

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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50p

Punishment and Rewards

In his introduction to his government's first Queen's Speech, in 1997, Tony Blair announced: "We have reached the limits of the public's willingness simply to fund an unreformed welfare system through ever higher taxes and spending. The blunt truth is that the world of 1997 bears little resemblance in work patterns, in industrial production and in social life or family life to the world of 1947."

The centrepiece of Gordon Brown's

subsequent budget announcement was the welfare-to-work drive. Sixteen to twenty-five year olds who refused a place on one of the work schemes Brown had cooked up would have their benefits withdrawn if they refused to take part. New Labour has set itself the task of creating a "pro-active welfare system to help people into work". The Thatcher-Major years had created a reserve army of labour which acted as a drag anchor on wage levels, but at a cost – between

1989-90 and 1993-94 the share of GDP consumed by benefits rose from 10.1% to 13.4%, a cash increase of £34 billion in four years. Tony Blair's strategic vision, then, was simply to cut the costs of welfare by coercing the poor into low-paid work.

The 1999 Queen's Speech gives us a chance to see how the next stage of the New Labour project will be implemented.

The usual handouts for the rich are in place, and the part-privatisation of air traffic control will go ahead regardless of public opposition. There are a few sops to keep the liberals in line: a gutted Freedom of Information Bill (in the last week Downing Street has moved to ensure that nuclear safety and accident reports are removed from the ambit of the Bill) and the repeal of Section 28.

The substance of the speech, though, is taken up with matters of coercion: compulsory drug tests on anyone arrested by the police, and the withdrawal of benefits from young offenders if they fail to abide by court orders with regard to community service. After all, as Blair put it, benefits should be spent only on people who "really, really need it".

The jewel in the crown, though, is the revamped Prevention of Terrorism Bill, which extends the Prevention of Terrorism Act's provisions from Northern Ireland to the mainland and extends the definition of terrorism to "the use of serious violence against persons or property, or the threat to use such violence to intimidate or coerce the government, the public or any section of the public for political, religious or ideological ends". So defined, the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism

(continued on page 2)



Pageboys adjust the train of the ceremonial robe worn by the Queen prior to her 1999 speech at the State Opening of Parliament

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On the homelessness question ...

Government money, fool's gold

Are we making life too comfortable for the homeless on the streets? Louise Casey, the government's new 'homeless tsar', seems to think a culture of homelessness has been created. It seems that rough sleepers are out there on the streets congregating around slap-up soup kitchens, only later to retire to bed in a shop doorway supplied with "a better sleeping bag ... than you can buy in the camping shop Blacks". Casey, who was made head of the Rough Sleepers' Unit in February, told *The Observer* that "with soup runs and other kinds of charity help, well-meaning people are spending money servicing the problem on the streets and keeping it there. Even the *Big Issue* is perpetuating the problem".

Casey's unit plans to publish its recommendations next month. Some fear a crack-down on the rough sleepers, now estimated to be around two thousand. Casey aims to cut the number of folk sleeping rough by two-thirds by the year 2002.

Commenting on this government ambition to corral those sleeping out, a spokesperson from a Rough Sleepers' Unit told *Freedom*: "I don't see why people can't sleep rough if they want to, it may be better than a lousy hostel". It is claimed that at least 5% of those sleeping out want to do so. All these figures must be taken with a pinch of salt, however, because they are based on surveys done in urban centres on an erratic basis.

Cleansing the streets

The Rough Sleepers' money was made available originally under the previous Conservative regime. At the behest of shopkeepers and business interest in London, the previous administration put up funds to clear the streets of what was seen to be a series of eyesores. It was more an attempt to tidy up the townscape aesthetically, than to solve a social problem.

Once government money becomes 'on tap' there are agencies falling over each other for such funding. It is rather like rattling the swill bucket and watching the pigs come running. My source in the Rough Sleepers' Unit tells me the money was immediately "hijacked by the voluntary agencies". These kinds of charities are professionals at setting up soup kitchens and doling out sleeping bags, and are not specialists in tidy townscape.

Enough money has been thrown at London to clear the streets to some extent. Some rough sleepers have been exported into the provinces. Many of the hardcore remaining may have serious problems and, as Shelter director



Louise Casey, who has called for an end to handouts for the homeless

Chris Holmes claims, "handouts or a key to a council house are not always the answer".

All this tough talk from the Rough Sleepers' Unit is coming amid soaring house prices in London, which may bring further homelessness. Of course there is also a need to clear the streets for the millennium celebrations.

Big business charities

My source in the Rough Sleepers' Unit talks about social fascism and attempts to harass the homeless off the streets. In the same way that the unemployed are made to feel blame-worthy, so the homeless are being corralled and cleared off the streets whether they like it or not.

In 1881 Leo Tolstoy wrote that when he went to Moscow he was shocked to find beggars being arrested for begging. In his pamphlet *What Then Must We Do?* he writes: "Once, on the Myasnitski Street, I met a crowd of these beggars, some thirty of them. In front and behind went policemen. I asked 'What is it for'. 'For asking alms'."

It seems that governments and middle class people are in a constant quandry regarding the paupers and the homeless. Sometimes, like Tolstoy, they are shocked into action and begin a plan of philanthropic activity. At other times they will start a policy of dragooning, harassing and even imprisoning the poor.

The one thing that comes freely from the rich and the politicians at all times is advice.

Voltaire, in a short story, tells of a Spanish beggar who when appealing for alms was asked why he didn't get a job. The beggar responded: "Señor I request alms, not advice".

In 1865 at a Coroners Court investigation into the death of a man from starvation, the dead man's son was advised: "You are dying of starvation yourself, and you ought to go into the [work]house until the summer". To which the son replied: "If we went in we should die. When we come out in the summer we should be like people dropped from the sky. No one would know us, and we would not have even a room". John Ruskin, commenting on this case, wrote that "the poor seem to have a prejudice against the workhouse which the rich have not".

In Moscow in 1881, Tolstoy estimated that there were twenty thousand cold and hungry people. Nick Raynsford, the Housing Minister, met representatives of the Association of London Government this month as homelessness in the capital rose to a record 38,000 households. This figure means general 'homelessness' and not just the 'rough sleepers'.

In Tolstoy's day the well-meaning went down to the 'dens of destitution' to do a census. Tolstoy describes the scene: "Evidently, like hunted animals, they were ready for anything merely to escape us. Gentlemen in various guises - as police

officers in town and country, as examining magistrates and as judges - had harassed them all their lives in the towns and in the villages and on the highroads and in the streets and in the taverns and dosshouses, and now suddenly these gentlemen had come and shut the gates on them merely to count them; it was as hard for them to believe this as it would be for hares to believe that dogs had come not to catch them but to count them".

Tolstoy discovered that these destitute people came to regard him "not as a man, but as a means". Today it is all so much more businesslike with the big establishment bodies like Shelter and Crisis herding the homeless. Some seem to think they have a 'vested interest' in the social problem of homelessness.

The whole business, like everywhere else, is driven by 'performance indicators' - targets to show how many have been housed in temporary accommodation or permanent accommodation. A recent cartoon in one of the poverty professions' magazines shows an old man being pulled off a lamp-post and the charity workers is saying "It might be only a roof over your head to you, but to me it's a performance indicator".

Louise Casey, as 'homeless tsar', will use 'performance indicators' to guide her in her grant-making powers to voluntary and other agencies.

BB

Global capitalism and academic scholarship

As we move into the 21st century the doyens of academic sociology and political theory present us with a rather bleak future scenario.

On the one hand, we are told that socialism is a dead letter and that liberal capitalism has triumphed over all feasible political alternatives. One apologist for capitalism, as you may well know, was brazen enough to talk about the 'end of history'. Thus the well known sociologist Tony Giddens, allegedly Blair's intellectual guru, tells us that we need to orient ourselves to a world "where there are no alternatives to capitalism". Global capitalism rules the world, and all we can do, we are informed, is to argue about "how far, and in what ways, capitalism should be governed and regulated" (1998, page 43). This will involve, according to Giddens, the creation of a new democratic or 'social investment' state – a state without enemies, one that strives not for real social equality but for 'inclusion', a state that is transparent and open and represents 'diverse interests', and, finally, a state that has a 'civilising' mission, not only reflecting but shaping social norms and values. Such is Giddens' famous (or is it infamous) political programme – the 'third way'. That states (e.g. the current United States government) tend to 'demonise' enemies rather than embracing them, that they largely represent and support the economic interests of the powerful, that they are much more concerned with secrecy and surveillance than they are of 'transparency', and that their proposed 'civilising' mission has awful authoritarian implications – all this is lost on this liberal scholar. He does admit however that a healthy 'civil society' is needed to protect the individual from "overwhelming state power" (page 85). This 'renewal' of social democracy, the 'third way', is all very depressing: it reads like a New Tory Manifesto.

