

## Has the Tide Turned for Trade Unions?

For nineteen long years British trade unions have seen their membership fall. From a high of just over half of Britain's workers belonging to a union in 1979, by the end of this decade fewer than a third of workers are union members. There are, though, signs that union membership may be beginning to rise once again, albeit modestly. According to the official Labour Force Survey the number of people belonging to a trade union in 1998 rose by 4,000 compared to the previous year. Modest as this is, the fact that union membership is rising for the first time since 1979 is significant and something that anarchists should take note of.

Overall 7.1 million people belong to a trade union. This represents though just 30% of the total workforce. Outside public sector employers such as the NHS and local government only one in five workers are union members. As TUC chief John Monks said "unions must not be complacent. In almost half of the UK's workplaces there are still no union members".

Growth in union membership is particularly strong amongst women (up 60,000) and workers from ethnic minorities. Indeed Afro-Caribbean workers now have the highest rates of union membership at 36%. These statistics clearly present challenges to union bosses who are overwhelmingly white and male.

Although little debated amongst union rank and file members but as previously reported in *Freedom* this increase comes at a time when moves are afoot to change the very nature of British trade unionism. Tony Blair has stated that he wants to take a "once in a generation opportunity" to reshape British industrial relations. The opportunity exists because unions are weak and after years of being ignored by Thatcher are pleased to have a government

that at least acknowledges that they exist even if, despite the money unions pour into the Labour party, they will do them no favours.

So what does the future hold for unions. A push for greater worker's control? A campaign to reduce the working week? An attack on racism and discrimination at the workplace? Forget it! GMB boss John Edmonds has declared that in the future "trade unions must become pressure groups for excellence and press for improvements in the way companies are managed". Forget redistributing wealth; the rallying cry of the trade unions will be in the future, if Edmonds has his way, 'better quality management'! In fact you will be lucky if you even get a pay rise. At a recent TUC conference Tony Blair called annual pay negotiations "outdated and a meaningless ritual". Union leaders present clapped! A TUC document states that "unions must associate themselves with best practice, continuous improvement, high productivity and enhanced competition". Moreover workers must be "willing to change".

What all this boils down to is the idea that unions and employers can work together in partnership. As Blair has put it "the days of strikes without ballots, mass picketing, closed shops and secondary picketing are over". In the future unions and employers will sit around the table and reach consensus over issues. No more negotiations, no more conflict, no more industrial action. All will be peace and harmony. Of course all this begs the obvious question: if such a thing was possible why would anyone actually need to belong to a union in the first place?

As anyone who works knows, the reality is far different from the rosy picture painted by Blair. Last month the independent employment arbitration

service ACAS reported that in 1998 it dealt with some 508,000 inquiries. The number of individual employee cases it dealt with rose by 6%. Most cases concerned unfair dismissal or employers breaching employment contracts. Cases relating to race discrimination increased by 10%. Elsewhere sacked Lufthansa Skychef staff enter the eighth month of their dispute with their employers unwilling to meet them. As reported in *Freedom* last month employers are finding every way they can to wriggle out of paying the national minimum wage.

This, then, is the reality of work for many: unfair dismissal, discrimination, breaches of contract. Any worker trying to fight back faces the most restrictive employment law in Europe. So bad is it that UNISON, the public sector union, are taking the Labour government to the European Court arguing that Britain's industrial action law is so restrictive it denies workers a basic human right.

Nearly twenty years of Tory rule followed by Tony Blair has stacked the odds well and truly in favour of the bosses. No wonder the CBI is all in favour of partnership. As they have said themselves "we are frankly not interested in anything which is in the nature of returning to the collective bargaining structure of the 1970s". What is less easy to work out is why union bosses are so keen.

People join unions for protection and to advance their rights at work. Union bosses like Monks are in danger of throwing away the small rise in union membership recorded by the Labour Force Survey. Who on earth is going to bother to join a trade union if its leaders see its role as simply helping to improve a company's competitiveness?

Richard Griffin

# anarchist fortnightly

# Freedom

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THE EURO ELECTIONS, 'J18' AND THE BLACK PANTHERS

## Chickens coming home

"Being an old farm boy myself, chickens coming home to roost never did make me sad. They've always made me glad." (Malcolm X)

Last week's Euro elections saw the chickens head home for Tony Blair. Labour had won 64 seats at the last elections to the European Parliament in 1994. This time, they managed to scrape together enough votes to secure 29. Labour's vote share was 28%, against the Tories' 36%. William Hague – portrayed by all the Westminster pundits as a disastrous leader of the Conservatives – had trounced the 'immortals' of New Labour. The party that, for *The Guardian's* Polly Toynbee "walked on water" has just realised it needs to learn to swim.

We are all, of course, supposed to believe that this was a victory for Euro scepticism, a ballot over the future of the pound. Never mind that Labour's election broadcasts made clear that what was expected was a vote of approval for Blair's performance so far. Never mind that Labour's vote was at its lowest in its purported heartlands. In seats where Labour won 60% of the vote in 1997, only 28% of the electorate turned out to vote for them this time round. The 1999 Euro elections don't represent a turning point for Hague, any more than they indicate a mid-term 'blip' that can be rectified by the return of Peter Mandelson as 'election campaign supremo'. What was revealed at the polls was the extent of working class disgust with, and retreat from, New Labour. A party that has spent the last decade trying to distance itself from its origins as the party of organised labour has been forced to recognise that its formerly passive constituency had taken the hint. That Blair thinks that all of this can be solved by the return of Mandelson to make Labour's mendacity shine brighter in the play of the studio lights, says much for his contempt for those who delivered the 1997 victory.

It's not only New Labour who've been caught out. Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party put its pretensions to the test of the voting booth. In seven out of nine constituencies the SLP was beaten by the British Nationalist Party. The fond hope of the left, that any break from Labour would be to the left, has been found to be a comfortable illusion. Faced with a choice between the SLP, which is an electoral machine for Scargill's Parliamentary fantasies, and has no real community base, and the BNP, which turns out to canvass regularly, and offers ethnic cleansing as a solution to working class deprivation, more chose the BNP. One reason for this is simply that, by maintaining a presence in working class areas, the BNP appear to show more respect for their prospective constituency. More important, they understand that politics, in the last instance, resolves through force. Michel Foucault once observed, corrupting Clausewitz's much quoted aphorism,



"Politics is war by other means". Behind the studied blandness of Blair's Third Way a war on the poor is conducted. The BNP attempt to change the terms of the war, to transform that war from being one waged by the rich against the poor to one where the poor fight the poor for the diminishing resources allocated to their communities. The left, though, whatever their rhetoric (and this goes for many anarchists too) conduct their politics entirely at the level of the moral and through entirely symbolic means. They don't live in the communities they purport to address and they have nothing practical to offer those communities to improve their everyday lives. The left (and again, this has to include much of the anarchist movement) has believed it can win by ideology alone. The dismal performance of the left in the Euro elections suggests some chickens may have wandered home here too.

On 18th June, in what purports to be an exercise in freeing ourselves from the shackles of capitalism, a good many of us will converge on the City of London, to take part in "an international day of protest, action and carnival aimed at the heart of the global economy, the banking and financial centres". If proof were needed of our movement's resort to entirely symbolic activity, none better could be found. Most people who suffer at the hands of capital don't do so in the heart of the City, they suffer through paying high rents on run down estates while local resources go to service local authority debts to the City, they suffer through hospital waiting list increases as bed capacities and staff numbers are lost due to health authority private finance deals. They suffer through exploitation at work, through higher prices and lower wages, through the increased cost of entertainment – football season ticket costs, club door prices, etc. Their quality of life is diminished through the actions of capital, but a demonstration in the City will do nothing to alleviate the conditions of exploitation. Hence, none of those most in need of liberation from the "roar of profit" (Reclaim the Streets leaflet) will go near such an event, because the "sounds of

rhythms of party, carnival and pleasure" are a poor substitute for money in your hand and decent accommodation, and will take us no closer to their realisation.

Not least, because the organisers have, helpfully, announced where their two major events will set off from, allowing us to indulge in that favourite activity of the 'revolutionary' – telling the police what we're doing, then complaining when they box us in. In his book *Pacifism as Pathology* (Arbeiter Ring Press, 1999) Ward Churchill writes of a typical "mass demonstration" in the US: "One will find hundreds, sometimes thousands assembled in orderly fashion, listening to selected speakers calling for an end to this or that aspect of lethal state activity, carrying signs 'demanding' the same thing ... Throughout the whole charade it will be noticed that the state is represented by a uniformed police presence keeping a discreet distance and not interfering with the activities. And why should they? The organisers of the demonstration will have gone through the 'proper channels' to obtain permits required by the state and instructions as to where they will be allowed to assemble, how long they will be allowed to stay ... Both sides of the 'contestation' concur that the smooth functioning of state processes must not be physically disturbed, at least not in any significant way." Churchill, rightly, condemns this as the "politics of the comfort zone", founded on "What sort of politics might I engage in which will both allow me to posture as progressive and allow me to avoid incurring harm to myself?" It is this political practice, which the Canadian activist Mike Ryan calls a "theatre of pseudo resistance", which has resulted in a situation where the inheritors of the death of Labourism are not those who purport to speak of working class unity in struggle, but the forces of the far right.

