

A science of financial markets

Thinking can get in the way of seeing. In this century thinking has often become mixed up with scientific pretensions, especially in ideologies like Marxism, but capitalists in the market place also make scientific claims.

Recent victims among those proponents of science in the market include the mass of stockbroking redundancies at Merrill Lynch earlier this month, and before them the senior executives at UBS and IMG Barings who resigned in shame. As Andrew Marshall recently wrote: "The financial markets are good at many things. One of them, it might seem from the last few weeks, is humbling the mighty".

Yet despite the market masters getting it wrong in recent times so spectacularly, at the October meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank there was not much modesty in evidence. There was sour grapes, of course, because the market hadn't obeyed the predictions of these scientific geniuses of world finance. Often, it seems, these financial analysts believe the markets only exist to follow the forecasts of experts.

Punch-drunk punters

The slogan of our times in high finance is that 'you can't buck the market – the free market!', and yet when the Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM), the hedge fund based in Greenwich, Connecticut, was going under recently it was bailed out by a \$4 billion US government led lifeboat.

The LTCM hedge fund was held in the highest esteem by financial pundits before its fall. Its 150 employees were dubbed 'rocket scientists' because of their clever use of mathematics in their judgement of market movements. Andrew Marshall described its methods as "gambling as physics".

This LTCM fund with a capital of \$4 billion borrowed another \$120 billion, then used that to borrow about \$1 trillion. This was a sum about the same as the gross domestic product of China. Clever stuff! But when the markets crashed it all came to nothing.

Mr Marshall says there is something essentially American about the LTCM company. He describes it thus: "Its foundation was science, a kind of fundamentalist rationalism that placed ultimate faith in the fusion of science and markets". The underlying premise of the company was "that science, mathematics plus economics, had discovered the secrets of the financial universe, the underlying truths that drove markets".

Although the hedge fund had two Nobel prize-winners in economics on its board, and despite the huge funds it was



juggling around, the company's performance wasn't that good. Even in the good times of rising markets its returns were pretty average. In truth the fund's scientific analysts made money in rising markets and lost money in failing markets.

Of course the LTCM 'rocket scientists' had their economic equations, but when the crash came these turned out to be wrong. But the scientists of LTCM still continued to believe in the infallibility of their equations even when they didn't fit the evidence. The LTCM Nobel laureates like punch-drunk punters were so addicted to their economic models

that they built up a mountain of debt until nobody would lend them any more.

Saved by the Federal Reserve

But in the case of LTCM it seems there is a difference between a hedge fund manager in Connecticut and a steelworker in Sheffield or a miner in Doncaster, for government and the Federal Reserve Bank came to the rescue. Indeed the Federal Reserve Bank in New York propped up LTCM and bullied some of its friends into a buy-out. Andrew Marshall claims: "LTCM was too big to let it go ... too important".

Mr Marshall spells it out: "Moral hazard is a technical term in banking to describe what happens when bad decisions get rewarded, and moral hazard is what is at stake in Washington. Long-Term Capital Management got bought out by the big American commercial banks because it would have been too damaging to those same banks if it had been flushed down the toilet to join the thousands of smaller banks, shipyards, coal mines, corner shops and farms that have ended up in the cess-pit of global capitalism in the past few years".

In the *Slate*, an on-line magazine, Paul Krugman, a leading US economist, says "if you believe that big supposedly sophisticated players can be that foolish ... you start to wonder whether our whole financial structure is as sound as we like to imagine".

But perhaps they are not so dumb if they figured that they are so big that the government would always be there for them if they made an arse of it. Yet *denken ist schwer* (thinking is difficult) – looking and seeing what is under our noses is even more difficult judging by the performance of many twentieth century marxists and the capitalists at LTCM. **BB**

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

Vol. 59 No. 21

31st October 1998

50p

MAI: The Dracula Strategy

On 20th October negotiations recommenced in Paris on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), described by Renato Ruggiero, the head of the World Trade Organisation, as the "constitution of the global economy". The MAI, which would enshrine a major shift in global power relations, has been kept under what Sir Anthony Mason, the former Chief Justice of the Australian Supreme Court, has condemned as a "veil of secrecy" – his reaction to the refusal of the Australian government to permit even parliamentary scrutiny of the new treaty.

Apart from in Canada, where activists broke through the veil in mid-1997, the peoples of the West have been kept in blissful ignorance of the revolutionary changes embodied in the MAI (Third World awareness of the treaty had developed in early 1997). Such is the secrecy that even Jack Straw, Home Secretary, professed ignorance when asked about the MAI on BBC's *Question Time* back in May. Straw told his questioner, "I don't know what it is ... Well, when I find out about it, I'll tell you what I think". As Gibby Zobel pointed out in *The Big Issue*, Straw's comment revealed that "the biggest international treaty on investment ever has not even been discussed in Cabinet".

Of course, some people have been in the know. *Business Week* headlined their 9th February 1998 story on the MAI, "The explosive trade deal you've never heard of", but there are sections of the business world who had heard of the MAI – the US Council for International Business, for example, which circulated *A Guide to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment* among its business constituencies in January 1996.

The business world, and its adjuncts in government, have drawn a 'veil of secrecy' over the treaty because of their fears of the reaction from the public. The *Wall Street Journal* remarked in the debate around the 'Fast Track' legislation in Washington earlier in the year that opponents of 'Fast Track' might have the 'ultimate weapon' on their side – public opinion. ('Fast Track' was intended to grant the President a monopoly on negotiating trade agreements, untroubled by Congressional interference or public concern.) Opponents of the MAI feel that they might have the 'ultimate weapon' on this issue also.

The French anti-MAI coalition, the

Coordination française contre l'AMI, wrote in July: "In France, just as in Canada, US, Belgium and New Zealand, the disclosure of the content of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment caused indignation and at long last generated public debate. The 'Dracula strategy' worked: the meaning of this 'writing of the constitution for a single world economy' has been grasped by scores of NGOs, trade unions, political organisations and social movements. They are now working together in a common resistance to the 'Silent Coup' of TNCs and investment banks via the MAI".

The 'Dracula strategy' is to expose the MAI treaty to the light of day, so that it will shrivel up and die in the glare of public opinion. The fact that it was not passed in April 1998, as originally scheduled, is due in large measure to the grassroots campaign against the MAI, which forced the negotiators to agree to a six month delay – ostensibly for 'active public debate' something that none of the negotiating governments has been overly eager to stimulate.

The paranoia in ruling class circles over the popular movement against the MAI was demonstrated in a lengthy article in the *Financial Times* a few days after the last round of negotiations broke down (30th April 1998). Guy de Jonquieres wrote that "fear and bewilderment have seized governments of industrialised countries as they struggle to draft rules for the treatment of foreign investment ... To their consternation, their efforts have been ambushed by a horde of vigilantes whose motives and methods are only dimly understood in most national capitals. This week the horde claimed its first success and some think it could fundamentally alter the way international economic agreements are negotiated. The target of their attacks was the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) being negotiated at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the attackers a loose coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from across the political spectrum. They included trade unionists, environmental and human rights lobbyists and pressure groups opposed to globalisation."

The *Financial Times* concluded that the OECD ministers had been "[u]nnerved" by the campaign against the MAI, and had



"interrupted the negotiations for six months in a belated effort to rally support for the proposed agreement among politicians and voters at home". A 'veteran trade diplomat' said: "This episode is a turning point. It means we have to rethink our approach to international economic and trade negotiations".

In other words, governments and big business interests may have to begin to take into account the views of the public, that vast body of people who are supposed, in conventional democratic theory, to be the source of power, and whose informed consent is supposed to be the basis of policy. The horde, or an appreciable proportion of it,

learned a little of the plans of the masters – and protested. And the plans of the masters were disrupted as a result. A lesson for popular movements as well as for veteran trade diplomats.

Fundamentally, the MAI – which will be discussed in detail in future articles – is another round in the continuing contest between unaccountable power and the movement for democracy. One key element of the struggle is access to information, and as with many other issues the hope is that the provision of accurate information will lead to popular revulsion, and a stake through one of the limbs, if not the heart, of the beast.

Milan Rai

Freedom and The Raven to stay at same price for another year

After careful thought, we have decided not, after all, to increase the cover price or subscription rates of our periodicals for 1999.