Yet on the other hand, academics like Pierre Bourdieu and John Gray have recently offered powerful critiques of global capitalism. Gray's study *False Dawn* (1998) is indeed one long polemic against the neo-liberals – those "ranting evangelists" for global capitalism, as he describes them. Gray argues that free market capitalism is essentially a creation of state power: it is a political project conducted by the United States government. As he writes: "The truth is that free markets are creatures of state power ... they are a product of artifice, design and political coercion. *Laissez-faire* must be centrally planned" (1998, page 17).

Free-market capitalism was last in existence and heralded during the nineteenth century, when the British Empire (state) held hegemonic power. Such a global free market (capitalism) has however been re-animated over the past two decades by powerful multinational corporations and transnational agencies like the IMF and the World Bank – bolstered by neo-liberal ideology (Thatcherism in its popular version) and aggressively supported by state power. Global (free market) capitalism, in fact, as Gray continually emphasises, is an "artefact of state coercion", and its extreme rationalist project of social engineering is akin to that of Soviet communism – which is more accurately described (as Berkman did) as 'state capitalism'. But the shift in structural power from nation-states to global markets and multinational firms has, for Gray, been socially devastating, and has led to what he describes as a "false dawn". (He was earlier a supporter of Hayek and Thatcher!) For global capitalism has created economic dislocation, increasing social inequalities, widespread poverty, social chaos and political instability. In relation to the United States, the costs of free-market capitalism, he writes, has been one "of crime, incarceration, racial and ethnic conflict and family and community breakdown" (1998, page 216).

In his short book *Acts of Resistance* (1998) the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu also offers a powerful critique of 'globalisation' (which he also sees as a political project), as well as of neo-liberalism – the utopian 'myth' of our time, as he describes it. Bourdieu speaks of global capitalism's destruction of 'civilisation', by which he means the state provision of public services – education, social housing, public broadcasting, and the rights to health, welfare, culture, and, above all, work.

But in stridently and passionately critiquing global capitalism and its neo-liberal ideology, what have these two academics to offer in the way of an alternative to capitalism? Gray, it must be said, has few concrete proposals. Although he often refers to the 'incompatibility' of free-market capitalism and liberal democracy (page 8), all he seems to suggest is a "plural capitalism" and some form of government intervention to reconcile the "dynamism" of capitalism with social stability. Like the neo-conservatives he is not against capitalism only free-market capitalism. Thus he feels that transnational organisations are needed to create a framework of regulation within which diverse

market economies (i.e. capitalisms) may flourish. Dismissing the viability of Keynesian social democracy (upheld by Will Hutton), Gray in his advocacy of a new regime of "global governance" seems to differ little in his politics from that advocated by Giddens. No wonder that he too is an avid supporter of 'New Labour'.

In similar fashion Bourdieu advocates neither the abolition of capitalism, nor of the democratic state: instead he bewails the regression of the state into a "repressive, policing" agency under neo-liberal doctrines. Like these other scholars he too advocates the creation or restoration of a social or welfare state to counter or resist the 'scourge' of neo-liberalism: a state exemplified it seems by a future European state. As Bourdieu puts it: what is needed is "to resist the involution of the state, in other words the regression to a penal state concerned with repression and progressively abandoning its social functions of education! health, welfare, and so on" (1998, page 34).

The state thus needs to be restored as the "guardian of the public interest". As an old fashioned state socialist Bourdieu thus concludes that alongside social movements and trade unions "a special place should surely be made for the state, national or, better still, supranational, in other words a European state (as a stage on the way to a world state) capable of effectively controlling and taxing the profits made on the financial markets: capable also, and above all, of countering the destructive action which these markets exert on the labour market" (1998, page 104).

Unlike Giddens and Gray, Bourdieu clearly identifies with the powerless and with working people, but his message is much the same.

Down-playing the intrinsic and symbiotic (mutually supportive) relationship that has

always existed between capitalism and the nation-state, all three academics can only envisage a future where state intervention or transnational forms of governance (the 'social investment' or a future European state) is the only means of controlling the destructive and antisocial aspects – the 'scourge' – of global capitalism.

It is indeed a rather bleak vision.

Brian Morris

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The next issue of *Freedom* will be dated 11th December, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 2nd December.



If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc (with a print-out please).

(continued from page 8)

Act could be exercised against anti-road protesters, anti-fascists, anti-GM campaigners – anyone, in short, who refuses to bend their knee to Blair's Britain.

Proof of 'terrorist assets' will be transferred from the criminal to the civil courts, where the onus of proof is lower. The redrafted Prevention of Terrorism Act is intended, as its consultation paper makes clear, to extend the "security environment" of the Six Counties to the mainland. The spin-off of the 'normalisation' of politics in the north of Ireland is, for Blair, the militarisation of politics throughout the UK. Under the new Prevention of Terrorism Act the police will be able to arrest without warrant anyone they suspect of being involved in the preparation, commission or instigation of acts of terrorism. Powers of stop and search, and entry, search and seizure currently used in the Six Counties will be deployed across the UK. The power of proscription – banning political organisations and making membership a criminal offence – will apply across the UK.

Meanwhile, for the rich life goes on as before. In a pre-budget speech wherein Gordon Brown declared his intention to extend the New Deal to over-25s ("I say to the unemployed who can work: we will meet our responsibility to ensure there are job opportunities and the chance to learn new skills. You must now meet your responsibility: to earn a wage") and introduce daily signing-conditions for claimants suspected of 'moonlighting', Capital Gains Tax was

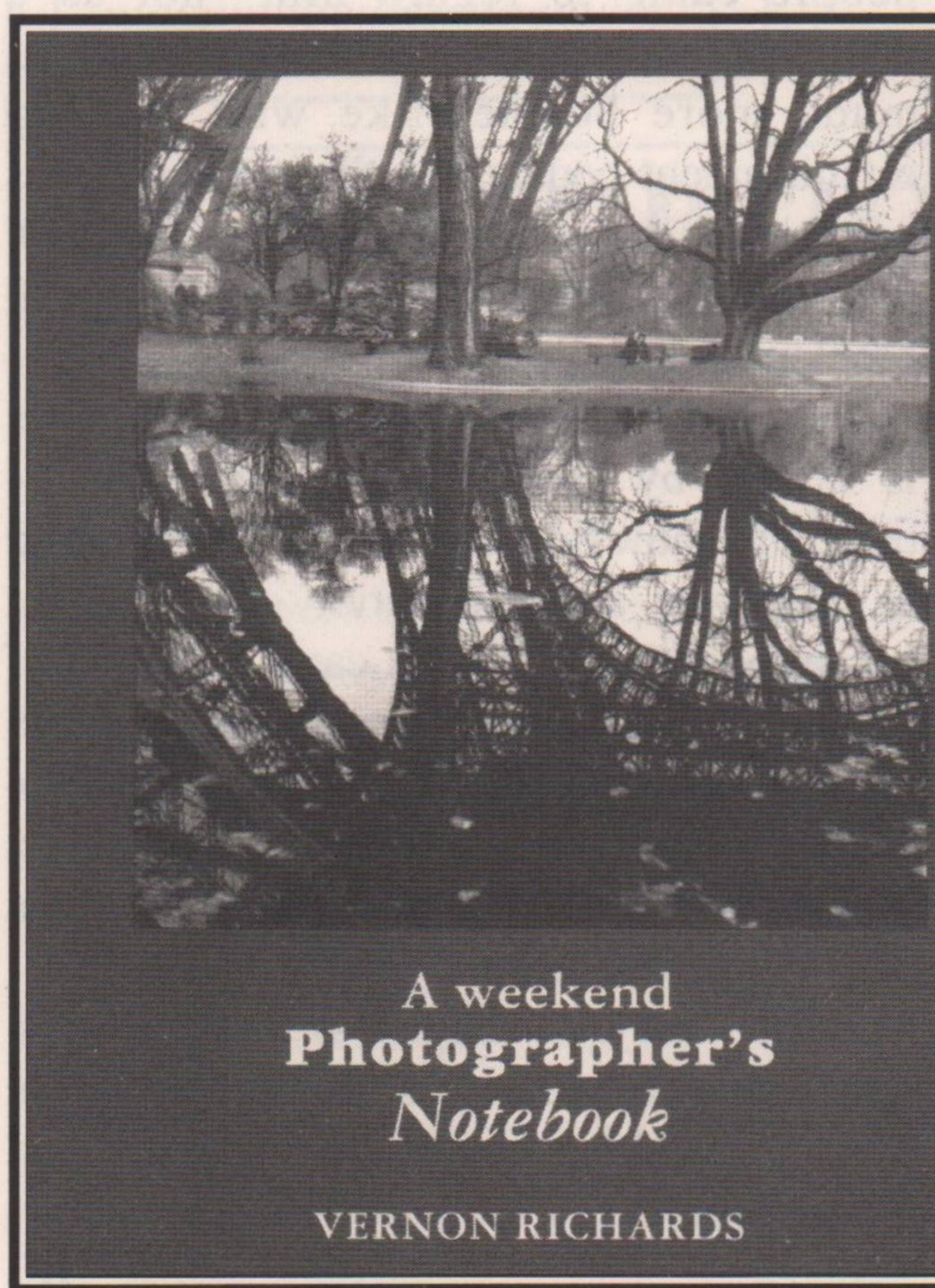
reduced from 40% to 22% for investments held for more than three years (for stakes held for five years the rate drops to 10%).