So how do we escape from the mess we're in? Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin has suggested that the anarchist movement could learn much from the methods of the Black Panther Party, of which he was a member. Specifically he has referred to the Panther's

attempts to establish a 'survival economy' for poor black communities, with the Panthers organising survival programmes to move towards community self-determination. Panther groups organised breakfast programmes for poor families, set up and ran medical centres in poor neighbourhoods, organised free transport for prison visits and established armed self-defence units to monitor and prevent police brutality. "Panthers established a network of community service projects designed to improve the life chances of African American people. Institutional racism relegated a disproportionate number of African Americans to deplorable housing, poor health care services, an unresponsive criminal justice system, inadequate diets, and substandard education. The party's survival programmes aimed to help black people overcome the devastating effects of racism and capitalism. Panther officials explained 'The programs ... are meant to meet the needs of the community until we all can move to change social conditions that make it impossible for all the people to afford the things they need and desire.'" (JoNina M. Abbron, 'Serving the People', in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, edited by Charles E. Jones, Black Classic Press, 1998)

The Panthers focused their work on the poorest communities, those most affected by racism and by the "roar of profit and plunder". Organised from scratch, with no links at the start with the organised left, the Panthers succeeded because they lived in the communities they served, and suffered alongside them, and because they acknowledged that a belief in working class self-determination ought to lead to more than ideological opposition to the state. As Huey P. Newton, one of the Party's founders, noted: "In their quest for freedom [people] have to see first some basic accomplishments in order to realise that major successes are possible".

In pointing to the positive legacy of the Panthers, Ervin has highlighted a possible avenue out of our present irrelevance. Under Blair, working class communities are seeing resources sucked away to keep New Labour's Private Finance Initiative partners happy, with schools and libraries under threat, transport links being closed down, and estates sold off. The notion of a 'survival economy' is as relevant to our communities today as it was in Oakland in the '60s. The Euro elections should have made it clear to all of us; if we allow our politics to be reduced to the 'theatre of pseudo resistance', we will be as irrelevant to most people as New Labour and the Socialist Labour Party are seen to be. If anarchism is committed to bringing about the autonomous organisation of working class communities its time for us to prove it in practice, and prove it where it matters most.

Nick S.  
(Note that this article was written before the demos on June 18th – see our next issue for further reports)

# Bedsit beasts and provincial anarchism



Following the massive disruption of traffic caused at the end of April when police in central Manchester moved to cut off the PA system at a Reclaim the Streets demo against traffic pollution, the OKasional Café group put on a vegan supper and rave squat at the abandoned Hacienda Club on the eve of the appearance in court of those who had been arrested in April. One organiser told the *Manchester Evening News* that the rave was put on to raise cash for the supporters of Reclaim the Streets arrested in the earlier action.

On Monday 7th June the *Manchester Evening News* reported "Hacienda rave ends in riot". It had been a wild weekend at the former Hacienda nightclub, which started on Saturday night when members of the OKasional café distributed leaflets around Manchester inviting all-comers to a free vegan supper.

The electricity supply was connected up, the sound system went into action, beer flowed. Just after midnight big crowds gathered on Whitworth Street. Then the police moved in demanding that the squatters leave the building.

This attempt to clear the building brought 'serious disorder' on Whitworth Street West. The *Manchester Evening News* reports: "Officers were pelted with bricks, bottles and buckets of urine by the thousand-strong crowd outside the building and from the roof of the Hacienda". There were twenty arrests during the conflict.

Close to a hundred police took part in the operation, including members of the Tactical Aid Group. But an organiser said "there was no trouble at all until the police arrived". The squat ended at 8am on Sunday morning when the revellers left voluntarily.

## OKasional Café squat

The Hacienda Club built Manchester's status as a dance scene capital with a worldwide reputation in the 1980s. It was set up in 1982, jointly financed by Manchester's own dance music pioneers New Order and Factory Records.

While it was rated the 'best venue on Britain', the Greater Manchester Police were trying to get its licence withdrawn. They claimed it was being used for blatant drug-taking. In the end, according to Paul Taylor in the *Manchester Evening News*, "it was closed voluntarily in the face of gun-toting gangs".

The Hacienda closed for the last time in 1997 with debts of £500,000. Current plans include turning it into luxury flats. The OKasional Café squatters who moved into the building on Friday 4th June posted

notices warning the owners, GR Morris Construction, that they would be prosecuted if they tried to reclaim it.

## Some historical trends

The anarchist movement in this country has before it two distinct traditions. The 'bedsit beast' tradition described here, which is broadly a romantic protest against ugly aspects of modern life like traffic pollution. The approach of this tradition has been to mobilise mass direct action in the streets by mainly young people. Reclaim the Streets is an obvious example of this approach. But there are many other operations active, like 'June 18th'.

Similar movements have existed here before. In the 1960s peace movement CND and the Committee of 100 were probably part of this romantic tradition. Culturally these movements are mainly middle class.

A different form of anti-establishment opposition has been the working class or syndicalist tradition. In this country this powerful tradition has existed alongside the romantic approach. Measured by the strength in strike activity of the British trade unions today, this force has been seriously weakened, while workplace struggles seem to be undergoing a transformation.

Recent publicised disputes have almost all resulted in conflicts between the workers and their unions. This was true of the T&GWU and the Liverpool dockers, of the Magnet workers and their union and also of the Hillingdon women and UNISON, and now the Tameside careworkers and UNISON.

Commenting on these romantic and syndicalist traditions at the start of the nineteenth century E.P. Thompson, the historian, wrote that "these years appear at times to display not a revolutionary challenge but a resistance movement, in which both the Romantics and the Radical craftsmen opposed the annunciations of Acquisitive Man". Yet, as I tried to point out in my postscript to the Freedom Press pamphlet *The Tradition of Workers' Control* by Geoffrey Ostergaard, "the Romantic criticism of utilitarianism remained separate if parallel to that of the craftsman".

More recently these two criticisms of modern management and government have come closer together. There was an

intervention by Reclaim the Streets in the Liverpool dockers dispute, and by similar elements in the Tameside careworkers conflict. Both were impressive developments.

This kind of overlap is not unique – there was an industrial section in the Committee of 100 and the peace movement – but it isn't typical. Anarchists should encourage this kind of overlap activity between these two traditions.

## The consequences for anarchists

I was struck by the photographs in the last two issues of *Freedom*, one on 29th May showing chaos on the roads around Cádiz,

the other on 12th June recording the Reclaim the Streets action in Manchester on 30th April.

The message is stark: direct action in the streets of Cádiz and Manchester. In Cádiz the people manning the barricades blocking the traffic were ordinary shipyard workers concerned about the threat of redundancy. In Manchester the activists are young, mostly middle class student types with a green agenda.

English working people tend to be brave in the workplace and timid in the streets. In English civil society the fear of the policeman and the law by workers is almost always greater than their fear of the boss. With the white-collar English middle classes it seems the other way around.

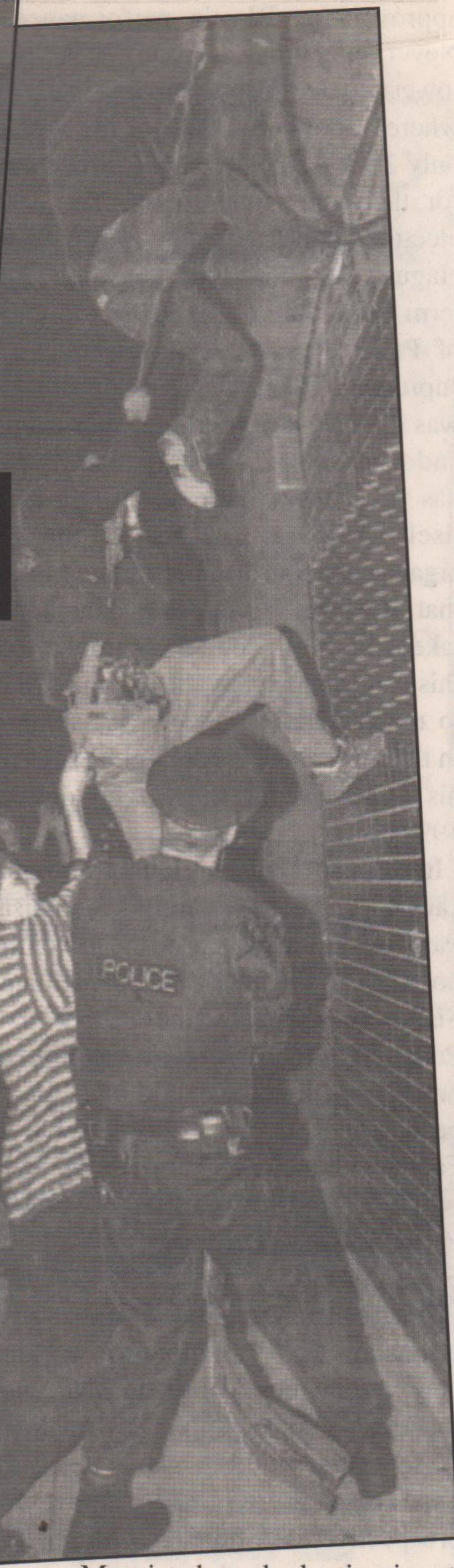
Examples of the initial timidity of the Tameside careworkers has been described to me by local libertarians like John Bevan and Derek Pattison. English workers are frightened to death of being shown up in their communities or laughed at by their mates at the pub. Even today, in civic society,

the conservatism of the English worker is breathtaking, especially in the north. Anyone who doubts this should try attending a branch meeting of one of our 'great' trade unions.