Costs will undoubtedly increase. Postal charges will go up, we do not yet know by how much. But *Freedom* and *The Raven* are already sustained by donations, mostly from subscribers who add small amounts to their subscriptions, and we are gambling that these will continue at a sufficient rate.

We cannot afford to subsidise shops, street sellers, and others who have agreed to pay for bundles in arrears, but take their time

paying. One or two of these are a real drain on our resources. You know who you are. Please pay what you owe promptly, and either get into the habit of paying regularly, or cancel the arrangement.

Our single-handed subscription department reminds us that more than half the subscriptions to *Freedom* expire at the end of this year, with number 5924 at the top of the address label. It will help to our volunteer comrade if these subscriptions especially are renewed well in advance. Subscriptions for two or more years will of course be honoured at the current price.



What hope for Northern Ireland and Palestine?

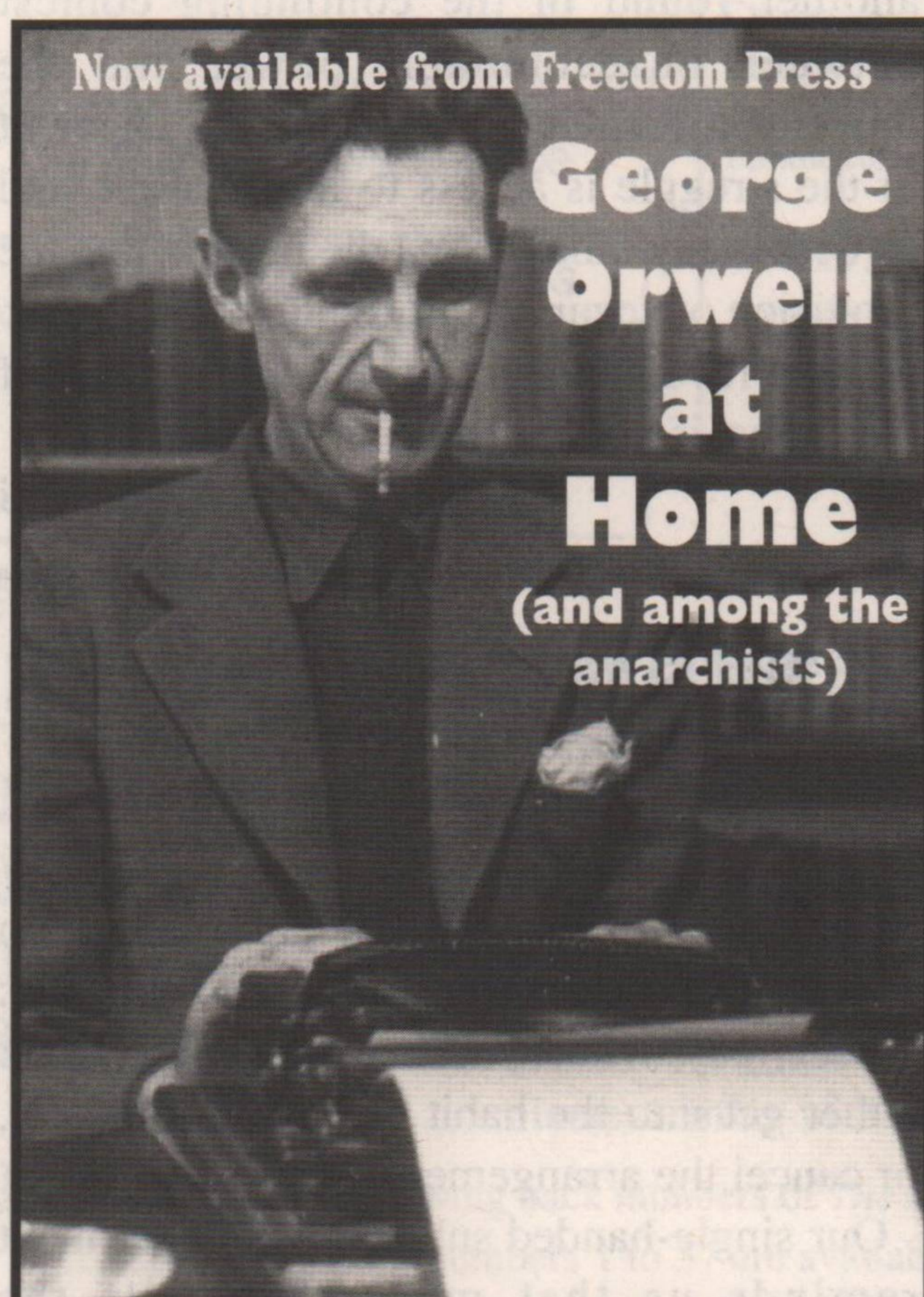
As we write, the press reports that the Basque separatists have declared a ceasefire. In Northern Ireland the IRA and the Loyalists have also declared a ceasefire and last, but not least, Israel and the Palestinians, who sat around peace tables a few years ago, are now in the USA with Clinton as chairman.

In *Freedom*, as we were pointing out ages ago, British governments (which after all created the problems in Northern Ireland some 75 years ago) have now only been concerned with the problem they had created because of the violence on both sides (Catholic and Protestant, more than three thousand deaths in all and more by the Protestant terrorists). And in Israel even a reactionary government like Likud has had to realise that the Palestinians were not going to accept the Israelis creation of new settlements even in areas of the West Bank which the new Israeli herrenvolk had granted to the Palestinians. (One must also not forget that more than a million Palestinians driven out of their lands by the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 and by the war of 1967.)

This writer at least has no doubt that governments only respect violence. After all, why does the British government spend some £22 billion on defence instead of disarming and spending its time and money persuading the rest of the world that we should love each other? Obviously the only reason why the British government has even considered negotiations with Sinn Fein (and thereby the IRA, since they insist that they are blood brothers) is that governments only respect force – be it IRA violence or financial ‘violence’.

For either the British or Israeli governments to demand the decommissioning of the IRA or the Palestinian terrorists before they are prepared to discuss is just nonsense. They are *only prepared to discuss because the IRA and the Palestinians are armed and prepared to kill, even the innocents*. Perhaps some anarchists, including this writer, would suggest that it might be more effective to aim at the politicians rather than the poor innocent women doing their shopping.

VR



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Critical Theory Today

Contemporary Critical Theory has its origins in the Frankfurt School founded by socialist intellectuals in the 1920s. Independence from the various parties and factions allowed them the freedom to be heterodox and not sweep the failure of orthodox Marxism under the rug, as several generations of party intellectuals did. Three questions were of major importance: Why no revolution in the industrialised countries? Why fascism? Why did the Bolshevik Revolution turn sour?

Such questions could not be reduced to mere epiphenomena of capitalism. Many of the evils of corporate capitalism were mirrored, or were worse, in Russia. The Western democracies were undergoing a rapid growth in economic and political centralisation. Fascism had too many similarities to Stalinism. An adequate explanation required more-encompassing categories.

Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno in their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* believed the problem lay in modernity which was rooted in the French Enlightenment. Modernity entails a process of rationalisation, the destruction of the particular and the imposition of the universal. Examples of this include the Nation State sweeping away regional differences, rational education systems eradicating local education, local languages and dialects, market forces undermining local economies, and the inculcation of universalist concepts such as Development, Progress, Democracy and Socialism. Modernity, by attacking the particular, undermines community, creating incredible dislocation and stresses. The category of Modernity is broader than that of capitalism. Corporate liberalism, nationalism, communism and fascism are all aspects of the tendency to deny the particular. Not to say Adorno and Horkheimer were idealists who believed Enlightenment thought the root cause of all social evil. Theirs was a holistic view of the process of rationalisation inherent in commodity production and statism and ideology.

The next question was how to change society in the face of this ever-changing power. Who was to make these changes? For Herbert Marcuse, the workers' movement was co-opted. Students, drop-outs and minorities were a revolutionary force. For Adorno, it has necessary to overcome an authoritarian personality holding back social change. Marcuse's adolescent rebels soon became adults and to put Adorno's theory into practice, the entire population would have to undergo therapy. Critical Theory was left floating in the air without a subject.