The introduction of Enterprise Management Initiatives allows companies to award up to £1 million share options, tax free. The cost of this to the exchequer is likely to be £45 million a year – about the same amount saved under the new rules for incapacity benefit, therefore taking from the sick and giving to the rich is the new ethos of Blair's 'caring society'.

Since coming to office the government has not prosecuted a single case of alleged insider dealing, despite 32 cases being forwarded to the DTI inspectors in 1997-98. The Health and Safety Executive, according to a statement to the Commons environment select committee by the Centre for Corporate Accountability, fails to investigate 90% of major reported injuries. Only 10% of those investigated result in prosecution and no director or manager of a company has been prosecuted for a workplace injury or death between 1996 and 1998. In 1998 a record 77,300 people were sent to jail, and conviction rates rose by 6% to 1,470,000. According to *The Guardian* (16th November): "Jack Straw hailed the rise in convictions as a sign that the criminal justice system was more efficient".

In Blair's Britain the rich are free to plunder without limit, and the rest of us have three choices: work, starve, or go to jail. The new Prevention of Terrorism Act makes the last option yet more likely.

Nick S.



A weekend
Photographer's
Notebook

VERNON RICHARDS

A Weekend Photographer's Notebook Vernon Richards

Vernon Richards makes no claim to break new ground, but his humane eye allows important qualities to shine through his photographs. Their straightforward honesty and compassion vividly reveal the great interest in, and friendship towards, his fellow men and the world about us. This weekend 'button-presser' shows us just how much can be achieved by an energetic enthusiast whose simple equipment would be considered laughable by today's gadget-laden photographers, both amateur and professional.

This book containing 170 photographs is available from Freedom Press at £6.95 (post free in UK, add 15% for p&p overseas).

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Belgian developments

If the comparison was made between the state of the Belgian anarchist movement and other regions within the French Speaking Federation (FAF) – notably France itself – then it would seem that the Belgian libertarian movement is in good shape. In a country with a population of some 4.5 million we will find:

- Specific groups which are members of the FAF such as Le Noir Lombric in Peruweltz, the Groupe Alternative Libertaire in Brussels.
- Autonomous groups such as The Anarchist Network in Tournais, the Libertarian Centre in Brussels and the Black Cats of the University of Brussels.
- The Anarcho-Syndicalist union – La Coordination Autonome des Travailleurs.
- Several dozen libertarians who are active in various groups which form the overall social movement.
- The Alternative *Libertaire* journal which helps stage debates, spread ideas and disseminate information generally within the body of the movement (and indeed beyond).

Faced with such a situation you could be forgiven for being surprised that such a libertarian presence has not had more effect on social and political realities at both the regional and national level.

Two reasons suggest themselves: division and dispersal.

Historically, the movement in French speaking Belgium has been marked by a romantic individualism and its corollary: a rejection of all forms of organisation. This has been strongly reinforced by a strong feeling of localism and the inability of people to see beyond 'their' town, 'their' region and 'their' group.

However, over the last few years the situation seems to have evolved because of the pressures of the real world, since, in the more significant of the various libertarian circles, the question today is less whether or not to organise than how to organise.

This evolution is, without doubt, the outcome of various people's experiences who have been groping for a form or organisation, albeit 'fluid', which is vital if the movement is to develop. Because if today it is relatively easy to bring together a few dozen people or even a few hundred when there is a demonstration or something similar (The Anarchist Camp and Barbecue, the 1st May Festival, etc.) everyone realises that, just as it is with a hand filled with sand, when you let your fingers go all the forces which have gathered together go back to the beach.

After numerous discussions and meetings the French-speaking Libertarian movement in Belgium (it's a long story) has now managed to begin producing a regular journal. The question now arises: how to bring together the resources which we need to help develop this project further? In a word how can we organise the most active libertarians and build around them a structure which will give form to the movement and allow it to progress?

Our answer to this question has to set up a French-speaking Belgian local union within the FAF. To begin with this union will be regionally based. That is to say its aim is not to bring together anybody and everybody in any particular locality but rather to set up a framework for exchanges, co-ordination and thought for the region more generally speaking. Thus we hope not to come into conflict with existing structures at a local level but rather we hope to bring together those folk who wish to extend their horizons in order to have some real import on national realities. In this manner the union hopes to occupy what is currently a vacuum.

In keeping with the basic principles of the FAF the aim is certainly not to create an anarchist 'party' but be addressing the issues which are pertinent to a libertarian organisation (such as funding, meetings, participation in federal campaigns, etc.) Disorder is the dominant theme in some 'libertarian' circles and this has forced us to take a more formal approach and to reaffirm what is in effect a real association of equal members.

Union locale Belgique francophone de la Federation Anarchiste
(from *Le Monde Libertaire*, September 1999)

ANARCHY IN ACTION?

NUMBER 16

Radio Schoolbag, on Libertarian Radio

The radio station of the children of the schools of Ivry: a radio station not quite without a master

For a good ten years, every Thursday from 2pm to 3pm, it has been possible to listen to Radio Schoolbag on Libertarian Radio. Radio Schoolbag, on the Ile-de-France, is the only radio programme produced and hosted by primary school children. The idea dates back to 1982, in the boom days of free radio stations, and is a project of parents and teachers following on from the creation of an 'open' school.

The idea is gaining ground, the inspector of national education is encouraging the project, it will be the radio station of all Ivry's schools. Thus the national education system has a small toehold in Libertarian Radio, something that annoys some libertarians. The feeling is mutual: the presence of Radio Schoolbag on an anarchist radio station sometimes causes disquiet in educational circles. Thus Radio Schoolbag sometimes falls between two stools.

A studio is set up in a school. It comprises the equipment needed to record, edit and broadcast programmes: a mixing desk, a tape recorder, portable tape recorders, cassette and CD decks, a table with six microphones and other equipment with which to link up with Libertarian Radio's studio.

Each broadcast is presented live by a team of children, which changes each time. Each programme consists of five or six sequences of variable length (between two and twenty minutes), the first aimed at the youngest, the subsequent ones at the older listeners. Each programme offers a varied content, with different sorts of live and pre-recorded sequences: investigations, reports, interviews, vox pop, creation, games, discussions. These sequences cover very diverse subjects: news analysis, literary, historical, scientific and artistic programmes, serials, poetry, music and song.

But why a radio station for children?

To give children their say? No! A person's say is not given. It is not a matter of giving a tool to some little privileged individuals so that they can ape the grown-ups. Words and language have to be constructed and conquered. They must be appropriated. Words are the tools of thought. Rather than 'What is well thought out is clearly stated' it is more apt to say 'What is well stated is clearly thought out'.

In general, and especially at school, children can only put their ability to express themselves orally into practice in situations where they are expected to answer an adult. In this way they may acquire formal tools (e.g. by systematically learning to use words involving causality, or agreement of tenses: 'If I had known, I would have said nothing!'), but this is far from enough to make speech into a true means of expression.

