisition here – an executioner. Simon Templar he ain't. Essential reading for all those who worshipped, or still do, at the feet of Saint Che. Gambone has unintentionally done a great service to unemployed plasterers everywhere, and deserves a sainthood himself. 12 pages, £1.

**Lobster\*** No. 34. Following the two short pieces in the last *Freedom* on compulsory lobotomies and their possible re-introduction in Britain, I was interested to see that Armen Victorian quotes Dr Walter Freeman, the first person to perform this mind-altering practice (clocking up more than 3,500 in

*Lobster*. But the bulk of Victorian's article concerns something just as frightening – perhaps more so. He cites incontrovertible evidence that the American army, navy, air-force, the CIA and various other bodies have been involved in the research, development and use of so-called psychotronic weapons, i.e. those using electromagnetic, microwave and mind-control technology, for many years, and some of the Defense Intelligence Agency documents he quotes show evidence of a similar, though more advanced, Soviet programme which began thirty years earlier to which the US only woke up when it discovered that its Embassy in Moscow had been targeted by such weapons in the 1960s. By 1974 a Czech engineer named Pavlita had developed a device to kill insects at a distance, and by 1979 the Soviets were able to kill goats at ranges of over 1 km. Since then the US has greatly intensified its research, passed laws to forestall public curiosity and "banned university authorities from questioning members of their own academic fraternity engaged in such programmes ... a similar situation pertains on the campuses of some British universities". Also reported on at great length is the highly curious Owen Oyston affair, and Jane Affleck's now regular Web update has excellent coverage of electronic privacy and cryptography on the Internet: how the authorities are trying to prevent public use of PGP and other unbreakable encryption codes, plus loads of useful addresses on this subject, including an address offering downloadable PGP! 48 pages of these and many other topics, £2.50.

**Evolution and Revolution: an introduction to the life and thought of Peter Kropotkin\*** by Graham Purchase, Jura Media. A systematic examination of Kropotkin's influential ideas, drawing heavily on those of his works published in English in a commendable attempt to show their continuing relevance today. It also

relates those ideas to modern developments in science, such as Chaos Theory and symbiotic cell evolution, and considers *Fields, Factories and Workshops* an early work on social ecology. The long introductory chapter goes into considerable detail over Kropotkin's life and times. The much shorter final chapters address the relevance of Chaos Theory and the two-sided coin of evolution and revolution (which the author continually and distractingly conflates into 'r/evolution'), both in the world and in Kropotkin's own ideas. Here he's on less solid ground, allowing too much scientific discussion to cloud the issue – discussion which would be better reserved for a separate pamphlet. An interesting and useful book, which a decent proof-reader could have made even better given the number of errors in syntax and punctuation. 174 pages, £6.95 (limited stock).

**Anarchist Studies** No. 5/2, White Horse Press. Among the main features is 'Max Stirner: the Last Hegelian or the First Poststructuralist?' and 'Kropotkin and Spatial Social Theory: Unfolding an Anarchist Contribution'. Among the review articles Colin Ward discusses three of Bookchin's works, and there are many other shorter reviews. And just to show that the journal has a sense of humour, a lengthy Spanish anarchist joke from Mintz's *Anarchists of Casas Viejas* is reprinted as 'Instead of an Editorial'. Nice one. 96 pages for £6.

**Fifth Estate** No 32/2. An excellent article, 'Freedom, Individualism and Revolution: Courbet, Zola, Proudhon and artistic anarchism', is accompanied by two interviews with the late Allen Ginsberg and a very long piece by David Watson (over ten A3 pages) on primitivism and eco-fascism, but also including a useful examination of the Neoist/ Green Anarchist feud over here. 35 pages, £1.50.

Following the death announced in our last issue of the Franco-Greek revolutionary and intellectual Cornelius Castoriadis, aka Paul Cardan, NW mentioned in his well-researched obituary a number of his publications. Of those still available in English, Freedom Press has the following titles in stock:

**History as Creation\*** 56 pages, illustrated, originally £1.50, now £1.

**Workers' Councils, and the economics of a self-managed society\*** with introduction by Peter Dorman, 52 pages, illustrated, originally £1.50, now £1.

**Redefining Revolution\*** 24 pages, illustrated, originally £1, now 50p (a few copies left).

**From Bolshevism to the Bureaucracy\*** (a rather poor production but perfectly legible), 18 pages, 50p (very few copies left).