A new generation of Critical Theorists arose during the late 1960s around the New Left quarterly, *Telos*. Working on many of the same problems which preoccupied Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, the *Telos* Group examined Georg Lukacs and council communist thinkers such as Karl Korsh. In the late '70s they took an interest in Eastern Bloc dissidents and the New Social Movements (such as the Greens and feminists) which developed out of the remains of the '60s New Left. The *Telos* Group saw much evidence that the New Social Movements were not a genuine opposition, but were incorporated into the modernist rationalisation process. Critical Theory, while remaining true to its origins, began to move in a new, more radical direction.

Influenced by the sociologists Alvin Goldner and Christopher Lasch, *Telos* considered the possibility that a New Class had arisen. Not a class in the rigid sense, like that of the landowning nobility of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie, but a recognisable group of people in control of the state bureaucracies, the universities and the media. The members of the recuperated movements of the '60s, '70s and '80s aided and abetted the New Class, and in a sense, were its apprentices. This class continues the rationalising and centralising tendencies of the French Enlightenment through the 'Therapeutic State' which ever-increasingly moves into areas of life heretofore independent of the state, such as the family education and community. This is done ostensibly for the good of those concerned. Neo-conservatives with their absolutism and global corporate plans (the New World Order) are equally hostile to the particular. Thus 'right' and 'left' are obsolete concepts, two sides of the same debased modernist coin.

The only genuine opposition was to be found in movements which actively opposed centralisation and statism and what remained of mutual aid and community. *Telos* took an interest in the regionalism and populism which developed in the late 1980s. In order to offset any fragmentation brought about by decentralist movements, fragmentation which in history had often led to hostilities, Proudhon was re-discovered and 'bottom-up' or *integrity* federalism proposed. The *Telos* 'programme' is one of 'federalist populism, emphasising decentralisation, direct democracy, local economy and authentic federalism. To the charge that such empowerment of the population might lead to unpleasantness such as outbreaks of xenophobia, (as has happened occasionally with the Northern League) they responded by saying it is better to let people work these matters out on a face-to-face basis rather than a distant state bureaucracy imposing changes from above.

Critical Theory is the result of an interesting evolution. From orthodox marxism with its love of centralisation and its state cult to decentralisation and federalism. From the cult of the proletariat to the cult of minorities to a rediscovery of the ordinary person. From abstract universals – Progress, World Revolution, Stages of History, etc., to the particular, concrete social existence of human beings. As an anarchist, one has to resist the temptation not to gloat that this evolution marks the victory of Proudhon over his ungrateful student, Karl Marx.

Too much of what passes for anarchism in North America espouses a New Class agenda; the idealisation of minorities, the cult of the victim, elitist contempt for the average person (deemed irreparably sexist, racist and homophobic) indirect (and sometimes direct) support for statist policies such as so-called affirmative action and the welfare state. Such people are little better than modernity's militant vanguard. Anarchists need to be genuinely radical, to get to the root of contemporary problems, not obfuscate; to confront power, not give it sustenance. A serious study of contemporary Critical Theory could help put such people on the right track.

Larry Gambone

Demos in Finland

On 4th October 1998 there were 26 of us protesting outside the Belgian embassy in Helsinki in a demo organised by ABC-Finland. We marched to the centre of the city distributing anti-fortress Europe leaflets.

During last week two other embassies have been given their share: there was a protest outside British embassy while Finnish trident ploughshare-activists were in a court (no sentence was given) and on the twelfth birthday of the kidnapping of Mordechai Vanunu there was 24-hour demo outside the Israeli embassy. FAF has planned to organise a single demo going around all the embassies during autumn!

Finnish Anarchist Federation

NO NUCLEAR TESTING, NO NUCLEAR WASTE PRODUCTION, INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS

The 'Leonard Peltier' Affinity Group blockaded traffic for 25 minutes at the entrance to the Nuclear Test Site in Mercury Nevada at 8am on 12th October (Indigenous People's Day). About 70 people were gathered at the gates of the site, operated by privately-held Bechtel Corp and guarded by privately-held Wackenhut Corporation, serving to the publicly funded Department of Energy. Native American, Mexican Americans, and European Americans met before dawn around a fire to pray for the water, the rocks, the plants, and the sun. Test site workers were greeted with this sight as they went to work. Led by representatives of the Shoshone traditional government and Corbin Harney, a spiritual leader of the Shoshone, the people proceeded to the gates to demonstrate against the life destroying practice of testing nuclear weapons and creating nuclear waste. Women prepared tobacco ties to present, and on a signal activists crossed into the traffic lane and sat down, arms linked.

The thirteen activists were handcuffed and

kidnapped by the occupying mercenaries paid by Wackenhut, and released the same day. Three others crossed into the test site, illegally operating on Shoshone land, and were briefly held. Shoshone lands were 'taken' by US government, never ceded nor money ever accepted.

Come to Shoshone land on Mother's Day 1999. Protest nuclear war and technology out of balance.

For more info see <http://www.shudahai.org>

Andrew Rose

Leonard Peltier is a native American Indian activist serving two consecutive life sentences for the murder of two FBI agents during a shoot-out involving over thirty American Indians and 150 FBI agents and police. Leonard was targeted by the FBI during their infamous COINTELPRO to 'neutralise' activists. He was the only person convicted, despite there being no evidence to link him to the killings. The American government now admits it had no idea who killed the two agents, yet the parole board refuses to release him.

Subversion swansong

This month the small libertarian leftist group Subversion issued a statement declaring "The party's over". After ten years the grouping has decided to wind-up as an organisation. Disagreements over future organisational developments are given for closing up shop.

Though tiny, Subversion has been a bit of a lynch-pin in Manchester and the North West for activity on the libertarian left. They have been at the centre of the campaign against the Job Seeker's Allowance up here and were instrumental in setting up anti-JSA groups in central Manchester and Oldham. Members are still active in Groundswell nationally.

They were also involved in the anti-Poll Tax movement. More recently they helped to set up the successful Manchester Support Group for the Merseyside dockers. Members took part in the campaign against the M66 around Manchester, and have participated in some Earth First action in Oldham and Manchester.

This year in March the Oldham group organised the Northern Anarchist Network conference in Bury. At present members are helping to set up another NAN conference in Liverpool. This will include a special workshop on the Tameside care-worker's dispute.*

The group claims to be non-sectarian, although it has always been stimulating and lively. But this sometimes made some feel they were negative and even hostile to anarchism. **BB**

* The NAN conference is on Saturday 7th November. The Tameside care-worker's dispute extended workshop is at 2pm until 4.30pm, and speakers include Derek Pattison, Tameside Trades Council and a care-worker. Contact PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP or telephone 01704 879309 for more details.

Anarchist Information Network

The fourth meeting of AIN was held on Saturday 17th October 1998 at the Anarchist Bookfair. The meeting was well attended by comrades from around the country and abroad.

It was felt that although many comrades supported the initial invitation to join the AIN, which included the words "not-aligned, non-violent, non-sectarian, educational and evolutionary anarchism" since the wording had been seen by many as both too specific and dogmatic it might have perhaps alienated many potential supporters, so it was decided to delete it from future publicity, stressing the importance of willingness to work with one another.

It was assumed that people of strong viewpoints who wished to try and take over AIN would get the message that the Network was both universal and flexible in its approach. Non-aligned means non-dogmatic, non-authoritarian, not exclusive.

Stress was laid on communication with others both throughout the country and internationally. AIN members were themselves urged to set up local groups.

Anyone wishing to join the AIN should write to EMAB (AIN), 33 Abbey Street, Derby, DE22 3HQ.

The London AIN members intend to start a London group. If anyone is interested please contact: Peter Neville (by name) at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 4AW or phone 0181-847 0203.

Peter Neville

Saving Councillor Oldham's skin ... Bouncers block council chamber

Burly bouncers battled with women caseworkers and their supporters in a bid to stop them entering Ashton Town Hall for the October full council meeting. The sacked Tameside careworkers were protesting about the role of Tameside Council, Greater Manchester, led by Roy Oldham, the Labour leader, in their dismissal for refusing to accept a pay cut at Tameside Care Group's old peoples homes.

Police were called after one of the Town Hall porters got over excited and grabbed one of the women protesters, badly bruising her arm. Later the same porter, backed by others, formed a human barricade to hold back the forty strikers from getting into the Council meeting.