Anarchists have had hardly any impact on the British labour movement, in the same way the romantics have had little impact culturally on the workers despite the efforts of William Morris and John Ruskin. English workers decorate their houses more in latest Hollywood style rather than early Gothic.



Scenes from outside the squatted Hacienda Club rave in Manchester



Marxists have had a tiny input, but they have tended to reinforce, through the Communist Party and various trot (continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

groups, the attitude of conservatism and respect for the law in this country. Together with the Labour Party and the trade unions, they have held the English working class in a legalistic straight-jacket.

The anarchists on Tameside are merely trying to help the workers in the way one tries to show a spider the way out of the bath. That's not a vanguard, it's just commonsense humanity. The Spaniards, most recently in Puerto Real in the Bay of Cádiz, have shown this can be done. Anarchism in Spain was a romantic movement which successfully integrated with the working class with impressive results.

Perhaps Reclaim the Streets and June 18th are England's wayward heirs to what the Spaniards accomplished in a more complete and comprehensive form.

BB

## Fighting Talk

It is important that anarchists who belong to unions find out what their union's policy is on partnership and argue for a more radical form of unionism.

Anarchists who belong to trade unions or who have an interest in union and workplace issues can join the Anarchist Trade Union Network which aims to act as a forum for debate and information sharing. A quarterly bulletin called *Fighting Talk* is produced. The network can be contacted at: Box EMAB (ATU), 88 Abbey Street, Derby, DE22 3SQ (send four first class stamps).

Richard Griffin

### — COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 10th July, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 1st July.



If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc

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# BOREHOLE FOR DOOMED DOME

Plans announced for Opencast Mine on the most appropriate site in Britain

Following their successful mining venture at Thenford House, the Northamptonshire home of Michael Heseltine, in 1996, MSG Associates have revealed the next phase in their business expansion programme.

Their latest plan involves an urban project within the borough of Greenwich, to develop and operate an Opencast Mine on the eight-hectare site of the Millennium Dome at Blackwall Point, SE10, for which a planning application has now been placed with Greenwich Council. Those responsible for this ambitious development and planning application have a schedule to start drilling a borehole for sampling within the perimeter of the Dome, at the earliest opportunity.

A director of the group, Bruce MacKenzie said: "There is not a more appropriate site in Britain for an Opencast Mine than at the Dome". He added that "environmental considerations will not create any real problems as most of the required safety and 'sustainable' infrastructure is already in place. The roof of the Dome will provide a wonderful dust cover and sound insulator. There is an underground rail link - North Greenwich - for removing overburden and other hazardous substances". The site also offers good river access and the chance of more jobs with expansion of the scheme within the surrounding twenty hectares, where there are expected to be large reserves of coal.

### Report of opening ceremony

Following the discovery of coal on the Blackwall Point, Greenwich, the managing director of MSG, who have applied to the Council for planning permission to develop an Opencast Mine on the site of the Millennium Dome, declared the 9th May opening ceremony an encouraging success.

On a beautiful day, and within a few yards of the Dome, MSG directors and shareholders listened to a moving declaration (shown right) from director Christopher Tranchall, and speeches from Gary Holden, a local resident, and Mick Appleyard, a senior official in the Yorkshire area of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Both speakers extolled the virtues of the Dome as the most appropriate site for an Opencast Mine, and the best possible example of an encompassing shield to protect the surrounding area from the noise and dust pollution caused by Opencast mining. The presence of the North Greenwich rail-head - linked to the main rail network - was also praised as it could carry materials to and from the site. It was stressed that if every Opencast Mine

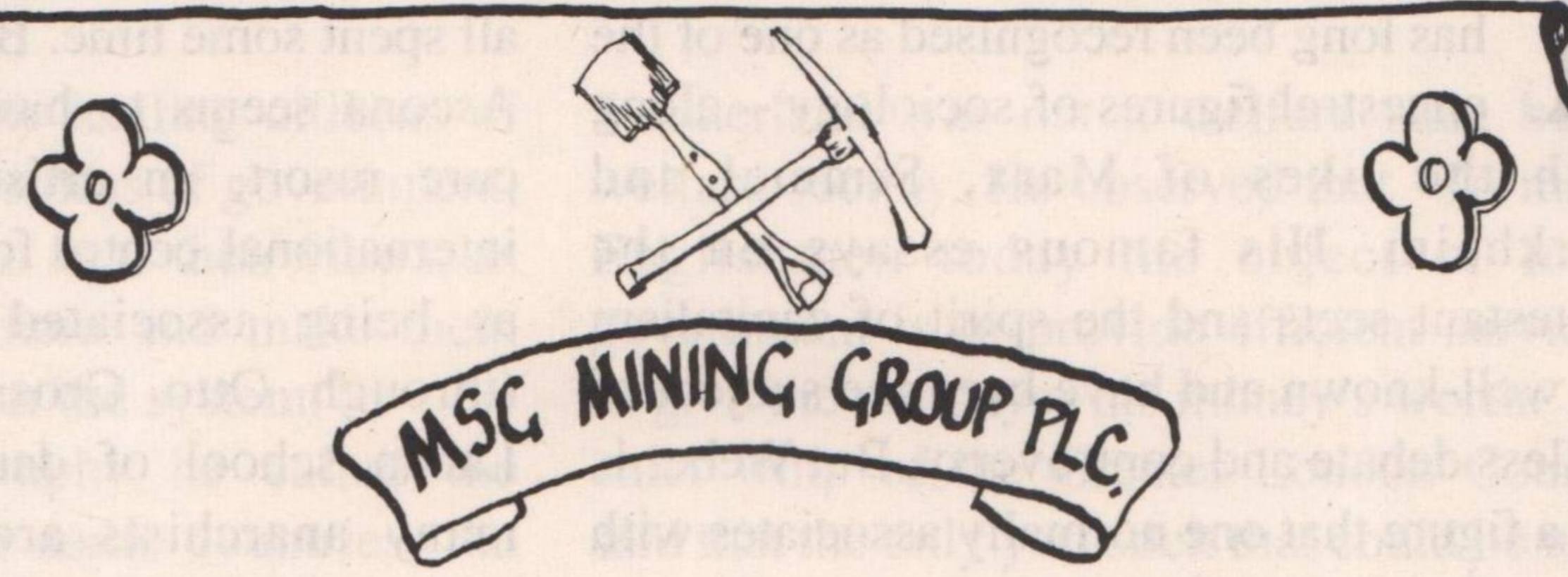
around the country had these provisions - an eight-hectare dome and a linked underground railway - then they just might be more acceptable. This was contrasted to the millions of separate car journeys that the Millennium Dome Experience was expected to generate.

Preceding the ribbon-cutting event, Mr Tranchall read out an apology from St James's Palace excusing the absence of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, from the Opening Ceremony.

Immediately afterwards a rush of shareholders proceeded to dig a number of boreholes, beneath the shadow of the Dome,

and to everyone's delight coal was found. On the strength of this find MSG share certificates increased in value and were sold to the assembled gathering, including one enthusiastic policeman.

Before departing, after a productive afternoon's work, it was announced that samples of coal were to be sent to Greenwich Council for analysis of chemical elements. Meanwhile MSG Associates is in discussion with Greenwich regarding their request for Environmental Impact and Traffic Impact Assessment studies. And of course the future of the Dome now in conflict with proposals for an Opencast Mine.



## DOOMED DOME MILLENNIUM SITE

We the Directors and Shareholders of MSG Associates do request entry to the site known as the Doomed Dome, Millennium Folly, to pursue our principal aims to develop and operate an Opencast Mine. And further, in accord with our noble aspirations, we wish on this providential day, 237 days in advance of the millennium fiasco, this May 9th 1999, to initiate our historic claim to progress this first Opencast Mine in an urban community in the city of London. We do consider this to be the most appropriate site in Her Majesty's Realm, for this venture.

So, to meet the needs and greed of our shareholders we do hereby intend, today, to commence drilling boreholes to test for the quantity and quality of what will henceforth be known as New Labour, Millennium Coal.