**Modern Capitalism and Revolution\*** 102 pages, illustrated, originally £3, now £2.

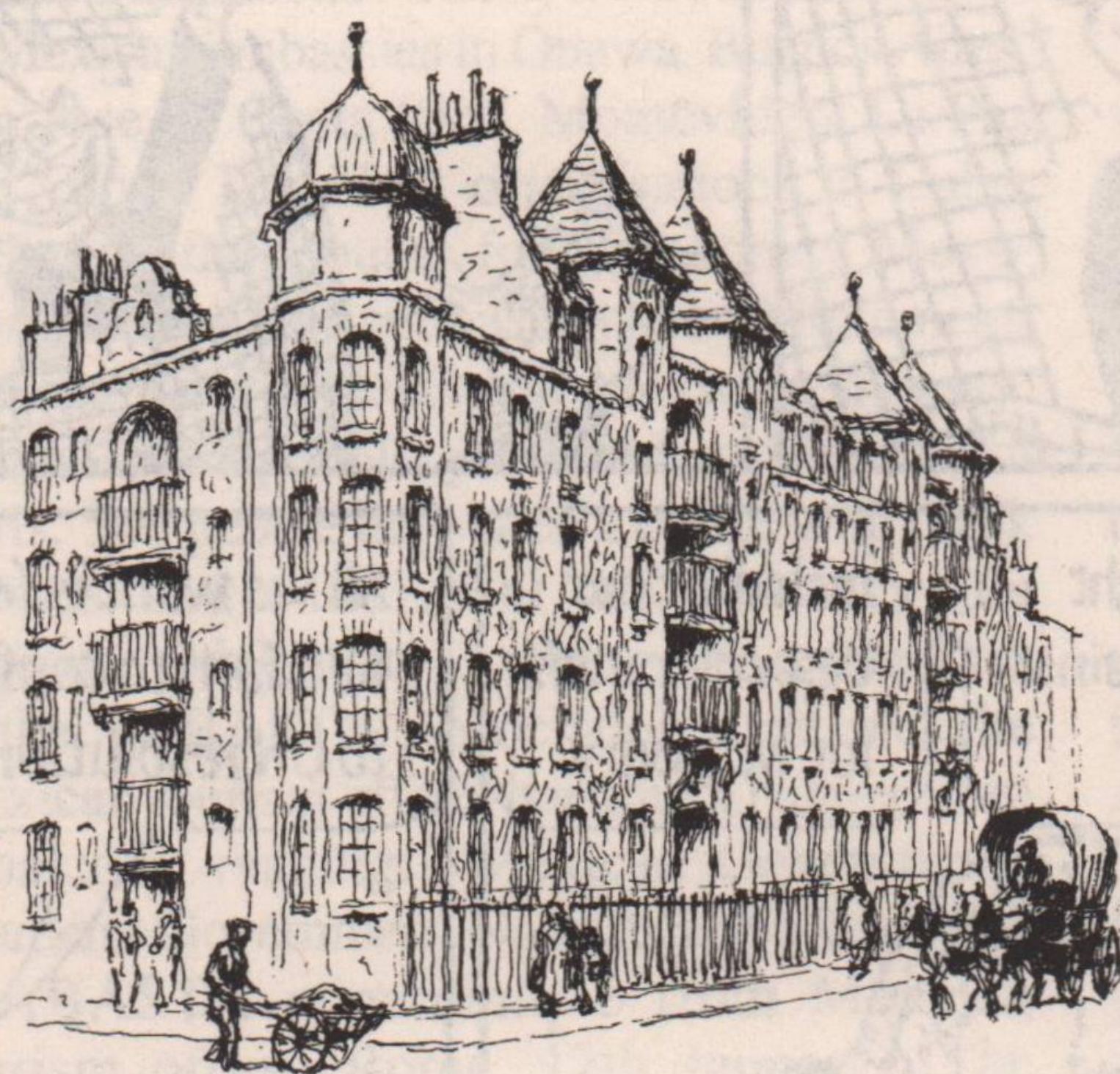
We still have small quantities left of Bookchin's *From Urbanisation to Cities*, reduced from £16.99 to £3.99 while stocks last, the *Anarcho-Surrealist Calendar 1998\** illustrated, £4, and a very few of Marshall's *Nature's Web\** at £9.99 (the new Cassell edition is £16.99).

Now back in stock are *Road Raging: top tips for wrecking roadbuilding* at £5.25, *The Struggle to be Human: crime, criminology and anarchism\** by L. Tiff and D. Sullivan, hardback, £6, and *Free Love and Anarchism: the biography of Ezra Heywood\** by Martin Henry Blatt, hardback, originally £26.95, now just £8.50.

KM

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### Fermin Rocker The East End Years A Stepney Childhood with drawings by the author



*The East End Years: A Stepney Childhood* appeared in German translation a few years ago. This is its first publication in the original English. In exploring his origins as an artist, Fermin Rocker conjures a moving and colourful picture of his remarkable father, of anarchism and of the Jewish East End.

Publication of this book coincides with his 90th birthday exhibition at Bartley Drey Gallery in London from 17th February to 7th March, Tuesday to Saturdays, 10am to 6pm. Bartley Drey Gallery is at 62 Old Church Street, London SW3

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# A Few Food Facts

Hardly had I absorbed the message of Joan Thirsk's book on *Alternative Agriculture* (discussed in this column for 24th January) than I was asked to a meeting at which another economist talked to us about the marketing of food. He was Hugh Raven and I noted down a few of the facts he told us, as a kind of statistical confirmation of what we already know.

In England and Wales five supermarket chains account for 70% of all grocery sales. There are of course places where the geography of retailing makes a more monopolistic situation. Three-quarters of all food bought in Sutton, Surrey, comes from Sainsbury's.