One porter was particularly boisterous, kneeling one bloke in the groin and, after a push and shove between the participants, catapulting himself forward arse over tit onto the top of the Town Hall steps, almost flattening a demonstrator in the process.

Hijack claim

The ban on the strikers and their supporters was issued by Michael Greenwood, Tameside Council chief executive. The chief executive had sought legal advice and been told that they had a right to bar certain members of the public from the council meeting if they anticipated a breakdown of public order.

The snag is that the Tameside chief executive, Mike Greenwood himself, is an interested party in all this. Mr Greenwood is secretary of Tameside Care Group which sacked the careworkers and, as chief executive, it is he who is slapping the ban keeping the sacked careworkers out of the council. Is that a conflict of interest?

In the September issue of the council free-sheet *The Tameside Citizen*, Mr Greenwood defended the Labour council's part as a 'golden shareholder' in the Tameside Care Group sackings.

Despite his own conflict of interest, Mr Greenwood saw fit to tell the *Manchester Evening News* last week that the trouble flared at Ashton Town Hall because non-strikers were 'hijacking' the dispute. Claiming

the town hall staff "handled the situation with skill and dignity", Mr Greenwood suggested: "I believe there are agent provocateurs with the carers ... trouble is flaring because of these agent provocateurs and we have had to review our security arrangements. It is not that we regard the ladies who worked for Tameside Care Group as dangerous, but we don't want any more serious incidents."

A strike leader, Pam Walker, disputed that the strike had been 'hijacked': "We decide what action we are going to take at strike committee meetings every Friday. We then tell the Support Group on Monday".

'Hitler's tash'

After the scuffles on the Town Hall steps the police got the authorities to agree to let in three of the careworkers. It was while they



'Hair we go!' Above are Linda, Chris and Alicia with their false moustaches. Pictured right is Councillor Roy Oldham sporting the real thing.



were in the council chamber with Citizen Oldham, the Labour leader, in full flow that the sacked careworkers donned 'Hitler style' moustaches.

Councillor Oldham was not amused, as he himself has a thin tash framing his 'Cupid's bow'. Citing the Public Meetings Act of 1908, he called the police and ordered the removal of the moustaches.

The police are reported to be weary with the Council's handling of this long-running dispute. The thin-skinned Councillor Oldham is constantly calling them in.

Arturo Ui

COPY DEADLINE
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 14th November, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 5th November

Second Gandalf trial for 2nd November

The two remaining 'Gandalf' defendants, Robin Webb of the Animal Liberation Front and Paul Rogers of our primitivist contemporary *Green Anarchist*, have been called for trial before Judge Sellwood, at Portsmouth Crown Court, on 2nd November.

There were originally six defendants, four from *Green Anarchist* and two from the ALF, charged with conspiring to incite criminal damage. The case against Robin Webb was deemed inadmissible by the magistrates at indictment, on the ground that he had already faced trial on the same evidence (but on a different charge). A higher court overruled the magistrates, after the trial of the others had started. Paul Rogers's counsel resigned after an argument, so his trial was postponed.

At the first trial, also before Mr Justice Sellwood in Portsmouth, the ALF man was acquitted and the three *Green Anarchist* men, Noel Molland, Steve Booth and Saxon Burchnall-Wood, found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison.

Weeks later they were released on bail, pending appeal. At the Appeal hearing on 3rd July, Lord Justice Henry acquitted the defendants, ruling that the Indictment had been improperly put. But this did not mean, he added, that they were being acquitted on a mere technicality - "the events that flawed their trial were too fundamental to be so described".

According to the appeal judgement, the trial judge had 'over-emphasised' the responsibility of the defendants, and even had they been guilty, the sentences would have been 'excessive'. Lord Justice Henry came as near as an appeal judge ever can, to accusing Mr Justice Sellwood of prejudice. It is of interest that Mr Justice Sellwood is also Major-General Sellwood, former chief of the army legal service.



The Crucified Kipper

Time and age has not diminished their fame or the love we all hold for them in our collective hearts for they are our eternal perennials who, by their efforts, have won the applause of millions, yet unborn, by having their struggles told and retold in literature, film and theatre and their lives and their actions have, and will ever be, a gourmet meal for the analytical theorising historians so that others, against our advice, will try to emulate their deeds.

Classwise Oscar Wilde and Jack the Ripper may have come from different social backgrounds, but there was a social and artistic chain that linked them from the mean and dark streets of Whitechapel, about *Freedom*, to the scented halls and walls of the Café Royal, waiter throw the bum out. In the modern parlance 'they did their thing', be it Post Office messenger boy or unfortunate permanent final sell-by date prostitute. For the great mass of the labouring class it was a conservative society that they did not question and, with the rented rooms in some terrace, the Sunday joint, the coal fire and the London fog with the *News of the World* to record romantic society scandal plus the fear and excitement of another body found throat-cutted in another dark alley, it was a society and a country worth reading about and fighting and dying for, God Save Our Gracious Queen. That its upper class were decadent was their right and privilege and they flaunted it with an easy grace, for they were not shackled by the laws and mores of a conservative and labouring class so it was in and out of the Royal guest bed chambers, a single blown kiss and a rose at the Café Royal and the knife under the coat in the

never-to-be-solved another Jack the Ripper murder, with the painter Sickert, a friend of Oscar Wilde, as a chief suspect.

But all things must change for better or worse and when the middle class moves up into extra money society becomes conservative, yea right up to the Royal bed and knife-happy Jack moves into folklore, Sickert's paintings into the Tate Gallery and Oscar as the martyred artist into the slammer slipping notes to the nice lad along the cell block.

But decadence, like civilisation, will never be like we knew it for give the middle class AIDS and the labouring class drugs then the romantic core of decadence is lost, for who wants to share a needle, a bed or a seat within the Café Royal with fun-spoilers via easy capitalism supply and demand.

Poor Beardsley has been dredged up again with an exhibition of his brilliant penmanship, yea even to the naughty drawings, but sad truth is that Aubrey passed out and passed on at the right time – his brilliant talent had reached its limit, for black and white penmanship is a limited craft and Beardsley's, again brilliant, decorative work was now hack work for the commercial advertising world within his own short lifetime.

We are of that age when oral, sodomy and bestiality sex has lost its whispered horror behind the fan giggling, for the mass media entertainment industry has taken the

romance from that sense of guilt and shame and all we are left with is Damien Hirst's dead fish and no chips in formaldehyde, via the Tate Gallery, and sold for over £100,000. The dadists and the surrealists should have killed off the giggle market in non-art, but there is



They decide to leave. Lampito decides to take the puff on a stick with them.

the money and the dealers sell. Its offence to me is the complete lack of imagination that goes into these efforts. I wish the practitioners, the dealers and the buyers well, for it is their money and problem, but as art it is pure crap. For £100,000 one could have bid for Hirst's *Alone yet Together* which, for the Philistine uninformed, is one hundred small fish in small containers sadly floating in formaldehyde, and one could argue that there is more fun, horror or art in the array of dead fish lying wet and shining – and for less than £1 – on a streetwise fishmonger's marble slab, but if the talent ain't there then take up table tennis.

Dr Gunther von Hagens, who picks up his pay cheque in the soft underbelly of Germany at his medical institute in Heidelberg, centre of leather shorts and tenors, found a simple way to preserve dead human bodies so that they do not stink or change hue after their sell-by date. And von placed the kaput on public display to the delight of 800,000 Germans via Mannheim who came to view the late freshly unstinking late dearly departed and none of Damien Hirst's preserved cod or kippers could match that. But von clashed with morality when he exhibited four of the non-stinking dead within Berlin's Kronprinzenpalais for ticket-holding Mariele Bergmann, a matured psychologist, blew the whistle and screamed law claiming that if von was not protected by de 'ol framed diploma on his wall he would be stretched out on a couch with the experts nodding 'crazy man, crazy'.