In making a programme, it is the children themselves who pose the questions, lead the discussion, and conceive and work out the final product to be broadcast.

Radio Schoolbag is a means for genuine production and communication. When children produce a class magazine, it isn't sold at the corner newsagent's. When they put together a video with their classmates, it never reaches official distribution channels, is never seen in the cinema down the street. However, when they make a programme for Radio Schoolbag, they are heard for real as any listener turning the knob on the radio can hear it and those producing it are listened to like any other presenters or radio journalists, for 30 km around Paris.

Radio Schoolbag is a teaching tool

Children who are preparing a broadcast will have to think out a project carefully, usually

write out what they will say, check their facts. Then, when making the broadcast they will improve their mastery of speaking (audibility, voice control, fluency, informative-ness), will have to communicate by reading (read their text live and communicate with the listeners, tell a story while reading it), master concentration (aptness of their contributions to discussions) and ability to listen (to their partners in the project, to other speakers), use technical equipment (tape recorders, microphones) and adapt to its constraints and those of broadcasting. What's more, they like it and even ask for more!

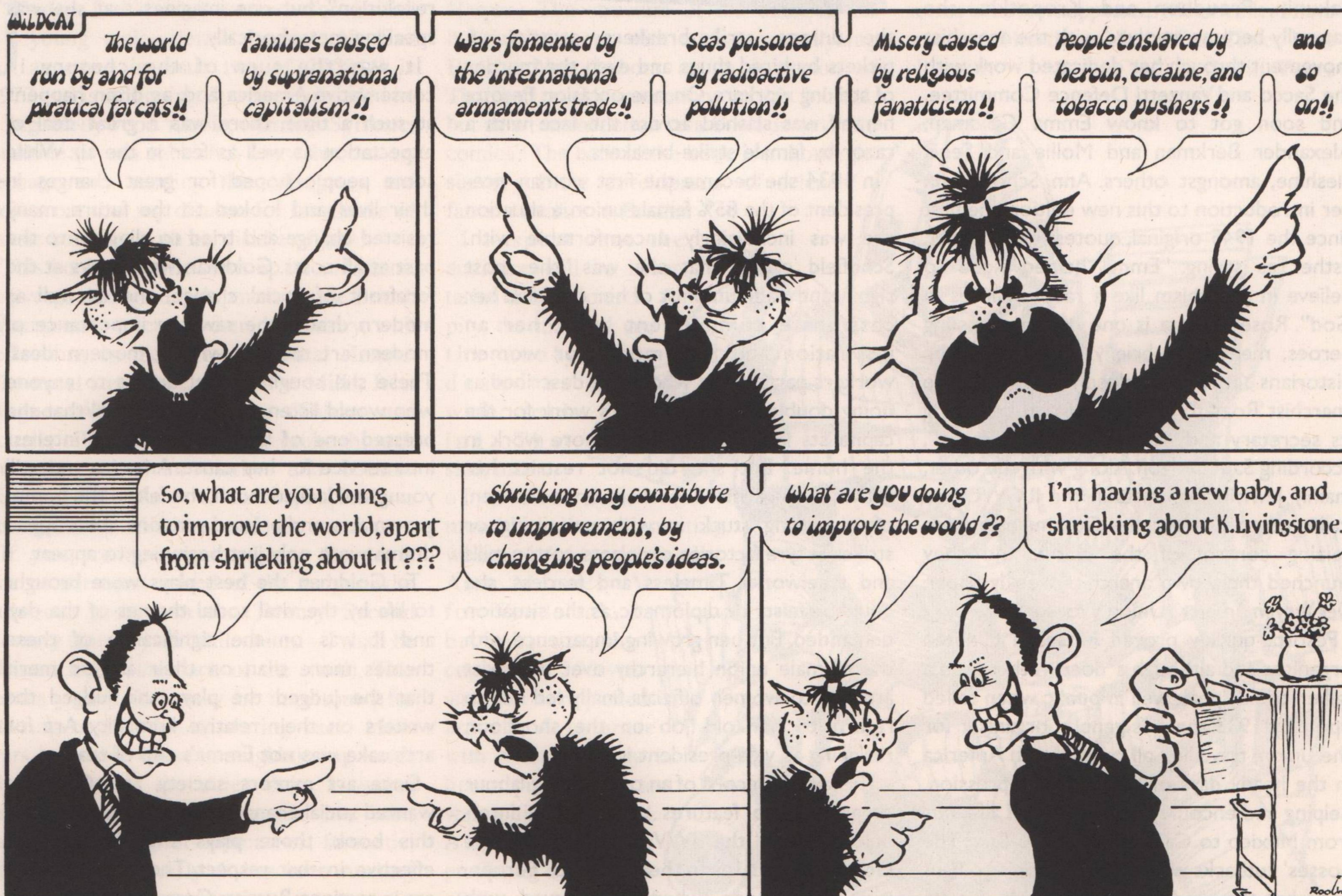
Radio Schoolbag is a tool for personal development and social integration. It helps children to open up their environment. The children of Ivry have produced series of broadcasts on the various sorts of jobs in the town and on all the sorts of posts found within a school (Radio Mechanic).

It develops children by giving them a good self-image, because they have the satisfaction of having succeeded in carrying out a project and in being listened to. It develops children by taking account of their language and culture, their concerns, like the 'polyglot' creations of a class of children arriving in France, like 'Abdulai', a story of the forms of exclusion suffered by a child of foreign origin, or like the Hit Parade in which the programme's authors reflect on currently fashionable musical effects and on the pleasure of singing.

It helps to anchor children in the social fabric of their school, their neighbourhood, their town. They are recognised as individuals who contribute something of their own to others. It brings out the abilities and the success of children who are listened to by their families and their schoolmates. (Children in an advanced class applauded their school-mates following a discussion on violence broadcast live.) It helps children to cooperate, to become familiar with the idea of collective responsibility and collective success and with the rules of a professional code of ethics. Children who produce programmes become more aware as consumers of media output.

And the place of the teacher in all this? He carries on teaching and is rather happy to really be able to help the children to build themselves, to build their knowledge, to become more competent, to be individuals.

Jean-Jacques Charbonnier, teacher in charge of broadcasts on Schoolbag Radio
(from *Le Monde Libertaire*, 17th March 1999)



Bumper Book Bargains

A clutch of excellent titles, all at half price or less, for those in need of literary lifting or whose thoughts turn to presents around the end of the year. They are a mixture of new titles, or fresh stocks of some we've had before, or books which we've previously had to sell at full price and which you might like to be reminded of. What's more, all are now post-free in the UK. Enjoy.

Bread Upon the Waters* by Rose Pesotta, edited by John Bffel, ILR Press. Born in Derazhnia, Ukraine, in 1896, one of eight children of a Jewish grain merchant, Rose Peisotaya was already listening in to furtive political discussions in the local marketplace by the age of nine. To openly criticise the tsarist regime was to invite exile to Siberia, and it was to escape this, and her only possible domestic future – to marry and settle down into drudgery – as well as to find economic freedom in the 'Free World', that she left at 17 to join her sister in the USA.

On her arrival in New York in 1913 Rose found work in the clothing industry's sweatshops, changed her name to Pesotta, and began learning English. She quickly discovered that poverty, exploitation and injustice were not unique to Eastern Europe, and she joined the ILGWU (International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union), becoming deeply involved in activism in the workplace, education programmes for workers, and for championing women's equality.

Being already familiar with the work of Bakunin, Proudhon and Kropotkin, she naturally became involved with the anarchist movement through her dedicated work with the Sacco and Vanzetti Defence Committee, and soon got to know Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and Mollie and Senia Fleshine, amongst others. Ann Schofield in her introduction to this new edition, the first since the 1945 original, quotes Rose's sister, Esther, as saying: "Emma helped Rose to believe in anarchism like a rabbi believes in God". Rose Pesotta is one of those unsung heroes, mentioned briefly if at all by the historians. Yet she was closely involved in the anarchist 'Road to Freedom' group, becoming its secretary and "its most dynamic force", according to Sam Dolgoff. Along with the other, mainly Jewish, anarchists in the ILGWU she managed to prevent the Communists from seizing control of the union, and they launched their own anarchist weekly paper, *Der Yunyon Arbeter* (Union Worker).