Although part of the attraction of the supermarket is that all the shopping can be done in one operation under one roof, the fact is, Hugh Raven assured us, that between 1975 and 1991 we increased the time spent in shopping because of a 60% increase in the distance travelled. Three-quarters of the population now do their food shopping by car.

Furthermore the movement of goods in the food, drink and tobacco industries accounts for a third of the increase in road transport in this country over the past fifteen years. Put in other words, each item of food is moved 15% more than fifteen years ago.

He then turned to what he described as the 'artisan economy' of food, for example organic growers, small brewers, local cheese-makers, and so on. This, he said, is increasing apace. In terms of distribution, one aspect of it has declined, for example mail order sales of cheese and clotted cream because of new

regulations (which he said were of British, not European, origin) insisting on certain temperatures.

Box schemes, where a family agrees to take a weekly box of whatever vegetables are in season, are growing and about 50,000 households are said to be box users. Obviously they show a saving in transport use since one van can visit two hundred houses, rather than two hundred cars going to the supermarket.

We are also on the brink of a movement for farmers' markets on the American pattern. In London there are four organic markets, including one in Spitalfields. I described the US version of farmers' markets in this column for 23rd July 1994 ('Markets and the Market'). They are a re-invention of the tradition eroded by pre-packaging, long-distance transportation and the hypermarket, and a renewal of the ancient habit of producers coming to town on market day with their fruit and vegetables. At that time Marcus Singer from Wisconsin explained to me how they emerged from the alternative culture of the 1960s and from ambitions to grow organically on land where regular farmers had failed.

The environmental psychologist Richard Somer stressed their 'social climate' compared with that of the supermarket: "Farmers' markets are among the most *social* spaces in America today".

Last September Patricia Tutt (Bath Council's Agenda 21 co-ordinator) managed to set up the first English farmers' market near the old Green Park station there. She told me how it had become financially self-sustaining



drawing by Clifford Harper

with forty traders and four thousand customers. Over a hundred towns in Britain have sought information on how to start farmers' markets locally.

Quite apart from reducing the appalling environmental profligacy of the supermarket system, it is a tiny step towards ending the exploitation of overseas producers by the British chainstores. See this column for 22nd March 1997, 'Face-to-Face with the Hyper-

market', discussing Tim Lang's contention that "the fight in this last quarter of the twentieth century has been about not just what we eat but about how food is produced". He was arguing about the need for frank exchange about the differences between the ecological consumer position and the more affluent value-for-money position. Exactly what I learned from that economist last week.

Colin Ward

ANNALS OF SCIENCE

## Revenge of the Grad Students

The heaviest element known to science was recently discovered by physicists at the Yale Research Centre. The element, tentatively named administratium, has no protons or electrons and thus has an atomic number of 0. However, it does have one neutron, 125 assistant neutrons, 75 vice-neutrons and 11 assistant vice-neutrons. This gives it an atomic mass of 312. These 312 particles are held together in a nucleus by a force that involves the continuous exchange of meson-like particles called morons.

Since it has no electrons, administratium is inert. However, it can be detected chemically as it impedes every reaction it comes in contact with. According to the discoverers, a minute amount of administratium caused a reaction to take over four days to complete, when it would normally occur in less than one second.

Administratium has a normal life of approximately three years, at which time it does not actually decay but, instead, undergoes a re-organisation in which assistant neutrons, vice-neutrons and assistant vice-neutrons exchange places. Some studies have shown that the atomic weight usually increases after each reorganisation.

Research at other laboratories indicate that administratium occurs naturally in the atmosphere. It tends to concentrate at certain points such as government agencies, large corporations, universities, and can actually be found in the newest, best maintained buildings.

Scientists point out that administratium is known to be toxic at any level of concentration and can easily destroy any productive reactions where it is allowed to accumulate. Attempts are being made to determine how administratium can be controlled to prevent irreversible damage, but results to date are not promising.

(Taken from the *Vancouver Sun*, 31st January 1998)

— VISIBLE HANDS —

# Blair and the Capitalists

Consulting an etymological dictionary, I discover that the noun 'capitalist' came into use decades before the concept of 'capitalism'. 'Capitaliste' was a derogatory term used during the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. 'Capitalism', on the other hand, developed only in the nineteenth century. As it refers to powerful and disturbing truths about society, there is a faintly dangerous air to the word 'capitalism'. It is a taboo word, meaning that it brings on a superstitious dread in the user. Capitalists themselves are more comfortable using the word - Michael Heseltine, for example, does not hesitate to refer to 'British capitalism'. Among those on the liberal-left, however, the use of this term is associated with outdated notions of class conflict and Old Labour. Hence its absence in the Blair's new Clause Four of the Labour Party Constitution, which instead refers glowingly to "a dynamic economy", "the enterprise of the market", "the rigour of competition" and "a thriving private sector".