Forty thousand of the better type of Berliners have queued to see the non-stinkers within the exhibition *The Power of Age* with a backing group of big dealer money-making 'artists'. Brock, the curator of this morgue, shrugs the protests off claiming that it is pushing back the boundaries of science and art, but then so did the medical branch within the concentration camps so claim. With mass entertainment we have become acclimatised to death, be it individual or mass. Too many public shootings too many open graves. At what stage does society claim the right to abuse the bodies of the dead be it the ham in the National Theatre holding a human skull to mouth Shakespeare or, as happened in the pre-war fun fair sideshow, to pay a few coins to view a human foetus preserved non-stinkingwise in medical glass jars. All morality is artificial, coined by a society's needs, but dignity towards the dead if not the living has always held a high place within that social morality even to the old women of the poor saving their pre-war three pence a week to pay for their own funeral so that it should be held with some small degree of dignity, for who knows before the millennium 2000 the body of a homeless drifter could be dragged off its autopsy table as an aesthetic gift for some non-talented alleged 'artist' to win a new prize. If so were Burke and Hare wrong? But let us dream of Oscar and our Jack in those good days when absinth (wine and wormwood) could rot the liver and laudanum (opium) could rot the brain. When Oscar could queen it at the Café Royal and our Jack was peering into his Whitechapel street guide. They were days before the medical mafia had the sole claim to performing mass murder and you could get change out of a sovereign even after buying a digital television, those days when Oscar spent his last breath in a French B&B fighting the wallpaper – but who should care?

Arthur Moysé

Mindfield

Hate Thy Neighbour: the dividing lines of race and culture

edited by Susan Greenberg

published by Camden Press (Mindfield Series), £9.95

This is a well-designed volume, lavishly illustrated and easy on the reader's eye. It also displays a subtitle which neatly encapsulates the themes explored within: 'hate thy neighbour – the dividing lines of race and culture'. The cover is particularly striking, depicting as it does a close up of two sets of knuckles respectively tattooed with the words 'love' and 'hate'.

The text is an eclectic mix, many different areas being viewed through the lenses of a variety of disciplines, viz group psychology ('Malice and Fascism', page 42), anthropology and biology ('Why groups go ape', page 36), political economy ('The colour line is the poverty line', page 46) and so on. Various mediums are employed and a wide range of contributors involved, fully justifying the book's sub-title 'Polemic, debate and analysis in words and pictures'. Articles come not only from members of ethnic or cultural minorities and/or experts in particular fields, but also from mavericks such as the National Front supporter who appears on page 25. Throughout, personal experience seems to be the touchstone, so it

is quite possible that future readers will regard this book as an invaluable piece of oral history. It is also provided, on the final pages, with a useful bibliography, contact list and brief biographical details of the contributors.

Lack of space precludes a detailed description of each chapter, but perhaps I may comment on one or two that seem to embody the flavour of the book as a whole. 'We have put in our full pound's worth' (page 13) movingly describes the suffering and the achievement of black people in this country over the past forty years, while 'Pride the cure for prejudice' (page 77) looks at the erosion of 'Englishness' by current liberal opinion and 'They think it's all over' (page 112) analyses the problems facing Muslim communities in Britain and elsewhere. I found the BNP interview particularly interesting, consisting as it does of a desperate attempt to dress xenophobia in the threadbare cloak of patriotism.

This book is an intriguing pot pourri which provides new and valuable insights into the kaleidoscope of opinion generated by a society like ours. Nonetheless I do have a few reservations. While Susan Greenberg's introduction adequately lays the ground for what is to follow, the absence of any kind of 'conclusion' is a considerable deficiency. Just a few pages to draw together any unifying themes arising from the disparate topics covered would have perhaps given the reader the chance to attain a coherent overview of an infinitely complex situation. A smaller but valid point is that chapters are not numbered, which means that the reviewer has to identify each one rather clumsily by title and page number (see paragraphs 2 and 3 above).

Because the editor has, sensibly enough, gathered together as wide a range of topics

and sources as possible, she may have fallen into the trap of trying to squeeze too much good material into too small a compass. If this is so, perhaps the book should have been longer than 128 pages in order to justice to the material. Alternatively, maybe the focus could have been narrowed to Britain alone and some chapters, like those on caste and on affirmative action in the USA, dispensed with altogether.

I found the piece on the role of the press ('Only on paper', page 104) very interesting, but I would have liked to have seen it address the problem of media concentration on racial violence – 'Black teenager killed by white thugs' – while ignoring its opposite – 'Two hundred thousand cases of inter-racial harmony today'. It passes almost unnoticed that 'half of British-born Caribbean men and a third of women ... [have] a white partner'. ('Atlantic rift', page 53). According to *The Times* of 9th July 1998 this is about five times the equivalent rate in the USA. Thus the traditionally suspicious Brits perform better here than the stereotypically hospitable Yanks – has the melting pot finally melted? It could be that, despite our somewhat patchy record, this country has moved some way towards being the sort of society which defines citizenship by 'belonging' – adherence to the prevalent mores – rather 'blood' – that is to say race.

However we have no reason to adopt a posture of terminal self-satisfaction. The man in the Deptford Market (replacing the one on the Clapham omnibus) recently expressed his admiration for the five young men accused of killing Stephen Lawrence, because they had displayed 'bottle' in the face of a hostile crowd. But reading and thinking about the message embodied in this excellent book will perhaps ensure that, albeit slowly, such attitudes become a rarity as we move towards a truly multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society.

Adrian Walker

The Raven
Number 37



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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

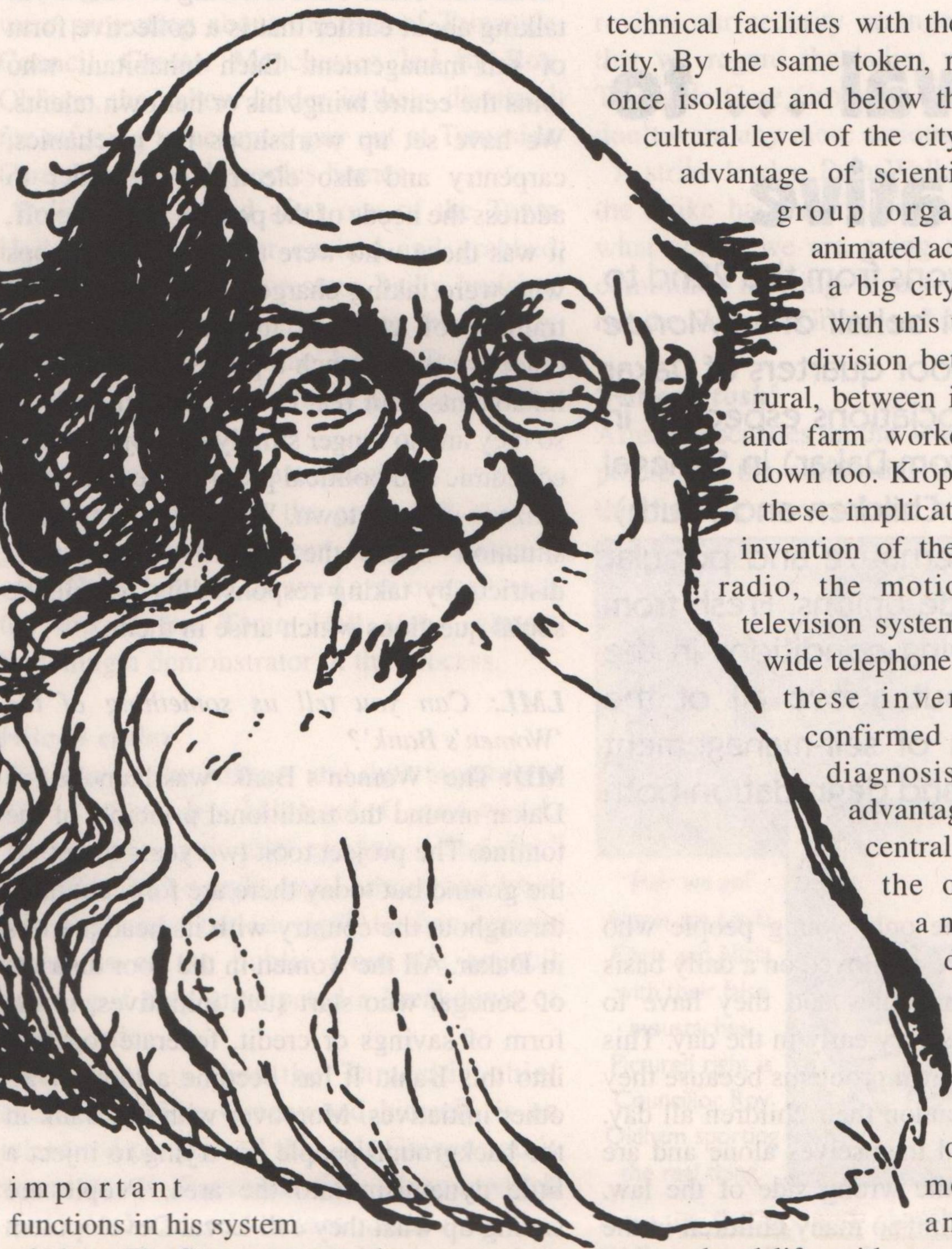
Kropotkin, Howard and decentralisation

Earlier this month I was at a meeting to celebrate the centenary of Ebenezer Howard's book that started life as *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. I always enjoy the fact that the most influential twentieth century text on town planning was written by a modest stenographer whose real ambition was to invent a shorthand-typing machine.