Pesotta quickly proved herself a talented organiser and although a 'doer' rather than a talker could speak well in public when called upon. By 1933 she was general organiser for the union, travelling all over North America in the heady days of the Great Depression, helping and encouraging workers of all kinds from Mexico to Canada to Puerto Rico. The bosses' cutbacks were forcing people to fight back, but they had to contend with spies in



Rose Pesotta demonstrating with a group of New York workers in Los Angeles, c. 1941



Rose Pesotta addressing an ILGWU convention shortly before her death in 1965.



Rose with bread for the strikers in Los Angeles, 1941

the unions, strike-breakers, attacks on pickets by hired thugs and even the murder of striking workers. On one occasion Pesotta herself was slashed across the face with a razor by female strike-breakers.

In 1934 she became the first woman vice-president of the 85% female union, a situation she was increasingly uncomfortable with. Schofield claims that she was "the most significant trade unionist of her day" and her passionate commitment made her an inspiration and role model for women workers particularly, whom she described as doing double work: a full day's work for the capitalists followed by hours more work in the home. But she did not restrict her activities to garment workers or to women, often getting stuck in with unionising or strikes at tyre factories, car plants, cotton mills and steelworks. Timeless and fearless, she could be feisty or diplomatic, as the situation demanded. But her growing impatience with the all-male union hierarchy over its sexist attitude to women officials finally led her to return to her old job on the shopfloor, resigning as vice-president in 1944.

This classic record of an outstanding labour organiser also features chapters on inter-union rivalry, the IWW and the Seattle General Strike,[†] and her visit to Europe, including London, where she stayed with

Emma Goldman in her freezing flat. Pesotta has an easy, attractive writing style, in one chapter cleverly weaving flashbacks in and out of the narrative, and the book's cornucopia of memories, facts and vivid descriptions of a thousand situations is broadened by the new introduction and ten new pages of photographs. 435 pages with appendix, bibliography and index, originally £13.95, now only £4.95.

The Social Significance of Modern Drama* by Emma Goldman, Applause Theatre Book Publishers. When I first came across this book I had never heard of it, and neither had many people I've asked about it since. And although I have heard of most of the playwrights I have only seen one or two of the plays. At first sight it seems an odd book for Goldman to have written – indeed its origin in 1914 was as a series of lectures she gave in New York, and they might never have seen the light of day had "an adoring young stenographer" not been in the audience and presented the bemused Emma with a transcript.

But in fact she was no stranger to the world of the stage. Her father was a theatre manager back in Lithuania, and almost from the moment she arrived in the United States in 1869 she was involved with experimental and progressive theatre groups, and she soon made friends with John Reed, the radical journalist who was later the subject, along with Goldman herself, of the film *Reds*. In 1897 she was down a Welsh pit lecturing coal miners on George Bernard Shaw, and after her New York lectures she was offered a spot on a Broadway stage in a vaudeville show that included acrobats, trained dogs and high-kicking dancers! She demurred. Still, vaudeville's loss was our gain. Emma Goldman may have coined the phrase "If I can't dance I won't be part of your revolution", but one imagines that she was speaking metaphorically.

It was the turn of the century in conservative America and, as often happens at such a time, there was a great deal of expectation as well as fear in the air. While some people hoped for great changes in their lives and looked to the future, many resisted change and tried to cling on to the past at all costs. Goldman was always at the forefront of social change, and as well as modern drama she saw the importance of modern art, modern writing, modern ideas. These she sought to get across to anyone who would listen, and it was logical that she pressed one of her main areas of interest into service for her cause. America was still young and lacked much, she felt, in the home-grown arts, and printed versions of European drama were only just beginning to appear.

To Goldman the best plays were brought to life by the vital social themes of the day, and it was on the significance of these themes more than on their artistic merit that she judged the plays and judged the writers on their relative humanity. Art for art's sake was not Emma's cup of tea.

Since art mirrors society, and Goldman wanted social change, she naturally selects, in this book, those plays she thinks most effective in that respect. The plays covered are in sections: Russian, German, Scandinavian,

English, Irish (although her much-admired Shaw might have been rather miffed to find himself in the English section), etc. They include Chekov, Yeats, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Tolstoy and many others. Extracts from the plays are used to illustrate Goldman's criticism, where she describes passionately and with deep conviction why she finds them so significant. This 1987 edition has, in addition to Goldman's own foreword, a good new introduction by Harry Carlson, and a preface. It won high praise from Judith Malina of New York's anarchist Living Theatre group. 184 pages, previously £7.50 now only £3.50.

William Morris and News from Nowhere: a vision our time* edited by Stephen Coleman and Paddy O'Sullivan, Green Books. Morris has been claimed by both Marxists and anarchists as part of their tradition: the Marxists most notably in E.P. Thompson's biography, the anarchists in his own lifetime and today – and neither with much justification: arguments over his exact political position continue. But anarchists have seen the ideal society depicted in *News from Nowhere* as close to their own vision of utopia. This volume, published for the centenary of *News from Nowhere*, is a collection of essays on Morris by nine writers (who come from both marxist and libertarian political backgrounds) to which they have added a biographical introduction, a synopsis of the plot of *News from Nowhere* and a bibliography. They are to be congratulated on producing a book which is essential reading for all who are interested in William Morris.

Stephen Coleman shows Morris's utopia as part of the continuity of history, emerging out of class struggle; it is to Morris's credit that he showed – in flashback – the insurrection taking place; his utopia had to be fought for.

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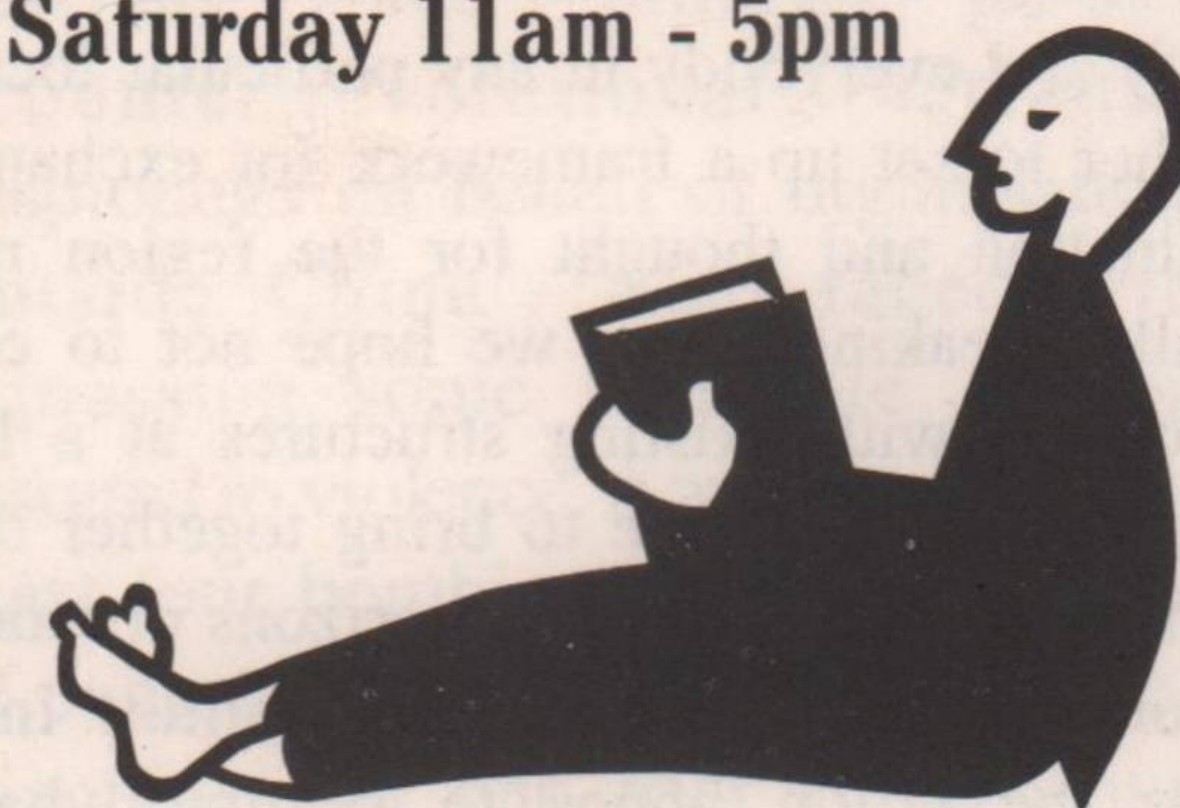
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Christopher Hampton traces the literary influences on Morris and his transformation from post-Romantic artist to the "recognition of the economic material conditions that determined the structures of his world". John Crump writes of the strengths and weaknesses of Morris's ideas on revolution; anarchists will be particularly interested in his observations on Morris's attitudes on state socialism and trade unions.