By now, the concept of 'capitalism' has stretched out of shape to a very considerable extent. Steve Jones, left-leaning Professor of Genetics at University College London, refers in a recent book to horse-riding raiders of 4000 BC as the 'first capitalists': "Six-thousand-year-old horses at Sredny Stog in the Ukraine have broken teeth, suggesting that they were controlled by bits. Riding increased mobility and helped people to work together to steal resources from others." While the idea of the capitalist as a greedy piratical figure captures something of reality, the concept of 'capitalism' begins to lose its usefulness if it comes to mean merely ruthless greed.

Marx, who of course wrote an entire book entitled *Capital*, pointed out that one of the main features that distinguished capitalism from earlier economic systems was that in

pre-capitalist societies one sold goods one possessed in order to acquire money, in order to buy goods that one desired. The capitalist, on the other hand, uses money to buy goods in order to sell them, in order to end up with more money. The central focus, both the starting point and the end-point of the chain of transactions, is not an object or a service that one wishes to use, but money, which one wishes to increase.

Marx also pointed out that "capitalistic production presupposes the pre-existence of considerable masses of capital and of labour power in the hands of producers of commodities". It is only when there are both owners of money who are eager to increase their wealth and workers who are willing to rent themselves out to the owners of capital, that capitalistic production can take place. In other words, as Marx puts it: "The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means of production". Peasants must be separated from the land (and also from the web of protection offered by feudal servitude) before they can become proletarians.

The determination of what might be called "the common wages of labour" depends on "the contract usually made between these two parties [the owners and the workers], whose interests are by no means the same ... The workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labour". In other words, in a capitalist society, there must of necessity be class conflict between those who employ and those who are employed. A fact which New Labour refuses to acknowledge, but which was commonly recognised in previous times, for example by Adam Smith, whose words I have just been quoting.

Smith continues his thoughts on the dynamics of class conflict by observing that "it is not, however, difficult to foresee which of the two parties must, upon all ordinary occasions, have the advantage in the dispute, and force the other into a compliance with their terms". The law weighed against 'combination' by workers, but "authorises, or at least does not prohibit" combination by 'the masters'. Above all, in all industrial disputes the masters are able to hold out much longer than the workers. Smith comments: "In the long-run, the workman may be as necessary to his master as his master is to him, but the necessity is not so immediate". He adds: "We rarely hear, it has been said, of the combinations of masters, though frequently of those of workmen. But whoever imagines, upon this account, that masters rarely combine, is as ignorant of the world as of the subject. Masters are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labour above their actual rate. To violate this combination is everywhere a most unpopular action, and a sort of reproach to a master among his neighbours and equals. We seldom, indeed, hear of this combination, because it is the usual, and one may say, the natural state of things which nobody ever hears of."

Such insight into reality is tolerated neither by economics textbooks nor by New Labour apologists for capitalism. However, unless we realise that capitalism presupposes and requires inequality between workers and employers, that the interests of labour and capital are opposed, and that the owners (and managers) of capital are much much more powerful than those who are forced to rent themselves out to capitalist firms, we cannot grasp much of what is going on in the world.

Milan Rai

It has been a volatile year for Swaziland, the tiny 'Mountain Kingdom'. Progressives have fought to replace the antique monarchy with a modern parliamentary democracy. Support for the pro-democracy movement has been consistently growing since the liberation of neighbouring South Africa in 1994.

The movement has led to open street battles between demonstrators and the Royal Swazi Police, to detention and beating of unionists and human rights activists, to a media blackout, to brave acts of sabotage (despite a threatened life sentence for those caught), to international workers' solidarity and to two successful general strikes this year!

#### IRON FIST IN THE VELVET GLOVE

The tourist brochures sing the praises of this 'idyllic' kingdom. But the reality is harsher. Unemployment runs at perhaps 40% and a stagnating economy, state corruption, illiteracy and AIDS are rampant. Under the traditional system, women have few economic or reproductive rights.

In the streets of Manzini, riot police arrest members of the People's United Democratic Movement (Pudemo) for the 'crime' of singing gospel songs in small groups on the pavement. This is a country where human rights activists are detained for no reason.

Because the country is so small, virtually everyone is connected in some way, so family ties make it difficult for a social revolution to develop. But develop it has!

The Swazi people have finally had enough of being exploited. A constitutional review commission appointed by the king to examine political liberalisation after a powerful 1996 strike is seen as a council of the rich and has very little grassroots support. But people can be jailed for 'belittling' the commission.

Few, if any workers, are brave enough to

## SWAZILAND phambili basebenzi!

This article is from South African anarchist magazine *Workers Solidarity*. Other articles from this magazine and earlier issues can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/7017/>

blame the fat-cat king. He has been smart enough to remove himself from the daily affairs of the country. Besides, it is a secretive cabal of senators, tribal leaders and multinational capitalists who really run the show, not him. And it was their exploitative interests that the strikers targeted this year.

#### THE STRIKES

In January, the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions called a two-day strike to protest the state's inaction on its 27 labour and social demands that were lodged in 1994. The key demand was the repeal of the 1973 royal decree that outlawed free assembly and free political activity (and thus democracy) in the country. It was meant to be a two-day industrial strike, but the government foolishly overplayed its hand and arrested four leading unionists.