I was told by Geoffrey Howard, his 89-year-old grandson that he was "the most unassuming person you could ever meet" and I learned from Peter Hall that Howard called Kropotkin "the greatest democrat born to wealth and power" – not quite the way you or I would describe him.

I don't know of a scholar who has recorded the interactions between Howard and Kropotkin, both busy meeting-goers in London in the 1890s. All through that decade Kropotkin had been serialising in the journal *The Nineteenth Century* his most celebrated books, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* which eventually appeared as a book in 1902, and *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, published as a book in 1899. Both these books were wholly supportive of Howard's decentralist point of view and indeed when his book was re-issued in 1902 under the more familiar title, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, Howard referred readers to Kropotkin's book to support his hope that "the former of Garden City has a market at his very doors, and this is a market which the rent he contributes has helped to build up".

The combination of topics in Kropotkin's book is unusual, and is explained by the framework of his thought. He was an anarchist, an advocate of society without government. He wanted the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the state, and he envisaged production, distribution and social organisation in the hands of a federated network of autonomous communes. *Fields, Factories and Workshops* had several



important functions in his system of ideas. The first was to combat the view that there is any technical reason for the scale of industrial and agricultural organisation in modern society to grow larger and larger – which of course is a standard objection to anarchist and decentralist ideas. The second – as a matter of revolutionary strategy – was to cope with the problem posed by dependence on imported food which implies that a nation in revolt could be starved into submission, although of course local production for a local market was desirable for other reasons, as Howard noted.

The third of Kropotkin's aims was similarly to advocate the kind of dispersed industrial production that was appropriate to the form of society he wanted to see, while the fourth was to deny that the dehumanisation of labour is the price we must pay for a modern industrial society. His book is really a thesis (to adopt a phrase from Professor Stephen Marglin) on *the economic consequences of the humanisation of work*.

There were many common threads in the web of ideas that Kropotkin shared with Howard, and in several respects his book was equally remarkable. Lewis Mumford, in his book on *The City in History* stressed these links, describing how: "Almost half a century in advance of contemporary economic and technical opinion, he had grasped the fact that the flexibility and adaptability of electric communication and electric power, along with the possibilities of intensive biodynamic farming, had laid the foundations for a more decentralised urban development in small units, responsive to direct human contact, and enjoying both urban and rural advantages ... Kropotkin realised that the new means of rapid transit and communication, coupled with the transmission of electric power in a network, rather than a one-dimensional line, made the small community on a par in essential

technical facilities with the over-congested city. By the same token, rural occupations once isolated and below the economic and cultural level of the city could have the advantage of scientific intelligence,

group organisation, and animated activities, originally a big city monopoly; and with this the hard and fast division between urban and rural, between industrial worker and farm worker, would break down too. Kropotkin understood these implications before the invention of the motor car, the radio, the motion picture, the television system and the world-wide telephone – though each of these inventions further confirmed his penetrating diagnosis by equalising advantages between the central metropolis and the once peripheral and utterly dependent small communities.

With the small unit as a base, he saw the opportunity for a more responsible and responsive local life, with greater scope for the human agents who were neglected and frustrated by mass organisations."

Obviously more recent revolutions in the technology of communications reinforce these opinions. But Kropotkin was also arguing for the global decentralisation of production and was addressing a British audience which assumed that Britain was the workshop of the world, and that for ever more the world would depend on textiles from Lancashire, coal from Newcastle, and ships from the Clyde. In a famous paragraph Kropotkin asked a series of rhetorical questions: "Progress must be looked for in another direction. *It is in producing for home use*. The customers for the Lancashire cottons and the Sheffield cutlery, the Lyons silks and the Hungarian flour-mills are not in India, nor in Africa. The true consumers of the produce of our factories must be our own populations. And they can be that, once we organise our economical life so that they might issue from their present destitution. No use to send floating shops to New Guinea with British or German millinery, when there are plenty of would-be customers for British millinery in these very islands, and for

German goods in Germany. Instead of worrying our brains with schemes for getting customers abroad, it would be better to try to answer the following questions: Why the British worker, whose industrial capacities are so highly praised in political speeches; why the Scottish crofter and the Irish peasant, whose obstinate labour in creating new productive soil out of peat bogs are so much spoken of, are no customers to the Lancashire weavers, the Sheffield cutlers and the Northumbrian and Welsh pitmen? ... Why famines are so common amidst the growers of wheat and rice in India?"

The answer of course is that economic dogma in his day as much as in ours, preached the global *division* of labour, rather than the *integration* that he, like Howard, envisaged. Prophecies usually come true in ways the prophets do not anticipate, and this applies both to Kropotkin and Howard. British manufacturing industry has collapsed, but your local supermarket stocks, at the moment, mange-tout peas which are the produce not of a local grower but of a village in central Africa where water, denied to local subsistence crops, is lavished on these exports.

History, indeed, has parodied the prophets. When Lewis Mumford introduced the 1946 edition of Howard's book he stressed (in italics) that "*The Garden City, as Howard defined it, is not a suburb but the antithesis of a suburb: not a more rural retreat. but a more integrated foundation for an effective urban life*". And he added that "not the least part of Howard's conception was his emphasis upon the *grouping* of Garden Cities: he realised that the advantages of a single city would be multiplied by the creation of 'town-clusters', groups or constellations of such cities."

In the same essay Mumford also suggested that "by now, our neotechnic and biotechnic facilities have at last caught up with Howard's and Kropotkin's intuitions". Over fifty years further on, we are still searching the horizon for ways of putting the visions of these two prophets on the agenda of ideas that serious people take seriously.

Colin Ward

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ANARCHY IN ACTION?

— NUMBER 14 —

Senegal, from survival ... to the social alternative

During the Freinet congress which took place in Lyons from the 22nd to the 24th August we met up with Moussa Diop on behalf of *Le Monde Libertaire*. Moussa Diop is a street activist in the poor quarters of Dakar in Senegal. He is also active in various district associations especially in Tivaouane (a town in the region of Thiés, 92km from Dakar) in Senegal within the framework of AUPEJ (Useful Action for Children and Youth). These associations concentrate on the social alternative and popular education. In addition he is active within the trade unions. Fresh from these various activities he speaks to us about living conditions in the region, the struggles which are taking place but above all of the numerous initiatives centred around the notion of self-management which have appeared in response to the poverty and degradation both material and cultural in that country.

Le Monde Libertaire: Can you tell us something about your activities?

Moussa Diop: To begin with, I work as a street educator among those young people who one might call the excluded, the marginalised both in urban and in rural areas. But I am mainly active in the poor quarters of Dakar such as Arafat, Guébaye and also Parcelles Assainies. In these districts, uncontrolled urbanisation has spread widely and we find a significant section of the population which is forced to face up to basic questions of survival. So I organise activities in order to allow for economic survival which come under the umbrella of small jobs ranging from small scale trading to rubbish collection and recycling and including such things as car washing and domestic work. In the district

where I work the only young people who have any work are employed on a daily basis by industrial companies and they have to leave their homes very early in the day. This brings with it its own problems because they are forced to abandon their children all day. They in turn find themselves alone and are often found on the wrong side of the law. This is why we find so many children in the special education centres or in detention of some kind. In the poor quarters there is a real problem relating to behaviour and schooling.