Chief engineer and director:

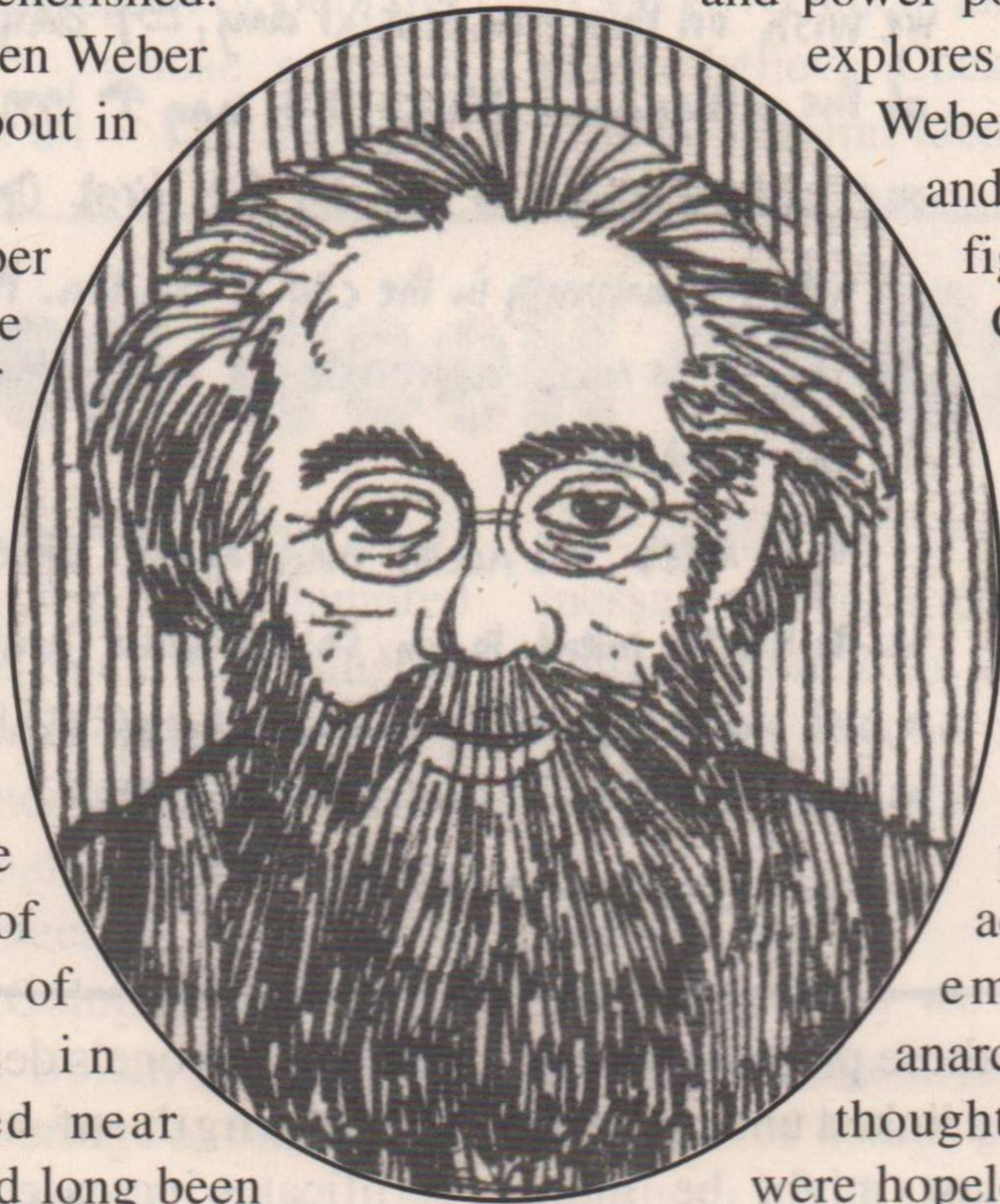


**Max Weber and the Culture of Anarchy**  
 edited by Sam Whimster  
 published by MacMillan, 1999, £17.50

The German sociologist Max Weber has long been recognised as one of the ancestral figures of sociology – along with the likes of Marx, Simmel and Durkheim. His famous essays on the Protestant sects and the spirit of capitalism are well-known and have been the subject of endless debate and controversy. But Weber is not a figure that one normally associates with anarchism. He was in fact an ardent German nationalist, and advocated a rather elitist form of liberal politics. Weber was nothing else if not bourgeois, as he himself continually affirmed. But in this interesting collection of essays a close connection and linkage is explored between Weber and anarchism, for as Carl Levy writes, Weber clearly had a fascination for anarchists, syndicalists and libertarian life-style politics even though they represented the very antithesis of all that he cherished.

The association between Weber and anarchism came about in three ways.

The first is that Weber and his wife Marianne were close friends of Edgar and Else Jaffe, and through them came into personal contact with several anarchists. Secondly, Weber sometimes spent his Easter vacations at the small fishing village of Ascona, on the shores of Lake Maggiore in Switzerland. Situated near Locarno, the village had long been an outpost for radical refugees, anarchists, artists and bohemian intellectuals. Here was situated the Tolstoyan community, Monte



Verita (Mountain of Truth), and it was here that Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta had all spent some time. Between 1900 and 1920 Ascona seems to have served as a nature-cure resort, an artists colony, and as an international centre for anarchism – as well as being associated with psychoanalysis (through Otto Gross), Dadaism and the Laban school of dance. And thirdly, like many anarchists around the turn of the century, Weber was deeply influenced by the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche – indeed, through Foucault and Deleuze, the 'spirit' of Nietzsche still haunts so-called post-structuralist anarchism.

Two of the essays in the book are specifically focused on anarchism, and are of particular interest. Carl Levy's 'Max Weber, Anarchism and Libertarian Culture' gives an absorbing account of the relationship between personality (or rather, personalities) and power politics in Germany, and explores the contrast between Weber's liberal nationalism and the anarchism of such figures as Ernst Toller, Gustav Landauer and Otto Gross. All these three anarchists (like Weber) had been influenced by Nietzschean existentialism and Neo-Kantian philosophy, but, in addition, they had also embraced the ethical anarchism of Tolstoy. Weber thought all three anarchists were hopelessly out of touch with the politics of the real world – which for Weber meant German nationalism, a centralising nation-state under the leadership

of a cultural elite, and protestantism.

In contrast, the essay by Ulrich Linse 'Sexual Revolution and Anarchism' deals specifically with Erich Mühsam. Whereas the anarchism of Tolstoy expressed a certain acosmism (as Weber described it) in its advocacy of pacifism, vegetarianism, and ethical individualism, and was positively anti-erotic, the anarchism of Mühsam (along with Gross and Ernst Frick) was thoroughly libertarian. Mühsam, whom Weber disliked intensely, was a poet, a radical bohemian and an anarchist. He was also an advocate of 'free love', in the sense of polygamous sexual relationships. Weber described Mühsam as one of the anarchist 'riff-raff', while his fellow Munich anarchist Landauer disapproved of his libertarianism. Linse, in discussing Landauer and working class anarchists, appears to see nothing between bourgeois marriage and promiscuity. But he notes that the 'absolute promiscuity' of Mühsam (and Gross – who besides being an anarchist was an associate of Freud and Jung) often led to rather superficial encounters and to sexual jealousy. But politically Weber and Mühsam stood poles apart. Weber was an established academic, a nationalist and reformer, and a spokesman for the cultural bourgeoisie: Mühsam, in contrast, was a bohemian intellectual, an internationalist, a revolutionary and on the side of 'drop-outs' and vagabonds. Weber believed in the liberal state; Mühsam in anarchy.

Apart from Landauer most of the anarchists

mentioned in the text have become, outside of German academic scholarship, somewhat forgotten figures, and the lives of some of them ended tragically. The poet Erich

Mühsam (1868-1934) participated in the Bavarian revolution of 1919, along with Toller and Landauer. Imprisoned for high treason until 1924, a decade later he died – tortured and murdered – in a Nazi concentration camp. Otto Gross, who had a life-long addiction to cocaine and opium, was diagnosed by Jung as suffering from 'schizophrenia'. Freud's biographer Ernest Jones described Gross as a 'genius' – but he tragically committed

suicide towards the end of the First World War. Ernst Toller (1893-1939), whom Weber dismissed as a starry-eyed St Francis, was a communitarian anarchist like Landauer. He also committed suicide in 1939, age forty six. Landauer, of course, was murdered in Stadelheim prison in May 1919. Only Ernst Frick (1881-1956) lived out his years. A 'lanky' Swiss from Zurich and a Tolstoyan anarchist, he spent his last days as a painter at Ascona.

This interesting book, although throwing important new light on Max Weber and his relationship to anarchism, will also perhaps serve to keep alive the memory of these past anarchists and what they stood (and died) for – a libertarian community.

Brian Morris

*The drawings of Gustav Landauer (left) and Erich Mühsam (above) are by Rufus Segar*

## Thoughts on Revolution

[Gustav Landauer's essay *Die Revolution* from which we publish extracts was first published in 1909 in a series called *Die Gesellschaft*, edited by Martin Buber.]