Popular disapproval at the arrests widened the strike out from its initial centre in the key sugar, timber and mining sectors into manufacturing, communications and education. Junior journalists in the government-owned newspapers also backed the strikers – despite a government ban on reporting the strike – and support spread like wildfire among civil servants.

The general strike that resulted lasted four weeks – despite heavy police and army

activity – and shut down the Swazi capitalists' economy. 100,000 workers downed tools.

COSATU spoke out in support of the strike, ordering a go-slow from its affiliates handling goods to and from Swaziland, and COSATU members blockaded several border posts, preventing trucks from entering or leaving. The strike was poorly covered in the South African bosses' newspapers, but it really shook the Swazi elite up. The capitalists miserably estimated the strike cost them R100 million in lost exploitation!

#### RED OCTOBER

In October 1997, another, shorter general strike was held, with at least 40,000 timber, sugar, rail and transport workers downing tools for two days, while teachers embarked on a separate 30-day pay strike. Again, COSATU supported the workers and the Swazi government was worried enough to ban all SABC broadcasts.

#### THE BESIEGED ELITE SHIFTS TACTICS

Faced with such widespread opposition by the umbrella Swaziland Democratic Alliance (SFTU, Pudemo, the Swaziland Youth Congress and others), the country's capitalist elite has started pressurising the government for democratic reform. Foreign exploiters (the

so-called 'investors') have also voiced their concerns that they may lose their grip on the levers of power.

President Mandela of South Africa, under intense pressure from COSATU, finally tackled King Mswati publicly at a South African Development Community meeting recently, saying the country needed to democratise. The king responded indignantly, but the writing is on the wall. Within a few years, Swaziland will become a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy.

But if the workers and the poor seize the opportunity presented to them and do not buy any sell-out two-stage revolutionary theory which asks them to delay their freedom until the capitalists have regrouped, it is possible to begin to work towards the establishment of a genuine libertarian socialist (anarcho-syndicalist) society from the ground up in Swaziland!

#### SWAZILAND'S EXPLOITATIVE ELITE

Swaziland was saved from threats of being incorporated into racist South Africa only by becoming a British protectorate in the colonial era. But though the Swazi monarchy continues to rule, the country is carved up into huge capitalist estates and is propped up by so much foreign aid and capital that it can hardly be considered an autonomous country.

The outcome has yet to be written, but what is certain is that rumblings of popular discontent are shaking the exploitative economic pyramid over which King Makhosetive Mswati III presides. Those who support the king and the economic order say that democracy is unnecessary under Swaziland's Western/African hybrid system called 'Tinkhundla'.

The people disagree. Having seen South Africa's transition, they want more freedom for themselves. Instead, what they have is Mswati's one-party Imbokodvo National Movement, its 280 tribal leaderships and those who live off its patronage sucking up the worker's life-blood!

#### SWAZILAND SUPPORTED OUR FIGHT

Ordinary people in Swaziland provided a base for uMkhonto we Sizwe operations during apartheid, acting as a haven for those oppressed by racist capitalism in South Africa.

And, because of the smallness and relative powerlessness of Swaziland, the country was also the target of murderous SADF raids and Security Branch activities. Swaziland backed the South African workers' fight for freedom – now it is our turn to support them.

#### SUPPORT THE SWAZIS

Indeed, COSATU, with its membership of almost two million, has already attempted an economic blockade of the Swazi elite and has adopted policies supporting its Swazi comrades in the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU). The Swaziland government complains about COSATU interfering in its domestic policies – but remember: this is the same government which agreed in 1982 to co-operate with the racist South African 'security' forces in kidnapping and killing activists fighting for democracy in South Africa!

COSATU has an ethical, historical right to intervene! South African workers, support your Swazi comrades!

Workers' Solidarity Federation backs COSATU in supporting the fight of the Swazi workers for democracy and freedom of association and of political activity. The situation our brothers and sisters are facing right next door, where they have suffered under a 23-year State of Emergency, should remind us of our darkest days and the international support which was crucial in forcing the racist capitalists here to compromise with the democratic forces of the people. Put pressure on your shop stewards and unions to take decisive action to support Swazi workers and defend the Swaziland Democratic Alliance! We have a class duty to assist their liberation.

Southern African workers unite to fight for a libertarian socialist Swaziland! All power to the Swazi workers and poor!

## WORLDWIDE PROTESTS DON'T STOP MEXICAN KILLING

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated on 12th January in Mexico and other countries to demand a peaceful solution to the four year old conflict between the government and the indigenous rebels of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in the southeastern state of Chiapas. The protests marked the anniversary of a 12th January 1994 demonstration of some 50,000 or more in Mexico City that many credit with forcing the government to call off its efforts to crush the EZLN uprising through a massive military offensive. This year's demonstrations came in response to a massacre of 45 indigenous people by rightwing paramilitaries in the Chiapaneco community of Acteal, Chenalho municipality, on 22nd December and to stepped-up army pressure on Zapatista supporters since the 1st of January.