With this as the background, and because there has been a veritable disengagement by the state in the education sector, both at the level of initiatives and organisation, we have turned to setting up popular education initiatives. My aim is to get in among the people in the poorer districts in order to develop activities which answer needs and thus allow for survival. I try to encourage the people to organise themselves or rather manage themselves so that they can gain control of the activities they initiate. The initiatives we have started go from schooling to professional training and include taking responsibility for health problems. We are trying to organise a real social, alternative education based around centres which are managed collectively at the heart of the poor districts.

LML: How did the state's disengagement in all this come about?

MD: Whereas in France it is the state which is at the heart of projects such as this, with the structural adjustment policies dictated by the IMF and the World Bank the state disengaged from all those services which one might consider to be social. Education and health budgets were drastically reduced. This process has been happening slowly since 1979 which was when the Senegalese state declared itself bankrupt. With this bankruptcy we have seen a process of loss in every sector ... no more social security, no more guaranteed jobs at the end of professional training, no rights to a health service ... everything has become very expensive. Then the state put forward the idea of privatising all these sectors. From that point onwards there arose a veritable movement at the level of unions, political parties and associations to oppose this move towards privatisation

and to launch other initiatives. We, the workers in the education sector, went to the people in these poor districts, we spoke to them, shared our thoughts, listed all the needs of the district and we decided to maintain the structure in another form as a district centre whilst taking advantage of the existing buildings and resources. When I say 'in another form' I am referring to what I was talking about earlier that is a collective form of self-management. Each inhabitant who joins the centre brings his or her own talents. We have set up workshops for mechanics, carpentry and also electricity in order to address the needs of the people. From the off, it was those who were using the workshops who were taking charge of the professional training of children in these fields. Our objective is to launch a process so that local inhabitants gain real control over their lives so they are no longer simply the objects of an economic and political programme but rather citizens of their town. We are working for a situation where the people manage their districts by taking responsibility for all the social questions which arise in them.

LML: Can you tell us something of the 'Women's Bank'?

MD: The 'Women's Bank' was launched in Dakar around the traditional principle of the tontine. The project took two years to get off the ground but today there are forty counters throughout the country with its headquarters in Dakar. All the women in the poor districts of Senegal who start such initiatives, in the form of savings or credit, federate together into this Bank. It has become a tool for all other initiatives. Moreover with the Bank in the background people are trying to inject a little dynamism into the area. People are setting up what they call Local Development Committees (LDC) which we are seeking to network to each other. We now realise that we need a power base which favours the people.

Also we would like to see, along with the setting up of forms of self-finance, the reinforcement of the people's ability to analyse and criticise, to raise a level of consciousness. By experiences such as the 'Women's Bank' people realise that problems linked to poverty and indeed poverty itself are not unavoidable but arise from policies that have been implemented. It is the government which has been in power in Senegal for fifty years which is responsible. Things progress slowly because not everyone is at the same level of consciousness in the movement and people don't always see eye to eye. We need therefore a long-term strategy.

To come back to the experience of the 'Women's Bank'. The beginning came with the whole thing concerning representation at the heart of society. These credit banks were first set up to finance things like traditional

and religious fetes. Since then they have gone on to take responsibility for a far wider range of activities especially everyday matters. In addition to the banks we have now seen the setting up of commercial co-operatives to allow people access to commodities, especially those which are not readily available because of speculation. Often, on the markets, in order to put pressure on prices, traders store commodities. This is why the co-operative has bought back essential goods in bulk in order to avoid speculation. In addition to this, it has freed women from the all too many sharks who prey on the markets during the day with loans at a high rate of interest. The credit counters also serve to finance projects which have been instigated by the women. And, what is of great importance, if a woman sees her project fail and the management committee (that is the collective management which runs the counter) verifies that this failure is not the individual in questions responsibility but is because of the economic situation there is no debt vis-à-vis the Bank. The financial loss is borne by the collective. There is real self-discipline. In a similar vein we have also set up a mutual health system based on this model. With a membership subscription of 100 CFA per month (approximately US\$7) women obtain the right to health care for themselves and their children in the medical centres with whom we have formed agreements.

LML: How do these credit counters work?

MD: Only women get involved in the management of the credit counters. Women chosen by other women. One must bear in mind that in Senegal, it is mainly women who ensure that the wherewithal for daily survival is in place. This is why it is so important to finances what they are planning to do. Thanks to these credit counters we have gone, in two years, from initiatives for economic survival to real economic initiatives. This is why financial aid is of such importance to projects like the district centres. When a leather or sewing workshop in a district centre makes products, within the framework of professional training for children, these are put up for sale in all the co-operatives supported by the counter. In this way we can set up popular chains of distribution for leather and wooden goods for example. Its a real political event. The setting up of these credit counters is in a way a response to the globalisation of the rich and the bourgeoisie offering a globalisation of the people. It is important for us to make these districts into viable economic spaces and not areas of marginalisation and conflict.

The second part of this interview will appear in our next issue

Opening of the squat in Warsaw

In early October the first squat for two years was opened in Warsaw with a really good concert. There were two crust/hardcore bands, 'Operation' from Sweden and 'Detestation' from the US, and two Polish bands, 'Silikonfest' and 'Nowy Swiat', who moved the crowd of three hundred people with a classic seventies punk-rock version of *Bandera Nera*.

Interesting cross-cultural relations have taken place at the squat, local mafia people learned to pogo dance, and seemed to enjoy it, they were friendly because they are friends with sharp skinheads at the football games. The association of friends of fortifications, with whom we cooperate turned out to be really relaxed (we feared they would be militarist right wing freaks) and marked their appreciation for our barricade work, saying they are happy that the fortress is used for defence purposes again, after a hundred years of being left to fall apart.

This fortress is a part of the military complex built by Russians in the nineteenth century, at the time when Poland was under occupation.

Zaczek

Postscript: new squats opened in Silesia, a second one in Wroclaw, and one in Gliwice.



Rich and Poor



Being a poet, words interest me. Sometimes certain words become taboo, somehow they acquire the wrong connotation and cannot be used or if used it is part of the usual degradation of language.

To the audience's question why Fermin Rocker was reluctant to describe his father having possessed a 'certain charisma', Anthony Rudolf thought that the word is now enmeshed and belongs entirely to a European orator who looked very similar to Charlie Chaplin.

So to describe Rudolph Rocker as a 'charismatic speaker' is not necessarily to praise him. But this is wrong.

This particular word comes from the Greek. *Charis* is any one of the the Charites, the Graces (Aglais, Euphrosyne, Thalia) and *charism* is a free gift of grace, whatever imparts graciousness to life.

There are such people that you feel possess that indescribable quality, although how some people achieve it without trying and others cannot however they try, is a subject difficult to think about.

That words should not rule our lives, is a concept not too difficult for an anarchist to accept. But most thinking (but not all) relies on definitions which only words can provide.

A word which has recently crept into this paper is the word *sex*. It is a word which, I think, comes from an American source for the American language delights in short, crisp tags to denote a vast hive of meanings (and activity).

Whereas the anarchist discussion which is going on in these pages is, of course, worth pondering over, unless they ditch this unfortunate word I fear they are not going to get anywhere.

We all know what they are talking about: that is, freedom for the individual without any possible harm to any other individual.

The word itself in worse than charismatic. As far as I can see it comes from the Latin verb *seco* which has other words in use in English (without distortion of meaning) such as *secateur* or *section* – in other words a cut or distinction. This bud or bod is male or female. They are what they are, just a boring prosaic description. It is not an activity. It is not your fault that the English language is full of Americanisms but gee, to base long-winded philosophic dissertations and even to carry placards in political demonstrations for the right to have unlimited 'hex' (just to make a slight alteration to the word) is as preposterous as to demand we should have unlimited life.

The propagation of the species differs creature by creature. That there is a certain amount of excitement connected with all human activities obscures the issue.

The fish lay eggs and others dance around the eggs. What goes on in their heads I do not know

What with wars, famines, atrocities, mismanagement of human affairs and no hope whatsoever for a change in the future, human beings nevertheless continue with procreation. By the time the child is grown up the propagators will be well out of the way to offer any explanation as to why they have been invited to existence – 'to party' as the newish phrase goes.