Our task is to reconsider revolution from the standpoint of social psychology. The best way to prove that a subject cannot be treated in a particular way is to make a genuine attempt to treat it in just that way, and to go on until this becomes impossible. So I shall begin by describing revolution in a strictly scientific and deductive way, and I ask the reader to pay careful attention and make sure I do this properly, for I must confess at the start that I am convinced the task is hopeless.

To begin with, we must establish a scientific terminology, for the current terms all derive from the experience of single events, and are therefore unsuitable for scientific use. In which field does the phenomenon of revolution occur? Revolution concerns every aspect of human life – not just the State, the class-structure, industry and commerce, arts and letters, education and learning, but a combination of all these social factors which is at a given moment in a state of relative stability. This general combination of social factors in a state of relative stability I shall call the *topia*.

The *topia* is the source of wealth as well as hunger, of housing as well as homelessness. The *topia* rules all the details of human existence. It fights wars abroad, it exports and imports goods, it opens and closes frontiers.

The *topia* encourages intelligence as well as stupidity, good behaviour as well as bad, happiness as well as unhappiness, satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction. The strong hand of the *topia* is felt even where it does not belong, in the private life of the individual and the family; the borderline between individual and family life on one hand and the *topia* on the other is not fixed.

The relative stability of the *topia* gradually changes until it reaches a point of delicate equilibrium. This change in the stability of the *topia* is caused by the *utopia*. The *utopia* belongs by nature not so much to social as to personal life. It is the combination of individual efforts and wishes which usually exist singly and separately, but which in a moment of crisis and under the influence of intoxicating enthusiasm can unite and organise themselves into a whole, into a form of social life, with the purpose of creating a perfect *topia* which will have no unpleasant or unjust features at all.

But the *utopia* leads to a new *topia*, which is essentially different from the old *topia*, but is still a *topia*. Thus we can derive the First Law of Revolution: that every *topia* is followed by a *utopia*, which is followed in turn by a *topia*, and so on ... And the corollary is that there is an equal number of *topias* and *utopias*.

So the *utopia* is the sum of all aspirations in a pure and refined state, none of which can achieve its end, and all of which can only bring about a new *topia*. Revolution is the period between the end of the old *topia* and

the beginning of the new *topia*. It is therefore the path from one *topia* to the next, from one relative stability to another, through chaos and revolt, individualism, heroism and bestiality, the loneliness of the great, and the total disappearance of the atom in the mass.

We can see that every *utopia* has two aspects – the reaction against the *topia* it comes from, and the memory of all previous *utopias*. *Utopias* are never more than apparently dead, and when their coffin – the *topia* – is shaken, they come back to life. In the same way, every *topia* contains the successful elements of the *utopia* it comes from, based on a desire for reality, as well as the surviving elements of the previous *topia*.

But this is not all we can say about the new *topia*, for its existence is influenced by a new factor we must take into account – the practical demands deriving from the period of revolution. This factor is so important and general that we can derive the Second Law of Revolution: that the practical demands of social life during the period of revolution lead to some form of dictatorship, tyranny, provisional government or delegated power, which leads in turn to the new *topia*. The first corollary is that although the new *topia* is formed to save the *utopia*, it foreshadows its destruction; and the second corollary is that the practical demands which eventually lead to the new *topia* derive not only from the economic disturbance of the revolution, but often from hostile interference from outside.

So the *utopia* is never realised, and revolution is merely a period of transition

between one *topia* and the next, the borderline between two *topias*. But, as we said, every *utopia* contains a powerful element of the exciting memory of all known previous *utopias*. Nature is more complicated, but suppose for a moment that every wine was fermented by a yeast from existing wine, and so on. Then the yeast would always be new, but would still have the reality, the power, the memory – they are all the same thing – of all the previous yeasts. In the same way, the *utopia* comes to life but always dies again, dissolving and disappearing in the alien substance which it has fermented and brought to a lasting tranquillity. It is always old and always new, surviving underground when there is a relatively stable *topia*, and coming to the surface again to mix memory, will and feeling into the whole which we call revolution. Looked at in this way, revolution is not a period of time or a borderline, but is itself a principle stepping over vast distances of time – the *topias* ... In this sense revolution makes nothing of our rules and laws, although they are valid, and becomes a principle which in a few huge steps bridges the centuries between the distant past and the future.

This is the end of our scientific exposition. It breaks on the rock of a future we know nothing about, and this shows the significance of the past we also know nothing about. I am convinced and do not doubt for a moment that for a science which was joined with experience, the future would be a mathematical problem which could be solved, and the results of its formulas could be confidently predicted, if only we knew enough about the past.

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# A philosopher of localism

I was sorry to learn that my favourite non-anarchist political philosopher, Ioan Bowen Rees, died in May at the age of 70. He was a Welsh admirer of Proudhon who always professed gratitude to me for giving him the Canadian translation of *Du Principe Federatif*.

I learn from Jim Perrin's obituary in *The Guardian* that Ioan came from the "mild grey well-built labyrinth of warm-hearted Dolgellau" where his father taught English, while his mother "had been one of the earliest students at the new university college, built from North Wales quarrymen's subscriptions, in Bangor".

This is a reminder that more than one of the 'new' universities owed their origin to the pennies of the poor and a tradition of working people's reverence for learning, and Jim Perrin goes on to suggest that "the genesis of his philosophy of localism was in the tight-knit, intellectually engaged community where he grew up". Ioan Bowen Rees developed several reputations. One was as a mountaineer and an authority on the environment, another as a poet in Welsh, but his actual job was as a local authority solicitor, working for a series of Welsh local councils in Dyfed, and for many years as chief executive and solicitor for Gwynedd County Council. His own political position was described as that of a left-wing nationalist and he was a Plaid Cymru candidate in the 1960s. "But," says Perrin, "he had no truck with what Tagore calls 'the cult of the self-worship of a nation'. Instead he believed that the 'battle

for Wales is the battle for all small nations, all small communities, all individuals in the age of genocide'."

This is not the language of a local authority bureaucrat, and Ioan got in touch with me many years ago because of a remarkable book of his which I glowingly reviewed. This was *Government by Community*, published by Charles Knight & Co in 1971 and now totally unobtainable. It was occasioned by a forgotten Royal Commission on Local Government, known as the Redcliffe-Maud Commission, which Bowen Rees claimed, was obsessed by what he called "the will-o'-the-wisp of size", the belief that efficiency goes with bigness. The changes that actually happened were made, of course, purely for the convenience, and dominance of central government.

Deeply influenced by Swiss federalism and by Proudhon and de Tocqueville, he polarised two fundamental ways of looking at the issues: "Those who look from the top down consider that the whole authority of the state is concentrated at the centre. To them, the centre is the only legitimate source of power. It is from central government that local authorities receive their powers. The central government does this for more efficient and economic provision of its

services. It involves the leading citizens of every locality in the business of government, not so much in order to hear their views, as in order to embrace them and make them identify themselves with the system."

The opposite philosophy he called the romantic school or, in some countries, the historical school: "This school sees the state itself as a conglomeration of localities, each of which has, it is true, surrendered much of its authority to the centre, but each of which retains some authority in its own right as well as a basic identity of its own. The romantic school places the emphasis on local authorities as nurseries of democratic citizenship, revels in diversity and local initiative, is impatient of central control and wishes to involve the citizen in government, not so much to bring him into contact with the state, as to foster his self-reliance."

Politicians of all parties pay lip service to this second school of thought but that is as far as it goes. There is, of course, a wide gap between these observations and anarchism, and it was this gap that Bowen Rees used to discuss with the late Leopold Kohr, happy to find a kindred spirit who understood what he was going on about. And this was why he urged the Welsh and the English too, to learn from Swiss federalism, claiming that

Switzerland was not a welfare state but a welfare society. He observed that "To many Englishmen today the object of local government is to provide efficient services, to give the ratepayer his money's worth. The chief whip of the Greater London Council said that the only yardstick that could be used was "the finest service at the cheapest possible price", whereupon a NALGO representative interposed that "as local government was big business the methods of big business should be employed". In Switzerland the principal object of local government is still to enable a locality to retain as much freedom as possible: "How else can one explain the existence of a strong movement, independent of the state, to encourage wealthy lowland communes to help poor Alpine communes to provide better amenities without having to succumb to bureaucracy and lose their identity?"

I was among those who urged him to rewrite that book for a new readership, but so far as I know he never did set about the task, and this leaves a huge area of ordinary human experience uncharted from that particular decentralist point of view, unless there is some little, local masterwork that I have missed.

Colin Ward

## Anarchism and Food

Anarchists have long recognised the importance of food. Three hundred and fifty years ago Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers occupied St Georges Hill in Surrey and started producing their own food in direct opposition to attempts by large land owners to enclose land and deny communities access to common land (a process which continues today as village greens, allotments and public parks are sold off for 'development'). Much of Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops Tomorrow* is taken up with a discussion of the importance of agriculture and food production.

Growing your own food is a political act. It is, to borrow Colin Ward's phrase, anarchism in action. Growing means taking responsibility for a part of your life by limiting your reliance on and contribution to the profits of the global capitalist corporations and national supermarkets which dominate food production and consumption.