Jan Marsh, who has written several books on the sexual relationships of the pre-Raphaelites, here provides a feminist critique of *News from Nowhere*. Morris was conscious of what was called 'the woman question', and she makes the point that many of the early socialists were fearful of the effect on their supporters of raising sexual matters publicly. She points to the unsatisfactory depiction of sexual relationships – and the eroticism – in *News from Nowhere* and relates this not only to Morris's place in the socialist movement, but to his own marital situation. Marsh effectively shows the links between the political and literary aspects of *News from Nowhere*.

Colin Ward writes on the town planners Raymond Unwin and W.R. Lethaby as Morris's disciples, and claims the modern self-build pioneer Walter Segal in the Morris tradition.

Adam Buick, writing on Morris's economics, claims him for the Marxist tradition. Morris depicted a society free of money and of government (or, to use Buick's phrase, "coercive government"). To the anarchist, Buick is especially interesting in his definitions of 'state socialism' and 'communism'; and he also ably answers the objections of those who say, "It's a nice idea but it wouldn't work".

Paddy O'Sullivan's sympathies clearly lie on the libertarian side. In his concluding essay he traces Morris's concern with what people today call 'ecology', from his founding of the 'Anti-Scrape' to his concern with waste and pollution, and his views on the nature of work in 'Useful work versus useless toil' (included in the Freedom Press volume *Why Work?*). O'Sullivan divides modern environmentalists into the 'technocentric' and 'ecocentric', then further divides the 'ecocentrics' into 'gaianists' and 'communalists', and places Morris as father to the communalists.

The high standard of scholarship and the variety of approach make this an outstanding book. 213 pages including preface, introduction, notes, bibliography and details on the contributors. Publisher's price £8.95, our price only £4.50.

The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth Century America* by Carl

Guarneri, Cornell University Press. An impressive in-depth study of one of the most successful and widespread pre-Marxian utopian socialist movements, its transplantation from Europe to the United States, and its aim of leading that country's highly competitive society to a communal alternative by "peaceful revolution both conservative and radical". Guarneri traces the movement from its roots in the religious, social and economic upheavals of the 1830s, through its bold communal experiments based on Charles Fourier's 'phalansteries' – the co-operative communal villages which he saw as the basic socioeconomic units for the new society – to its gradual decline after the American Civil War. *En route* he examines the Fourierists' relationship to the Abolitionists, slavery, capitalism (they were also against wage-slavery), the Civil War itself, organised labour, free love (surprisingly, homosexuality and even incest were practised in some phalanxes), and anarchists like Josiah Warren. The book is large and attractive, copiously annotated, has a thorough index, an appendix packed with statistical tables for each community (location, size numbers, members' ages, occupations, etc.), and an exhaustive bibliography. 525 pages, illustrated. Normally £19.90 but now just £9.95 from us while stocks last.

Rural Radicals: righteous rage in the American grain* by Catherine McNicol Stock, Cornell University Press. They hate the US federal and state governments, especially the Department of Agriculture, big business, bankers, lawyers, the police, the CIA, the FBI, the courts and the United Nations. They are

passionately attached to the land, demand the right to self-regulation, believe in small-scale agriculture and society, and have a strong sense of family and community solidarity. They love the wilderness and want to be left alone to pursue their rural occupations and activities, and they claim the right to defend this way of life against anybody, by force of arms if need be. Wow, you must be thinking, almost an anarchist society – fantastic! Well not quite, for that's about all they agree on, and while it is true that some of these isolated rural dwellers would fit in well with an anarchist community, many others decidedly would not. Some favour an egalitarian, pluralist, secular and cooperative way of life, and have formed associations to promote their ideas, like the American Society of Equity, the Grangers, the Populist Movement, the Green Mountain Boys and the Non-partisan League. Others are, however, extreme individualists, survivalists, identity Christians, conspiracists, vigilantes, white supremacists, anti-semites, or outright fascists – or any combination of these. And that's not just the John Birch Society, Aryan Nations or the Klu Klux Klan. There are also the Defenders of the Christian Faith, Posse Comitatus, the Knights of Mary Phagan, the innocent-sounding Duck Club, the Regulators, the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord, and many more. These want an authoritarian, hierarchical, elitist, religious and racist way of life. Both sets of rural dwellers have radical agendas, says Stock, and have often gone on the rampage, formed their own heavily armed militias to enforce their will, or been involved in shoot-outs and

sieges with the authorities, but it's not a simple question of left versus right: there is a lot of ideological cross-over between these groups, and many hold sets of beliefs that flatly contradict each other – not that they ever seem to notice. Nor is all this a recent development – it goes back at least to Bacon's Rebellion of 1676, and is inextricably tied up with US history and culture and American frontier mentality. This is a timely and accessible study, throwing a fascinating light on a phenomenon which many outsiders, including American city dwellers, find totally incomprehensible, but which still throw up incidents like the sieges of Waco and Ruby Ridge, the Oklahoma City bomb and the Unabomber. Welcome to rural USA. 219 pages, illustrated hardback with notes, sources and index. Previously £17.95, now only £8.50 while stocks last.

KM and CC

† By pure coincidence a few copies of a very interesting pamphlet have just arrived at the office, for which we thank Robby Barnes, one of our American subscribers. Its title is *The Seattle General Strike: an account of what happened in Seattle during the General Strike, February 6th to 11th 1919*. Originally published in 1919 by the History Committee of the General Strike Committee, it was reprinted with a new preface by Root and Branch in 1972, and several pages of background notes have helpfully been added to this 1999 edition. A chunky 75-page pamphlet, it also features a nice prose poem by the radical journalist Anna Louise Strong, who was on the Committee, and a 'further reading' list. Since the information herein expands considerably on Rose Pesotta's chapter, we are offering a copy of it free to the first twelve people to order *Bread Upon the Waters* who ask for it. (add a nominal 50p for the extra postage). First come, first served.

The Dredd Phenomenon

The Dredd Phenomenon: Comics and Contemporary Society

by John Newsinger
published by Libertarian Education,
paperback, 99 pages, £5.95*

Judge Dredd is a success for British young male-oriented comics. He first appeared in issue two of *2000AD* in 1977 and is still going. It was even made into a big Hollywood movie, starring Sylvester Stallone (it was rubbish – I say this but my teenage son, reading this, disagrees and points out that my distaste for his choice of music conflicts with his dislike of jazz).

This book's subtitle sums up its ambitions. It sweeps through developments in the British (young male-oriented) comics industry, with reflections on the current political climate. The usual suspects crop up, Pat Mills, John Wagner, Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons and equally talented others. Some broke through into the American market and became disillusioned. Many of these people have strong individualistic, anarchistic streaks.

If you are not aware, Judge Dredd is one of the most feared of the Judges who dole out justice in the Twenty Second Century (forget your Millennium – I shall be pleased to see the back of the word). This means justice. You may be imprisoned for littering or shot for answering back. Mass wars break out between neighbouring tower blocks. Outside the cities there is worse desolation. This brutal scenario has been used for a variety of approaches, futuristic, horror, satire, comedy. It has been running for more than twenty years.