Words and how their meanings change! Even the word 'freedom', today nearer to 'liberty' was originally used to mean nobility, generosity and, to quote that good anarchist poet Geoffrey Chaucer:

"A Knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the time he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe and honour, *fredom* and curteisie ...
He was a verry, parfit gentil knight."

John Rety

Genetic Engineering

Dear *Freedom*,

There has been considerable debate in recent weeks concerning anarchism and technology in general, and genetics in particular. This letter has not been written as a critique of any particular position taken by previous contributors to the debate. Rather, I am writing because there is a tendency to *separate* genetics (science) from other institutionalised practices pervasive in our culture. This undermines our ability to launch an effective critique of the particular historical-political formation in which we find ourselves.

We should ask ourselves, 'what is it that geneticists are trying to achieve?' Human bodies – like all biological entities – can be understood as self-regulating *systems*. The analysis of DNA provides the opportunity not only to acquire greater understanding of such systems, but, and this is crucial, the theoretical possibility of finding the means to create optimum versions of such systems. The interesting thing is, the human body is not the only entity to have been formulated as a system whose variables can be controlled and manipulated, culture, society and history have all been understood in the same manner. The assumption is simply that underneath each is a code, the decipherment of which will provide for the effective exploitation and automisation of human beings either as individuals or as groups.

The sciences, then, both 'natural' and 'social', are constituted by a metaphor of *depth*. Beneath chaotic surfaces, underlying and immutable codes which govern said surfaces await discovery. Further, the decipherment of such codes provides access to unlimited power.

It is the job of anarchists to intervene in totalising strategies which seek to constitute human beings as *instruments of reason*. This can only be achieved by reformulating practices of working and living in opposition to those currently hegemonic in our culture. Such a project requires not only some considerable debate, but also imagination and courage.

Paul Tremlett



Dear *Freedom*,

Thanks to Mick Cropper (17th October) for joining the discussion of genetic engineering. He puts some useful questions.

Why has there been no long-term testing of these crops that have been grown from genetically engineered seed? I assume that by 'these' you mean the crops which have recently been sabotaged. Long-term testing of these crops has not been completed because it is still at an early stage. The sabotaged fields are test fields. It will be years before their products are offered for sale. For comparison, GE produced human insulin was developed in the 1970s, the patent was granted in 1981, and for most diabetics, it did not replace pig and cattle insulin until the 1990s. The cheese-making enzyme chymotrypsin, from GE fungus, had a similar timetable (GE cheeses in supermarkets are labelled 'suitable for vegetarians'; other cheeses are still made with chymotrypsin from the stomachs of calves).

Why should we be used as human guinea pigs? I presume this is a figure of speech, meaning why should we be coerced or deceived into eating what we would rather not eat. We should not.

Who will control future seed supplies? In the absence of a revolution, the same people as control present seed supplies (GE and other). As now, companies will try to control the seed lines they own, but in many cases it

will be feasible for farmers to grow them on illegally.

Is the risk worth taking? This must be decided for each separate product, in the light of separate risk and benefit assessments. In my opinion, the benefit of herbicide-resistant corn is outweighed by the risk of farmers creating chemical deserts, while the risk of blood-clotting Factor viii from the milk of GE sheep is outweighed by the benefit of haemophiliacs avoiding HIV. It is absurd to expect a single answer for the whole of GE technology.

Have corporate industries like Monsanto a hidden agenda? I do not think so. They have an open agenda, to invest capital on products (GE and otherwise) which they hope to sell in vast quantities, making themselves even richer than they are.

Will the book 'The Thread of Life' answer any of these questions? Not directly. It discusses ethics, but offers no pat answers. Mostly it provides factual information, which reasonable people need before making up their minds on ethical questions.

Who are these 'current primitivist campaigners'? I use this term for the many anti-GE campaigners who share the belief of HRH Prince Charles that The Creator, Nature, or some such mystic entity has a monopoly of biological innovation, on we trespass at our peril. Prince Charles is frank about it. Others rarely mention it, not (I suppose) because they are ashamed of it, but because they think it uncontroversial.

If pushed for non-mystical arguments, they waffle. They cite GE inventions abandoned during testing because of unwanted side-effects, worries about particular GE proposals on the part of scientists who are not against GE as such, and the fact that agribusinesses like Monsanto are out for profit. None of these is evidence against GE.

Well-informed people, concerned about particular GE applications, find themselves in a Rainbow Alliance with Primitivists, New Agers, Lysenkoists and Ignoramusses proud of their ignorance. Their selective concerns are used as ammunition in an unselective blanket campaign.

Apologists for GE can point to the obvious benefit of HIV-free Factor viii, and the harmlessness of vegetarian cheese. The blanket campaign will fail, because it is founded on superstition. And I fear the arguments against environmentally dangerous applications may also fail, because they are lost in the noise of the blanket campaign.

Donald Room



Dear *Freedom*,

A couple of thoughts on the subject of genetic engineering. My impression is that both the potential dangers and benefits of this technology tend to be exaggerated.

Opponents of genetic engineering might reflect that nature itself conducts millions of genetic experiments, called mutations, each and every year and has been at it for three or four billion years. Looking at the resulting richness and diversity of the biosphere the results seem fairly impressive, though we should not forget that perhaps 99% of all the species that have ever existed are now extinct, probably due in large part to the blindness of the evolutionary process.


Humans too have been engaged in genetic engineering, via the process of selective breeding, for ten thousand years or more. The main difference with modern microbiological techniques, it seems to me, is that these are potentially much more controlled and exact. So in principle it seems possible that

the new methods could be *safer* than the traditional techniques, provided of course that short-term considerations of profit do not over-ride environmental and human safety.

The reason I think the possible benefits may be exaggerated is precisely all those millennia of selective breeding. A large proportion of the practically possible beneficial modifications of plants and animals may in fact already have been carried out. Talk of feeding the world's starving millions could be over-optimistic.

The same logic (or superstitious dogma) that regards genetically engineered crops as fair game for destruction could be applied to any agricultural technology, including many of the much-vaunted 'organic' techniques. For instance it is suggested by a writer in the current edition of *Direct Action* that seaweed is an acceptable form of fertiliser. No doubt a few tons of seaweed here and there makes little difference, but what would the ecological effect if millions of tons of this organic material were annually removed from, say, the British coastlines? Before adopting such a practice on a large scale, we had better understand the possible consequences. Such understanding requires careful *scientific* study, not the superstition and worship of ignorance that is all too prevalent in some sections of the British 'revolutionary' movement.

John Wood

Please keep sending in your letters and donations ... 

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For further information contact: Philip Coupland, Humanities Research Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL e-mail: coupland@mcmail.com tel: 01933-229134 www.utopianstudies.mcmail.com.

Closing date for abstracts (150-300 words) 30th November 1998

FREEDOM fortnightly
ISSN 0016 0504

Published by Freedom Press
84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Printed in Great Britain by Aldgate Press,
London E1 7RQ

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— PROGRAMME 1998 —

30th October Does Professionalism Matter?
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Anyone interested in giving a talk or
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Carol Saunders / Peter Neville

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Contact: Finchley & Barnet CND on 0181-444 1605

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Meet at 11am at Surprise View car park on
A625 Hathersage to Sheffield road (1 1/2 miles
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01773 827513**

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Saturday 14th November**

- 10.30-11.00 Registration
- 11.00-12.30 Solidarity Lost (Glen Burrows, RMT Bridgwater)
- 12.30-1.30 Lunch
- 1.30-3.00 Working Class Culture and Social Change (Tony Taylor, UNISON, Wigan)
- 3.30-5.00 Racism, Strikes and Riots (Dave Chapple, CWU, Bridgwater)
- 8pm until late: Black music social with jazz, reggae, blues, soul. £1 entrance (free to conference members)

Sunday 15th November

- 10.00-11.30 Bourgeois Politics (Malcolm Ball, UNISON, London)
- 11.45-12.30 Braverer's Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (Graeme Imray, NATFHE, Liverpool)
- 12.30-1.30 Plenary Session.

Cost of Conference: £3.00 waged / £1.50 unwaged.
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