Consider the implications of buying fruit and vegetables from supermarkets. You may be buying genetically modified food. At present the majority of GM products are not labelled. If you do not buy organic produce you are supporting the agrochemical industry whose fertilisers and pesticides pollute the environment. Even if you buy (expensive) organic food it is possible that animals may have suffered in its production. Pelted chicken manure used extensively by some organic producers, for example, is taken from battery farms. If you buy food transported from abroad (like African-grown green beans) you are contributing to 'food miles' – the environmental cost of transporting food by air and sea over thousands of miles. Food miles also means the displacement of indigenous crops by Western cash crops with frequently serious implications for local communities.

Buying fruit and vegetables, then, locks you firmly into capitalism. This does not have to be the case. Almost everyone can

garden. Forty nine million Britons have their own garden. In addition there are around 300,000 allotments in England and some 400 community gardens and farms. Even if you do not have access to open ground, many vegetables, salads can be grown in containers, hanging baskets and tubs.

Gardening is not difficult or time consuming. Nor is it expensive. By growing some of your own food you should actually be able to save money, particularly if you grow some of the more expensive vegetables such as asparagus or shallots.

If you have never gardened before do not spend a fortune on books. Go down to your local library and borrow or order introductory books on gardening. Particularly good for vegetables are *Month by Month Organic Gardening* by Lawrence Hill (out of print) and *The Vegetable Expert* by Dr D.G. Hessayon (pbi). Your library will be able to get you copy of these. These will tell you how to prepare your soil, when and how to plant your crops and what problems you might encounter.

There can also be few areas of life where the anarchist principles of mutual aid and assistance are more prevalent than amongst gardeners. Other gardeners will give you advice and assistance. You will also get free seed and any surplus produce.

Decide what you want to grow. Obviously this will initially be limited by the time of year that you start. Grow things that you enjoy eating. Most seed catalogues are free (you can find addresses of suppliers at the back of most gardening magazines and newspapers – take a trip down your library or newsagent with a note-pad).

If you have access to the Internet there is a site set up on anarchism and food which includes general advice and things to do month by month. It is at <http://freedom.tao.ca.gyo.html>.

Get Growing!

Richard Griffin

Beauty is more than  
'in the Eye of the Beholder'

VERNON RICHARDS

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Freedom Press 88 pages A4 £6.95

# The libertarian ideal in Bolivia

## Part Two: The situation in El Chapare

El Chapare, the beautiful jungle area of Bolivia, is in a state of war. 40,000 peasant families have chosen to grow coca as their subsistence crop and have organised themselves to resist the attacks of an administration which has no intention of losing its monopoly of the crop. That a government, abundantly shown to be involved in large scale drug trafficking, should declare war on the small time producers would reduce anyone to tears of laughter were it not for the steady trickle of victims among the peasants which makes any laughter stick in the throat: fifty murders under the previous administration and eleven in the first year of Banzer's regime.

Whilst elsewhere, in the region of Beni, the number of air flights – whose cargo is recognised by one and all – has increased

significantly, the government, following IMF 'recommendations' and especially those of the US has sent 40% of its military to El Chapare with the aim of eradicating the crop which threatens the fantastic profits to be made up north since it drives the price down. The coca producing peasants are well organised and their persistence in their struggle is reminiscent in many ways of what is happening in Chiapas.

In El Chapare, as in Chiapas, people speak of seizing back their dignity, women speak of banning alcohol in their communities and if necessary they resort to violence as a legitimate means of self-defence. The coca peasants are not only motivated by economics as the government and the media would have people believe. Coca forms an essential part of local cultural identity, its use is ritualistic

in their culture and of great value in social and production aspects meaning that its forced eradication affects the sense of identity of a whole people (particularly when this directive comes from the outside). The Whipala – the people's flag, a square flag with all the colours of the rainbow, is always present when the coca producers protest. The mixture of all the colours of the 'arco iris' represents multiculturalism among the indigenous peoples and its square design represents the necessary equality. These ancestral indigenous concepts have fitted in surprisingly easily with the more western vision of the ex-miners who have become part of the movement since 1985 when the government of Jaime Paz Zamora ordered, under IMF directions, the closure of the tin mines which in turn seriously weakened the industrial strength of the mining unions. A sizeable group of those militant miners relocated to El Chapare swelling the ranks of the coca peasants and bringing with them the organising experience they gained in the mines.

The peasants have the support of the COB (Confederacion Obrera Boliviana) although the union leaders find themselves more and more distanced from a peasantry willing to resort to direct action rather than the corporate approach of the leaders. In La Paz we saw one of the numerous demonstrations of coca peasants which descended on the capital to protest against the militarisation of El Chapare and the eradication of coca leaf production. We noted two things: the enormous police presence which squashed any act of protest and also the shameless mass media manipulation which repeatedly referred to the peasants as narco-traffickers who had come to the capital to cause trouble.

In the organisational structures of the coca peasants, which they claim to be inspired by communitarian socialism, we can see similarities with anarchism although they move away from the latter when they try to

bring direct action and parliamentarianism together within their organisation the ASP (Asamblea por la Soberania de los Pueblos). In Cochabamba, on the outskirts of El Chapare, we attended one of the sessions of the coca peasant growers congress which was taking place there. The debate was about the problem caused by their leader, Alejo Vélaz, who had entered into a pact with the government and was seen as having betrayed the movement. Evo Morales, one of the main activists and a delegate of the ASP, called attention to the need for effective control of the leadership by the grassroots. Several hundred indigenous people listened attentively, their swollen cheeks showing they were chewing coca and the strange smell of the 'sacred leaf' filled the atmosphere whilst their banners fluttered in the wind.

The war in El Chapare continues with the government confronting the determination of a few peasants who believe they can face up to Yankee intervention and a fascist government that locally implements its policies.

Banzer carries out to the letter gringo 'recommendations' because along with his Peruvian and Colombian colleagues they need to earn the US anti-drug certification necessary in order to gain 'loans' and 'aid' from those international financial organisations controlled by the US (IMF, World Bank etc.). Without this 'aid' the neo-liberal policies which have been forced onto Latin America would be unworkable producing a collapse with incalculable consequences. As one can see a fair bit is at stake, the blackmail is obvious and the reality is that Bolivia, along with the majority of countries on the continent are simple vassals of the Empire to the north. During a visit to Los Yungas, a traditional coca leaf producing region, although less so than El Chapare due to the government's eradication campaign, the coca fields extended over countless terraces as far as the eye could see. In the villages the peasants sell the coca leaf at their doorsteps and its aroma is present everywhere. Listening to the radio we were surprised by these lyrics:

*"Our coca is not cocaine which is what they make of it,  
Our coca is medicine for the people of Los Yungas."*

CNT, April 1999

## Another week of Caravan

Already halfway through, the Inter-Continental Caravan of five hundred people from the South travelling all through Europe for a month, protesting against worldwide economic structures, the activities of multinational corporations, and against genetic engineering, wars and nuclear threats. Here in Cologne we're doing fine, except for all the Bullen in town not even letting you cross a bridge at times. Lots is going on everywhere, so here we go ...

### Spontaneous actions on GMO in the UK

We received these notes from Katherine about the Caravan in the UK. Sounds pretty good! "On Friday, the day of the London public hearing, a report from the Nuffield Council was released which declared, we had a 'moral imperative' to develop genetically engineered crops to feed the Third World. The papers were full of images of starving third world children scabbling in the dust. It was nauseating. The report did not consult even one person from a developing country out of its 87 or so experts. Thanks to the utter and total brilliance of GEN and assorted genetics and other campaigners, who set up an impromptu working group outside the hearing to develop a plan, at four o'clock we cut short the meeting and marched over, farmers in the lead, with banners saying 'Food Control Eats You' and 'Say no to GMO' and shouting 'GMO hai hai, WTO hai hai', took over the main road, marched down it to the Nuffield Foundation offices which were luckily only ten minutes away. The crowd blocked the lobby and negotiated for five of the farmer leaders, and three of us and a translator to go inside. We had a 30 to 45-minute meeting with the director and assistant director, both of whom were quite embarrassed and surprised, but civil. The farmers told them they were astonished at the findings of the report and they were so frustrated their point of view was not heard, that they had to come in in such a manner. They said their problem was not production of food, in fact that poor farmers' prices were low because of overproduction and that storage was a problem but distribution, and they criticised genetically engineered crops and intensive agriculture. It was quite late in the day so I don't know what media coverage it got, it certainly got a huge photo and caption in the Guardian (of course!) the next

day. Nuffield said they would pass on the message to the bioethics council. I picked up a grant application form in the lobby on the way out, if anyone has a good idea how we could use it.

### Crop squat

On the Saturday we took the caravan up to a crop squat, again thanks to the last minute salvation of genius genetics campaigners, all of whom I will love forever and ever. It was a Monsanto test site in Essex that had been pulled up a few weeks earlier by protesters. We walked over the fields and one squatter said when he saw the first Indians coming with their turbans, and pink ribbons on their banners, and chanting, he had tears in his eyes. The genetics people had set up a small camp, with new plantings of vegetables, information stands on genetics, tripods, benders, and welcomed us with an Irish jig on fiddles and flutes. Anarchist Teapot, who were also total stars, cooked a big stew for everyone.