A late-afternoon march in downtown Mexico City from the Monument of the Angel of Independence to the main plaza, the Zocalo, drew 25,000 protesters, according to the police, and 60,000 to 80,000 according to press accounts (Reuters, 12th January 1998; *La Jornada*, 13th January). The demonstration was organised by the official EZLN support group, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN); a broad range of nongovernmental and grassroots organisations; and the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), now the governing party in the capital. Political columnist Jaime Aviles notes that although the protesters never filled the Zocalo, some feeder marches didn't arrive in the plaza until nearly 9pm, long after other marchers have left; he calls the demonstration the "broadest, the largest, the most profound (in terms of understanding of the cause) and the most Zapatista" since the uprising began. Thousands of Mexicans marched in other cities and even small towns. Protesters in the southern state of Oaxaca blocked highways and seized government offices; children

carrying cardboard doves were the highlight of a march in the central state of Puebla. In the eastern state of Veracruz, members of the FZLN and the middle-class debtor's group El Barzon symbolically 'took' the Army's 13th Battalion installations; the demonstration in the state capital, Jalapa, was the largest there since the insurrection started (*La Jornada*, 13th January 1998).

News services report demonstrations in more than thirty US cities. More than five hundred demonstrators blocked Wilshire Boulevard and Highway 405 in Los Angeles to demand an end to US military aid to Mexico (*La Jornada*, 13th January). US and Mexican-American activists – about a hundred, according to the *New York Times* of 18th January – demonstrated at the Mexican consulate in New York, with a cardboard coffin and two giant puppets of masked Zapatistas. There were rallies in front of Mexican embassies in Ottawa, Buenos Aires, San Jose de Costa Rica, Montevideo, La Paz and Quito. Dissident organisations in Cuba, including the Youths for Democracy Movement and the Christian Liberation Movement, sent a letter of protest to the Mexican embassy. Some 3,000 people protested in Madrid; in Paris, 500 people deposited a coffin with black flowers and candles at the embassy (*La Jornada*, 13th January). In Rome fifteen members of the YABASTA Association took over the Mexican tourism office, hanging a banner from a balcony reading: "Mexican Government, Murderer Government, No Justice, No Tourism" (YABASTA communiqué from Mexican tourism office, Rome, 12th January). The Chiapas95 Internet listserv reports that more than 230 actions involving at least 161,292 participants took place in more than 130 towns and cities in 27 countries between 22nd December and 14th January (Chiapas95, 14th January).

Thousands of EZLN sympathisers also demonstrated in Chiapas itself, but one of the protests ended in bloodshed when a group of

29 police agents fired into a small group of Tzeltal and Tojolabal demonstrators near the highway outside Ocosingo, the main town in Ocosingo municipality in the generally pro-Zapatista central area of the state. Guadalupe Mendez Lopez was killed; her two year old child, Isabela Sanchez Lopez, was wounded, as was a youth, Lazaro Lopez Vazquez. The unarmed demonstrators planned to block the highway but first moved in on a police unit, chanting: "Murderers, murderers, get out of here, go, you killed the people in Acteal". Some demonstrators threw rocks. Panicking, the police fired tear gas grenades, tried to retreat, shot into the air and then fired into the crowd. The entire incident was videotaped by a crew from TV Azteca (Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Center press bulletin, 12th January; Reuters, 12th January; *La Jornada*, 13th January)

Unarmed pro-Zapatista demonstrators, mostly women and children, have been aggressively blocking army and police units in response to the increased military presence in their towns since the beginning of the year.

The government of Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon moved quickly to contain the Ocosingo incident. An army unit arrested all 29 members of the state police unit on 13th January; gunpowder tests showed that 22 agents had fired their weapons (*La Jornada*, 13th January). In a 14th January communiqué, EZLN leader 'Insurgent Sub-Commander Marcos' discounted both the government's response to the Ocosingo incident and its professed desire to renew peace talks. Repeating earlier charges that "the government feigns peace but makes war", Marcos said that all the EZLN's efforts now "are directed at resisting the harassment of which we are the object and not responding to the government's continual, and each time more definitive, belligerent provocations" (*La Jornada*, 16th January).

**Rich and Poor**



**A**t the Science Museum there is an exhibition currently of genetically modified food. In Euston Road opposite the Wellcome Institute there is an artists' response to cloning. A year ago this month the magazine *Nature* revealed to the world that the Roslin Institute's farm in Midlothian managed to clone a lamb. During the 1939-45 war some military theorists on both sides of the divide pondered over the idea of artificially produced soldiers, factory produced cannon fodder, code-named chess pieces. Although in theory such soldiers could be produced, the actual time of rearing such an army is about the same as by conventional methods, although the Germans and Russians did reduce the call-up age to 14 years old. The whole idea broke down as an economic disaster. To all extents the robot army had to be fed and clothed and housed and minimally educated just like ordinary human beings, and no treasury could carry the cost of such profligacy.

The problem of cloning also carries with it the difficulty of determining which one is the original. As such, it has been accepted in the past that human beings without morality are robots. It takes on average about two decades of concerted teaching by a mass of random instructors until the single unit human being can be regarded to be a reliable and responsible citizen.