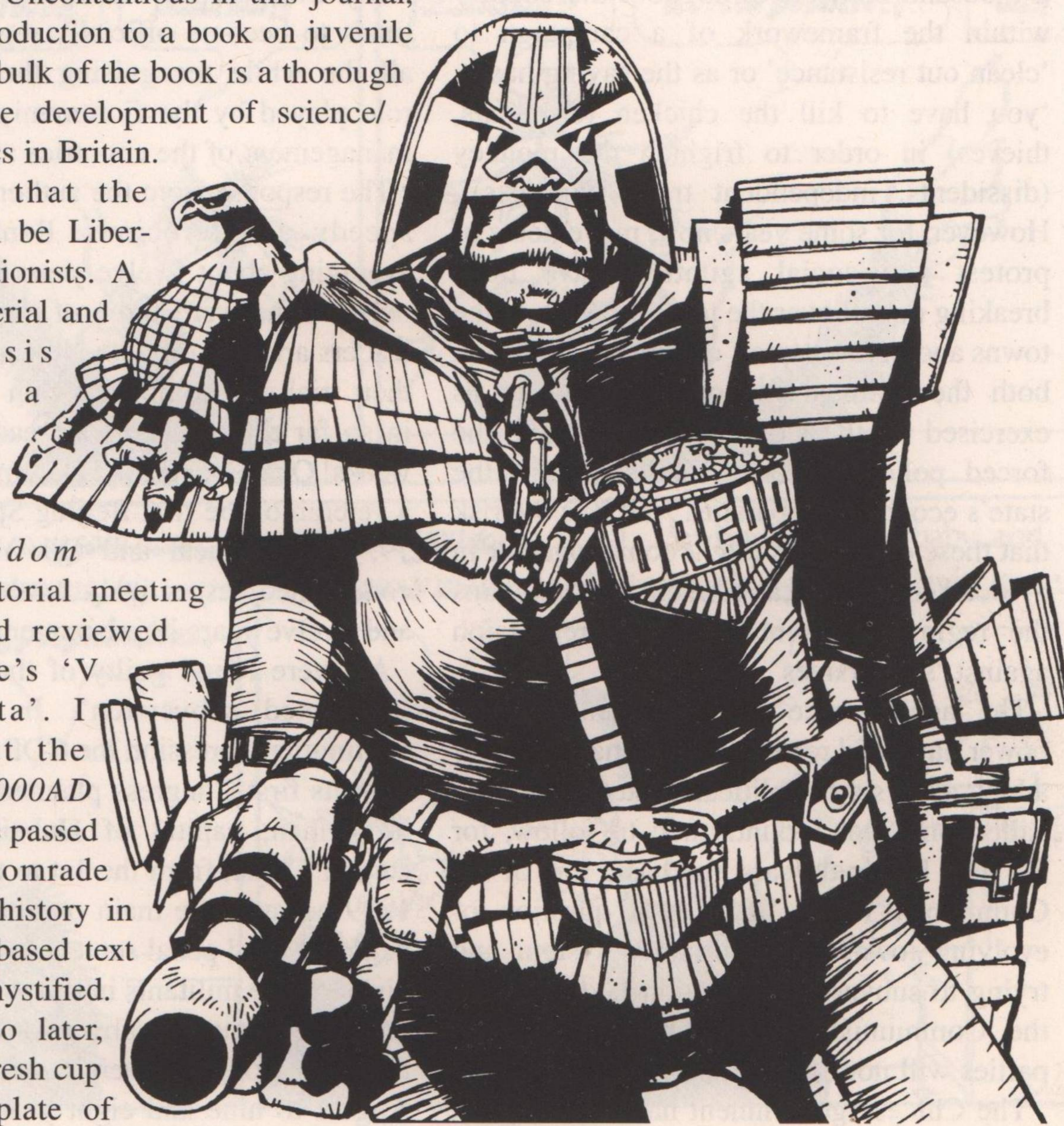
The problem for this book is the nature of the target audience. Many people are not sympathetic to comics, considering them irredeemably childish. They will not bother to read this. People who are sympathetic will already be familiar. (The cover is by Clifford Harper.) The structure of the book is not helpful. It opens with a chapter analysing Blairite New Labour as an extension of Thatcherism. Uncontentious in this journal, but as an introduction to a book on juvenile comics? The bulk of the book is a thorough survey of the development of science/fantasy comics in Britain.

I suspect that the audience will be Libertarian Educationists. A pity, the material and the analysis deserves a wider reading. That said, memory of a *Freedom* monthly editorial meeting where I had reviewed Alan Moore's 'V for Vendetta'. I brought out the copies of *2000AD* and they were passed around. A comrade with a long history in linear, prose-based text was at first mystified. A hour or so later, proffering a fresh cup of tea and plate of

crumpets and jam, I asked his opinion. Tearing away from the script, he mumbled "This is excellent" and was lost for another hour.

Young female-oriented comics? *Mandy* and *Bunty* seem to have gone younger. *Tank Girl* seems to have disappeared. Meanwhile, I have seen a publication called *Minx*. Times have changed.

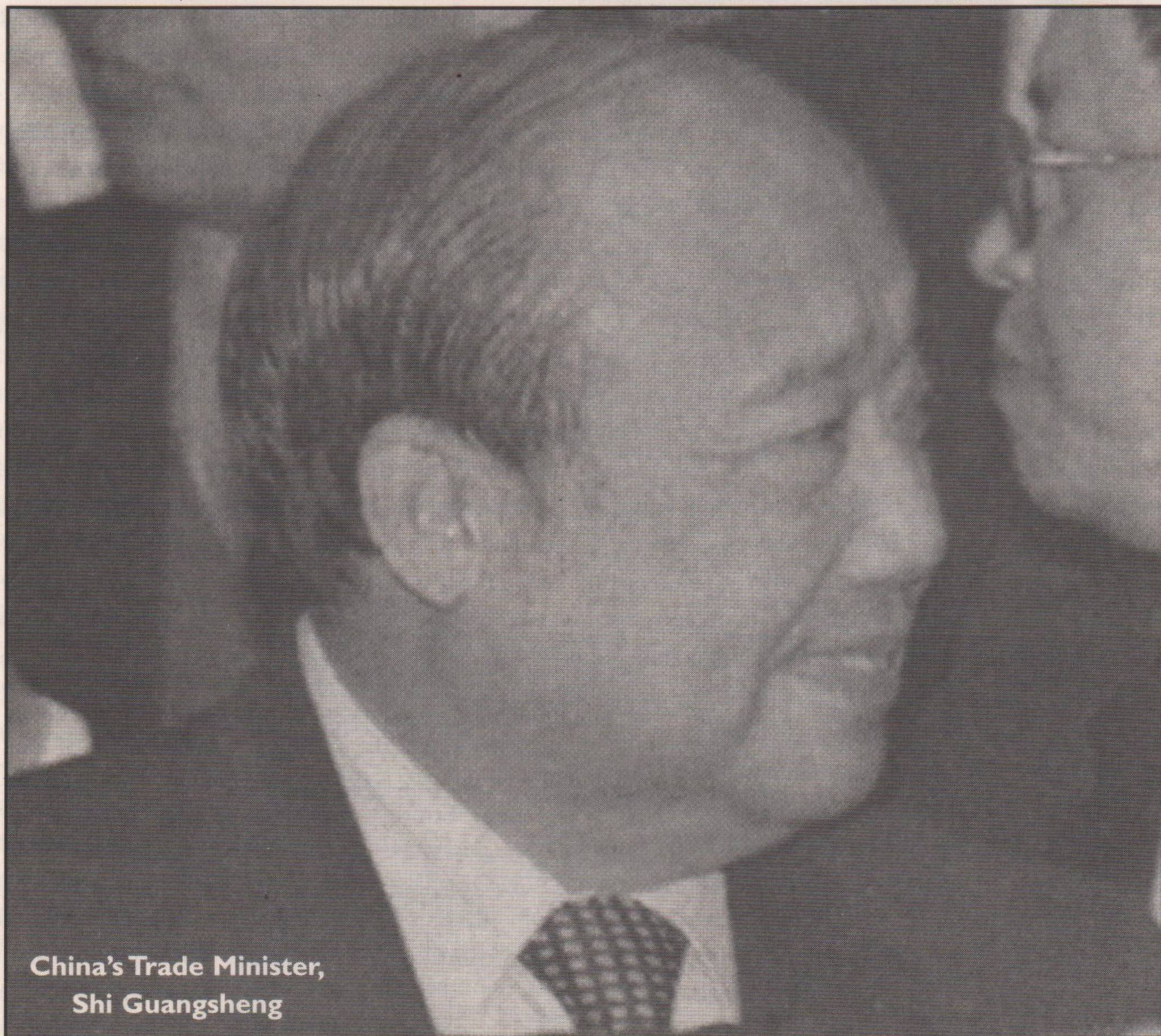
David Peers



Mail order customers: a plea from the drones

Please note that if ordering for Christmas and/or New Year you should get your orders in to us in good time. We don't mind the extra work, but we are at the mercy of the Post Office like everybody else. We advise allowing an extra couple of days for books going by letter post (up to about 800g) and ten to fourteen days for parcels. Don't forget that the bookshop will close early on Christmas Eve for the holidays and re-open on Tuesday 4th January 2000.