The police came and were very fluffy, although there seemed to be helicopter surveillance. We all had tea and sat in the sun swapping stories of genetics and campaigning and generally chatting and enjoying the peace of being out of London. Some activists demonstrated lock on and tripod techniques to the farmers, and swapped banners with them. A nice sight a climber going up the tripod to fly the Punjabi farmers' union flag next to the RTS flag already up there. The farmers planted organic vegetables into the earth of the destroyed test site, and watered them. This was incredibly moving. One of the farmers sang Punjabi songs whilst Dave, an English guy, played the sitan (a type of banjo) and accompanied him. It was a totally beautiful combination of western and eastern music, for some reason it really worked. The singer, Jagdish Singh, sang a song about resistance to the British colonial rule, and then the squatters sang an Irish tune on the same theme! Then Jagdish sang a song which he summarised afterwards saying, "this is a promise to our guru that we will never run away from our fields of battle", and the campers, who were staying overnight in the field, said, "Us too!". We were all blown away by the day, it was really special.

5th June 1999

## Demo in the Netherlands

On 10th June in The Hague, Netherlands, a demonstration took place against the European Union and the European Elections. The demonstration was organised by the anarchist collective EuroDusnie, and was a protest against the capitalist European Union and its repressive refugee policy. There were also other topics in the campaign: protest against the involvement of the EU in the creation of 'free' trade agreements, involvement of EU countries in the Balkan war and the massive EU propaganda.

In spite of the small number of people taking part (around 120) the demonstration was strong and peaceful. The first of five planned stops on the route was the office of the Dutch EU representation. This organisation is the brain(less)centre behind the massive brainwashing campaign trying to win popular support for the European Union. Millions of leaflets, glossy magazines, EU-condoms, EU-umbrellas, etc., are being distributed from this building. We planned to rename the building as 'EU ministry of propaganda' and to burn their leaflets (in a bin we had brought). The police corps of The Hague however immediately provoked a riot demanding we would not set fire to the EU-leaflets. So

when we burned a EU-flag instead (to light the propaganda) they tried to make an arrest. They failed. After already twenty minutes walking, they unilaterally decided to end the demonstration. When the protesters disagreed and wanted to go on, police started hitting people with truncheons. People that fell on the street were kicked in the stomach and back, several people were injured, one had to be taken to hospital. People were chased like cattle to the starting point of the demo. Also journalists and innocent bystanders (notice: we are not calling journalists innocent!) became victims of disproportional police violence. Eleven people were arrested on dubious grounds but later released.

In the night a group of around thirty people disturbed an EU-Yuppie gathering near the parliament building. A live broadcast of a national television station was disturbed as anti-EU slogans were chanted.

Almost all newspapers were filled with lies about what happened, something which was already predicted by the demonstrators. One of the slogans was (regrettably when translated into English it does not rhyme) 'Tomorrow the newspapers will say: Squatters burned the city down. Press, state and capital, they are all liars!'

# Anarchism and Communism

Dear Freedom,

(I must apologise to the editors for the length of this letter, but it is, after all, necessitated by being a response to a long letter.) I discovered Mr McKay's rebuttal of Bryan Caplan's examination of Spanish anarchism mere days after I sent my last letter – and needless to say, discovering that McKay had already read Caplan's essay and answered to it did make me feel just a little silly. I feel that McKay was right (in his rebuttal) to criticise Caplan's way of generalising certain atrocities committed by some anarchists to all the anarchists as a whole. However, Caplan too makes good points and I recommend both his essay and McKay's so that anarchists will know that the history of the Spanish Civil War is not as clear cut as they would like it to be. I would also recommend the chapter on Spain in Woodcock's *Anarchism*, where the author criticises the brutal religious intolerance (and links it with the CNT's anti-religious attitude in general) and the shootings by anarchists of male prostitutes (which appears really to have been an atrocity caused by mindless thugs who called themselves anarchists than by those who embraced the syndicalist programme in Spain as a whole). Readers might also consider Fred Woodworth's occasional criticisms of Spanish anarchism in the *Match*.

However, moving on, Mr McKay says "Mr Garner states that Proudhon did not seek to abolish property. Proudhon, in contrast, states that he does". McKay also chides me for not taking note of the idea that Proudhon wanted to abolish property in land. George Woodcock in *Anarchism* says of the *General Idea of the Revolution*: "Here the constructive hints of his earlier books are brought together into the semblance of a system". It is here, then, that we find out what Proudhon proposes and is in favour of. In the *General Idea of the Revolution* Proudhon suggested that the land problem be solved by setting up land banks similar to those used in Scotland. By a system of annuities tenants would buy their land off the bank. Thus Proudhon writes: "The Revolution has freed me from rent. Each year that I pay rent purchases a part of this farm for me. In twenty years the property will be mine. In twenty years I, who have nothing, I, who never expected to have anything, I, who would have died without

leaving my children anything but the memory of my weariness and resignation, in twenty years I shall be the owner of this farm ... I shall be its master, its proprietor! I shall sell it, if I choose, for gold, for silver or for bank notes; I shall move to another part of the country if I choose; I shall make my son a merchant if commerce suits him; I shall marry my daughter to a teacher if she likes; and as for myself, when I am old and unable to work, I shall buy for myself an annuity. My property is my refuge in my old age." Do these sound like the words of someone opposed to private property in land? Do these sound like the words of someone opposed to the buying and selling of land? What is more, is there any reason why the land banks, which he specifically says are not started by the state, could not exist in a free market for land?

In the collection of his *Selected Writings* Proudhon asks: "In what way does property or civil ownership differ from possession. In two things, neither of which by itself seems to me to contradict either law or morality. The first is that the property owner is answerable to neither prince nor commune, only to himself. The second is that his authority as head of family is self-generating and creates no responsibility to anybody." It seems plain to me that in these few lines Proudhon makes it plain that property is the key to personal autonomy, which naturally leads to his claim that "Property ... is a decentralising force ... Property is the basis of any system of federation". We can see that this is true simply by asking anarchist communists why only members of one commune are entitled to control the resources of that commune, whilst non-members aren't? I didn't see how it could be argued that everybody has as much right to wealth as anybody else, yet the control of enterprises should be exclusively controlled only by workers. However, its implications are further reaching than this. Communism is community of property; it is the communal ownership of property; it is the system in which the community owns all property. The community in question, for anarchist communists, is the commune. Therefore in pure anarchist communism the commune owns all property. Why does the commune have a right to own all property? What justifies its rights to property? Suppose we have two communes, commune A and

commune B. All land belongs to the commune, the anarchist communists tell us. Thus all the land occupied by commune A is the property of commune A, and all land occupied by commune B belongs to commune B. Why? Why not have, like the state socialists propose, one big organisation owning all land? The answer is simple: one big organisation cannot properly represent all the different and diverse regions of the country (or world, even), much better to have land controlled locally. Really? So someone in Manchester has no right to a say over how the land in commune A in East Anglia is used? So someone in commune A has more of a say over some land than a person in Manchester has? How can this be – is it not an essential feature of communism that nobody has any more right to a plot of land than anybody else? Well then, how can this decentralisation be compatible with communism? We talk about ending British imperialism in Ireland, but the Irish have no more right to their land than do I, according to the communists. How dare they presume to exclude me from having a say in how the land is used and allocated, and then have the gall to tell me that both I and the Irish have an equal claim to the land of Ireland and its benefits? Either I don't have a right to interfere in the affairs of the Irish, which means that they have an exclusive title as to what they do with their land, or land belongs to everybody and the business of the Irish is my business. In the former possibility there exists the right of property and power is not centralised away from the Irish; in the latter, nobody has any more right to a plot of ground or its benefits than anybody else, and there is centralisation and unification. If anarchism is opposed to decentralisation, then anarchism must choose the former possibility. The latter possibility leads to communism, and as the two possibilities are mutually exclusive, so too are anarchism and communism. At the very least anarchists must ask themselves whether they are in favour of a distribution in which a person is answerable only to themselves, and has no duties to any person, which is what Proudhon has said property is.

McKay says "if an individual does not want to join the communist commune then they do not have to ... If the possessors of the factories desire to pool their resources as a commune, then is this identical to capitalism?" What if the possessors choose not to pool their resources, is *this* capitalism? Because, obviously, it is not communism as the commune is not formed. And, in addition, if the possessors are not pooling their resources then they are saying 'only we have the right to control this wealth; only we have the right to benefit from its use; no matter how much you want us to pool our resources with you, and share it with you, it is our right not to share what we possess'. Sounds like property to me. Sure as hell isn't necessarily common ownership, as communism is, in which case it is perfectly possible that an anarchist society need not be communist. It is feasible, by McKay's examples, that it is a logical possibility that nobody would want to join a commune. It is possible, by McKay's examples, that an anarchist society could be a society of individual proprietors. Okay, call them possessors if you want. McKay says that in such a society a possessor would have "enough resources to work alone". So suppose someone else also tried to make use of the possessor's possessions. This would obviously make the possessor worse off, as well as interfere in her rights. So naturally she would deserve compensation (she may not wish to claim it, in which case it isn't owed, but whether or not is it claimed is up to her). Obviously adequate compensation

must be at least enough to cover the loss of her possessions – it must be at least equal to the value she held for the possessions. It seems plain that if someone wants to justly make use of another person's possessions (and thus deprive that person of their ability to make use of the possessions) then they must be prepared to give the possessor something of equivalent value. After all, is not the idea at the heart of mutualism the mutually beneficial contract – the exchange of equivalent values? It seems that Mr McKay must agree that a market of some sort can be just, if only it is one in which possessions can be exchanged for 'compensation' of equivalent value, in which case, Mr McKay, what determines the value of a good? I'm not asking you to tell me what Proudhon felt determined value, but what you do.