Messrs Willmut, Schnieke, McWhirr, Kind and Campbell of the Roslin Institute gave their combined revelation to *Nature* that lamb number 6LL3 was born from the non-copulative union of two (female) ewes. In other words, they have given up producing a lamb from two male sources, which is just as well.

Examining this from an outside perspective, there is a problem within the problem that the distinguished scientists have no doubt considered. That is that cloning is an end in itself, for no two mules have been able to produce another offspring. Neither is it proved that coupling two scientists from the Roslin Institute will produce yet another scientist.

The main problem is that the male of the species has become a diseased product for obvious reasons. Its genitalia is outside the body and radiation from the H-bombs have damaged their fertility. In Russia alone 70% of the males are either infertile or 'unreliable' genetically.

In England, where adult cloning has been experimented with, this has produced amazing results. It is rumoured that the Prime Minister, who I am told is Tony Blair, is a successful clone of the Tory ex-PM Margaret Thatcher via the unsatisfactory Tory clone Major. Other professions have also been satisfactorily targeted for cloning. Judges and barristers with their woollen headgear have always resembled sheep, and it is their function to execute the orders of the government in office. Among the judges the success rate for cloning has always been high and it now includes the chief judge in Portsmouth whom I have seen with my own eyes. He has the voice of the editor of the *Ethical Record* but with a falsetto. I have seen this judge put his fingers to his ears as soon as the defence barrister (a most unsuccessful clone) began to talk. This judge should be a matter of pride for the Roslin Institute's animal welfare and experiments committee.

In these days of doom and gloom when nobody knows where their next prime minister will come from, my guess is that if there is going to be a military coup 'Dolly' Selwood is destined for high office.

In the meantime the exhibition at the Science Museum reveals that our ever-loving scientists have managed to 'modify' the potato and are now turning their attentions to other fruits and vegetables ... and yes, apples are at the top of their list.

As for the cows, Professor Brainstorm is working on modifying their milk — you know, that white stuff — which will be too thin to sustain calves, but it will be like human milk, just good enough for us to drink and dispense with our dear mother altogether.

Us? Who is this 'us' you may ask. You won't find an answer at the 'artists' exhibition on cloning, which is without a spark of any artistic ability by the Central St Martin's School exhibitors. Perhaps the 24 students have left it to their clones to produce their art work. The sooner we have anarchy the better. The species is facing extinction and the human clock is practically running down.

**John Rety**

**Sociology's slum landlords ...**

Dear *Freedom*,

I welcome the comments of NW and the criticisms of Seumas Mhor in his review of *The Raven* No. 36 on class struggle anarchism. Mr Peter Neville's contribution, 'Some Thoughts on Class Struggle' questioning 'class struggle anarchism', is instructive for the light it sheds on much mainstream sociology.

Though elsewhere Peter opposes much Marxist, feminist and politically correct schools of sociology, in *The Raven* he adopts their bad habits and methodology. It is lazy, if not downright bone idle, to tackle class struggle anarchism as he does: "Although I have a fairly extensive library of books on anarchism I have found little mention of the term class struggle indexed within an anarchist context, so why does this approach apparently fire up the imagination of so many who nowadays call themselves anarchists?"

This approach I fear is typical of much present day sociology, and I suspect forms the foundation upon which all too many an academic house of cards is being built even as I write. Libraries, dictionaries, lexicons, still less indexes in Mr Neville's "fairly extensive library of books on anarchism", are hardly comprehensive mediums through which to view the world or to measure the significance of a term like 'class struggle anarchism'. One needn't be a Ludwig Wittgenstein to question the adequacy of dictionary definitions, but Mr Neville's method of discovering the significance of 'class struggle anarchism' by perusing the index of a book, denuded of its text, would seem to be beneath contempt.

Sociologists, and other academics who operate in this way, are slum landlords and it is our job as anarchists to put them out of business.

**Brian Bamford**

Dear *Freedom*,

Reading *The Raven* No. 36 and the subsequent articles and letters in *Freedom* one would think that anarchists have to either accept totally or dismiss the primacy of class struggle, and that's it. Such a position is far too simplistic and, I believe, results in anarchists spending more time arguing about their differences than similarities.

I personally accept Peter Neville's view that anarchism's central concern should be around the issue of power and hierarchy. Clearly class relationships are an important aspect of this, but to say, as David Douglass does in *The Raven* No. 36, that all exploitation derives from the economic mode of production is wrong. Exploitation in many forms (humans over non-human animals, men over women, racism

and homophobia to take just a few examples) existed well before capitalism.