As for the claim that a free market of enterprises under worker's control must degenerate into a capitalist system (one with 'wage-slavery'), Christopher Eaton Gunn, in an appendix to *Workers' Self-Management in the United States*, writes that "an 'ideal' labour-managed economy is as efficient as an 'ideal' capitalist economy. Plus, with both operating under perfectly competitive conditions, the workers' income in a labour-managed firm will earn an income equal to that of the workers in a capitalist firm, whilst under the more realistic imperfectly competitive conditions (where firms would earn more than normal profits) workers in a labour-managed form would get a higher income than those in a capitalist one. Thus workers would be more likely to want to join or form a co-op than work in a capitalist firm. The only way, then, a free market of labour-managed firms would become a capitalist economy is if workers value their lack of decision-making power in the workplace more than they value a higher income, and thus choose to work in a capitalist firm rather than a labour-managed one. In addition economists who study the idea of labour-managed economies say that the firm couldn't operate efficiently with socialised capital and land, and where investors (including co-op members) don't have a right to reclaim their property from the firm. Thus private property is necessary for an efficient labour-managed economy.

Richard A. Garner

## What does anarchism mean?

Dear Freedom,

Paul Tremlett (12th June) is surely mistaken in suggesting that we should not aim for perfection. Aiming for the perfect centre of a target gives the best chance of hitting the target at all. There is no point in aiming anywhere else.

I think he is also mistaken about anarchism. There are 'primitive' horticultural societies in which all men are of equal rank, and all collective decisions made by direct democracy, but where women are the chattels of men. They are not subject to nation states or capitalism, but as they are unequal and coercive, they cannot be called anarchistic.

The aim of anarchism is perfect freedom from coercive institutions. In the real world nothing is perfect, but that does not mean we should aim for less. Aiming for perfect freedom is the way to get relative freedom.

Donald Room

Fermin Rocker

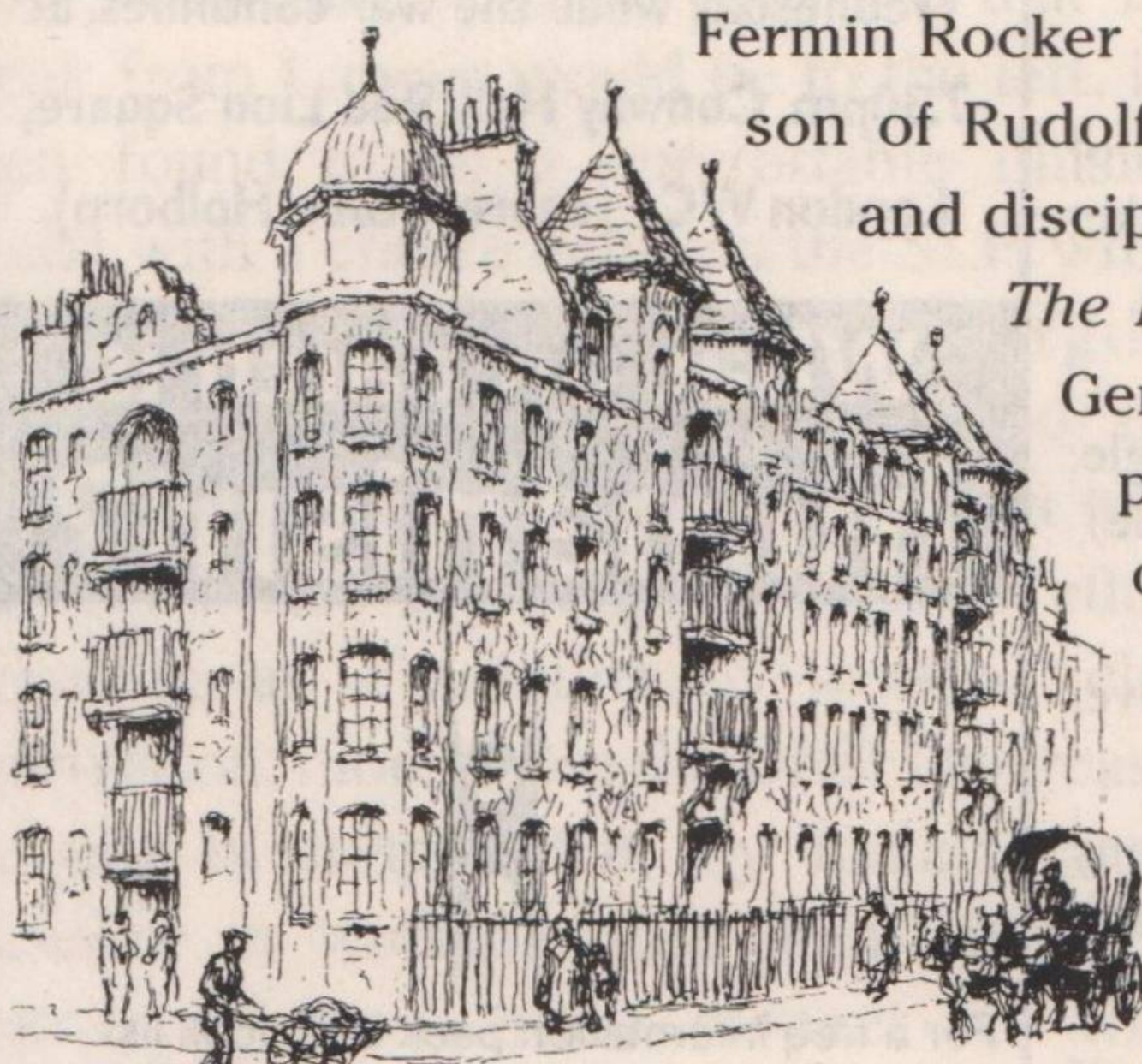
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## Meetings & Events

### The London Anarchist Forum

Meet Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall,  
25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL  
(nearest tube Holborn). Admission is free  
but a collection is made to cover the cost of  
the room.

#### — PROGRAMME 1999 —

- 25th June** General discussion
- 2nd July** Anarchism and Genetic  
Modification (speaker Donald Room)
- 9th July** General discussion
- 16th July** The Babymilk Scandal (speaker  
Edmund McArthur)
- 23rd July** General discussion
- 30th July** Authority and Credentials  
(speaker Adrian Williams)
- 6th August** General discussion
- 13th August** The Anarchist Study Project  
meets The London Anarchist Forum
- 20th August** General discussion
- 27th August** Anarchism and Ethics  
(symposium)
- 3rd September** General discussion
- 10th September** The Nihilist Origins of  
Anarchism: a suppressed history (speaker  
Steve Ash)
- 17th September** General discussion
- 24th September** Class and Class Struggle:  
A Critical Analysis (speaker Peter Neville)
- 1st October** General discussion
- 8th October** Getting Anarchist Ideas Over  
(symposium)
- 15th October** Open meeting for any  
comrades coming to the Anarchist Bookfair  
on Saturday 16th October.

Anyone interested in giving a talk or  
leading a discussion, please contact Peter  
Neville at the meetings giving your subject  
and prospective dates and we will do our  
best to accommodate.

**Peter Neville**  
for London Anarchist Forum

### Red Rambles

A programme of guided walks for Libertarians,  
Socialists, Greens, Anarchists and others. Bring  
food, drink, suitable footwear and waterproof  
clothing. A rota of cars will be used - full cars will  
travel to walks.

#### Sunday 27th June

Borough on the Hill. Meet at the John Storer  
House car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at  
10am. Walk leader Ray.

#### Sunday 25th July

Derbyshire walk in Shining Cliff woods and  
Alderwasley. Meet outside Hurt Arms,  
Ambergate, Derbyshire at 11am. Walk  
leader John.

#### Sunday 22nd August

Industrial West Leicestershire: Whitwick,  
Thringston, Swannington. Meet at the John  
Storer House car park, Wards End,  
Loughborough, at 10am. Walk leader Ray.

**Telephone Vivienne for more info:**  
**01509 230131 or 01509 236028**

### NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR

discussion meetings on the war in

Yugoslavia will be happening every

Wednesday while the war continues, at

7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
London WCI (nearest tube Holborn).

## What on earth is humanism?



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about humanism, or non-religious funerals,  
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