The primacy of class relations in some anarchist thinking derives from the fact that modern anarchism and Marxism were both products of industrialisation and enlightenment thinking. Inevitably in the nineteenth century the issue of class appeared paramount. The survival of such a restricted view of the world has a number of consequences. One, for example, is that anarchists have not developed a thorough analysis of employment relations (what happens at work). Some anarchists seem happy to stand in the shadow of Marxism and see work simply as a battleground between the workers and the bosses. Exploitation at work is important, but for anarchists so should the various power structures and the order created in the workplace which are far more than two dimensional. This tradition also seems to unquestionably accept the need for work, albeit freed of the wage system. Some of the valid insights of (particularly) anarcho-primitivists questioning the value of work are dismissed or ignored. It also relegates other concerns resulting, for example, in a greater concern with the (male) division of labour at work rather than the domestic division of labour. As an aside, I wonder why the male dominated dispute of the Liverpool dockers received so much more attention than the female dominated dispute at Hillingdon.

It is, of course, also wrong to dismiss class struggle as some do. Work is about conflict and workplace organisation is vital. Industrial disputes can radicalise people.

My point is simply that anarchists should not be so restrictive and protective about their views. The great strength of anarchism is that its critique of power can help us understand exploitation in general. Restricting that analysis just to one power relation (that of class) is misguided. Arguing about whether being on strike is more important than protesting against a road being built is pointless.

As an intellectual project I think it is high time that anarchism starts developing its own analysis of what happens at work. No doubt this will include some Marxist insights, but it's time we moved on.

**Richard Griffin**

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

**... and class struggle anarchism**

Dear *Freedom*,

Both sides of the *Raven*-induced debate over class have their points. Class is a concept or analytical device and not a thing. Look around you and you won't see a 'class' any more than you will see any other useful generalisation such as 'culture' or 'humanity'. Marxists and other class strugglers have a tendency to reify the concept of class which then gives rise to critics who tend to chuck it completely.

Class remains a useful generalisation only so long as it is an apt description of social reality. In 1930 it seemed obvious that society was evolving towards a rigid two-class (bourgeoisie and proletariat) structure. Sixty-odd years later, this is by no means so self-evident, for consumer society is vastly more complex. Professionals and semi-professionals far outnumber the poor. The state is the largest employer. Many baby-boom retirees will be living on one form or another of investment income. A large minority of well-off workers exists and many of these are investors. A new non-working sub-class has arisen. The old time petty bourgeoisie has not disappeared either, and the self-employed are

one of the fastest growing groups in the economy. Corporations are generally institutions run by (albeit grossly overpaid) employees. But even if the notion of class has gotten somewhat fuzzy around the edges, as Castoriadis pointed out a generation ago, we still can divide society into two groups: the controllers and the controlled. Rather than discarding the notion of class outright, wouldn't it be better to reject only the rigid and narrow marxist and old-time syndicalist viewpoint and replace it with a more realistic and flexible concept?

There is also a difference between the classical anarchist and marxist concepts of class. Marxism tended towards a two-class model, with other group discarded as reactionary or irrelevant. Classical anarchism, on the other hand, did not exclude the peasantry, small traders and the under-class. A more populist concept, if you wish, and one that tended to reflect the real situation to a greater degree than the abstract marxist model. I think we should return to the old anarchist concept of class and adapt it to the present situation.

**Larry Gambone**

**What a way to run a railway!**

Dear *Freedom*,

I can't really improve much on the editor's response to Jim Huggon's concern over the role of the British Transport Police and private security firms in protecting passengers and staff on our railways (letters, 7th February).

As I write I notice one group of railway workers are threatening strike action over the company's dilatory attitude to protecting public and staff alike. One problem here seems to have been the de-staffing of stations and trains, which has gone on under privatisation and the run-up to it. Women in particular are frightened of using trains at night.

Now in the absence of a worker's militia or some other form of public protection force, perhaps organised by local communities, what case can be made for the Transport Police other than that they protect the public and staff who use the trains. No case, I would have thought, can be made for doing such a job badly. That I would take to be self evident.

Now if the police are failing to live up to the pretension to protect the public, if rail travellers are being turned into the walking wounded, then I would have thought the most valid justification in the public mind for such a force will have been removed. By illustrating the incompetence of the Transport Police and the railway authorities on North West Trains, I would have thought the article invites this conclusion.

**Northern Reporter**

**Anarchism and Ethics**

Dear *Freedom*,

Not having read Thomas Nagel's *The View From Nowhere*, Francis Ellingham (7th February) has the drop on me — and I suspect most of *Freedom*'s readers — but then having declined all ethical theories goes on to propose one of his own, thus neatly illustrating Colin Johnson's point that such theories are unavoidable. He says that "everything that takes place is part of a single unitary flow" whose essence is "love and compassion", and I sense he implies we should go with the flow. In essence he is saying love is the measure of all things — now where have I heard that before?

In the first place (and I'm sure he would agree) there is no evidence that this 'single unitary flow' exists. Secondly, even if it did exist there is no logical reason why we should take it as the basis of our ethical system. G.E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy shows us you cannot derive values from facts and makes substantially the same point as Hume.

Anarchism is an ethical system, but then so are racism and fascism; we just happen to prefer anarchism — given a different upbringing and circumstances we might well all be fascists, it simply is a matter of chance, no 'virtue' in us at all. They say life would be roses without Jews and homosexuals. Some of us say the same about capitalists.

**Peter Lumsden**

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