China 1999: Dissidents and the Social Movement



China's Trade Minister,
Shi Guangsheng

The People's Republic of China has just celebrated with military pomp, but without the people, the 50th anniversary of its foundation when the Communist Party took power at the time radiant with revolutionary legitimacy but today reduced to an empty slogan. In effect the Communist Party no longer has ideological ambition, its sole aim is to remain in power playing the role of guardian with regard to the country's wealth – more and more unevenly distributed – and the country's geo-political status. The Party of the Proletariat has become the Party of the Rich, the former 'fish in the sea of (the) people' now simply owes its existence to its ability to repress.

It is symbolic in this regard that the event which is actually commemorated by the 1st October was the execution – with great ceremony and when the bill for the bullets was sent to the families of the deceased – of a thousand convicts throughout the country within the framework of a campaign to 'clean out resistance' or as the saying has it, 'you have to kill the chicken (criminals, thieves) in order to frighten the monkey (dissidents, independent trade unionists)'. However, for some years now, movements of protest and social agitation have been breaking out all over the territory, both in the towns and in rural areas, calling into question both the political monopoly of power as exercised by the Communist Party and the forced policy of restructalisation of the state's economic apparatus. And it is the risk that these campaigns might come together in a social and political ferment that explains the regime's current policy of repression against 'subversives'.

The ageing elite which currently holds power have said repeatedly, 'China will never adopt a Western political system, and has called on fellow countrymen to follow, for the next hundred years, the basic line of the Communist Party. 'If it is a question of evolving towards a multiparty system and trying to subvert the direction laid down by the Communist Party then new political parties will not be tolerated'.

The Chinese government has, nonetheless,

signed up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; it has signed both the International Pact "relating to economic and social rights" and that which "relates to political and social rights" and Article 35 of the constitution gives "citizens of the People's Republic of China the right to free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association and freedom to demonstrate".

These lines have been rendered meaningless because apart from the constitution's preamble which declares the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' there is also the two decrees enacted the 25th October 1998 which regulate the registration and the functioning of "non-profit making organisations which are independent of the state".

Despite such a Kafkaesque obstacle course the Chinese Democratic Party – a liberal, reformist tendency which claims a membership of a thousand spread out over 23 of the thirty Chinese provinces – has tried several times to become officially registered whilst all the while recognising the predominant role played by the Communist Party in the management of the country's affairs.

The response from the authorities has been speedy and ferocious. Penal sentences averaging about twelve years have been the norm. Thus were three of the party's main leaders arrested on 30th November 1998 and their trial was completed with unusual haste in so far as sentence was read within three weeks! On 21st and 22nd December, Xu Wenli, a veteran of the first Beijing Spring in 1978-79, Wang Youcai and Qin Yongmin were condemned respectively to thirteen, twelve and twelve years imprisonment respectively.

All were found guilty of the same crime: 'attempted subversion'. In the face of continuing repression the CDP was unable to hold its first Congress planned to take place in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province in central China, from the 1st to the 3rd March 1999 because the main organisers had been detained. And penal sentences continue to be given on the militants in the party, always for the same crime of 'subversion'. Zha Jianguo and Gao Hongmin were condemned on 2nd August to nine and eight years respectively

and on 6th August Liu Xianbin and She Wanbao received thirteen and twelve years.

Even those who act in isolation are severely punished when their actions threaten to make a mark. For having provided 30,000 Chinese e-mail addresses to dissident refugees in the US, Lin Hai was sentenced by a court in Shanghai to two years imprisonment for 'inciting people to overthrow the state'. Wang Wanxing is still interned in a psychiatric asylum for 'political megalomania' after having been arrested on Tiananmen Square on 3rd June 1992 whilst trying to unfurl a banner in memory of the victims of three years earlier, his gesture being perceived as an 'unacceptable provocation with regard to the leadership of the Party'. His wife, having asked what was meant by political megalomania was told by doctors that 'you would have to be mad to demonstrate on Tiananmen Square'. In the meantime Wang has written to the authorities explaining that he never called for the overthrow of the government nor had he tried to set up a political party. Rather it is the hierarchy in the Communist Party which is guilty of political megalomania. But they need not have any worries given the complicity of the international community. On 23rd April 1999 with 22 votes for, 17 against and 14 abstentions the UN Commission for Human Rights voted on a Chinese motion of 'non investigation' with regard to a project aimed at condemning the violations of fundamental liberties and demanding the release of political prisoners in China.

As for the more well known dissidents like Wei Jing-sheng or Wang Dan, the authorities do not hesitate to send them into exile to the US for 'medical reasons'. In the same way Liu Nianchun found himself in the US on 20th December 1998. He had previously been condemned to three years in a labour camp for having taken part in November 1993 in the editing of a Charter for Peace – a text demanding political democracy – and also for having drawn up the statutes of the 'League for the Protection of Workers Rights' an independent union.

In effect what the regime fears above all else are the attempts to federate the discontented and to establish bridges between the political dissidents and the wider social movement. In effect the country is facing a social explosion. In his speech of 24th December 1998, President Jiang Zemin recognised the fact that 'the army of the unemployed had grown' and that 'the income of peasants in some areas had gone into free fall'. For the last three years 1,000,000 employees have been laid off every year, with the concomitant loss of benefits associated with employment: health and education, cheap housing, pensions and various other services helping with the burden of everyday life. Unemployment is pushing up to 30% or 40% in the old industrial areas to the North of the country such as Shayang, the capital of Liaoning where a reporter from the French newspaper *Liberation* describes the 'labour market': "Dozens of men line up on the pavement outside the shops selling building materials. Around their necks they carry placards held there by a piece of string which announce their specialities – central heating, electrics, building – and they await, from dawn to dusk, a possible employer. Sometimes they are lucky and earn a miserable 10-20 yuans (70p to £1.40) for a day's work with no benefits."

The peasants are protesting against the corruption of the management and the dozens of taxes and other deductions they have to face up to. 'In mid-December 1998 an official report from the Treasury revealed that between 1992 and 1998 the official offices with responsibility to buy grain which receive subsidies from the state and from the banks to buy at a guaranteed price cereals from the peasantry turned over £37 million which were then used to finance the purchase of hotels and various speculative investments and transactions with private traders'.

Faced with such a situation, workers and peasants are trying to organise themselves to promote their rights because, as the official trade union (ACFTU) unambiguously declared at its thirteenth Congress, 'As the official trade union the ACFTU agrees to support the policies of the Communist Party including the massive redundancies in the state sector'. It is thus that, according to official figures from the Ministries of Employment and Health that, '216,750 strikes and demonstrations bringing together 3.5 million workers occurred in 1998. There were 459 violent confrontations between demonstrators and armed police which gave rise to 78 deaths and 2,230 wounded of which 800 were police officers or official state employees. In 627 cases the demonstrators took over the premises of governmental or official organisations'.

To give but one example a year ago in Hunan Province an 'Association for the reduction of taxes and the health of the nation' was set up. In Hong Kong, Han Dongfang, one of the founders of the 'Self-managed Federation of Beijing Workers' in May 1999, relieved of his nationality and of refugee status in Hong Kong for some years where he has run a radio station and published a Chinese language journal every month which is distributed within China to thousands of readers, set up, with the support of the independent labour movement, a grassroots network for a future civic society which he believed to be more important than demands for immediate democratic elections. But as with the case of the dissidents repression was fierce. The *Bulletin of Chinese Workers* has just published a list of thirty unionists, belonging to the 'Self-managed Federation of Workers' that is to say 'China's Free Workers Union' who have been imprisoned or detained in labour camps. Sentences handed out are very severe: between ten and twenty years for trumped up charges such as 'fraud', 'pillaging', 'hooliganism', 'counter-revolutionary activities' and 'espionage on behalf of organisations based outside China'. Also faced with such repression some desperate activists have resorted to violence. According to *Liberation* at least four bombings happened in the month of January: two in Hunan Province, one in Liaoning and one near Hong Kong which have resulted in 28 deaths and 106 wounded.

If the Communist Party seems to be firmly in power it has no popular support and its strength is by default faced with a society which it aims to keep atomised and fragmented but which is all the same and little by little coming together in a spirit of solidarity which holds the hope of social change at a grassroots level and which is trying to build bridges.

Jean-Jacques Gandini

from *Le Monde Liberaire*, 3rd November 1999

Machiavellian Calculations

Dear *Freedom*,

I might have been content to applaud the pungently refreshing common-sense response of Jonn Roe to Nick S's dissertation on the Kosovo tragedy ('Machiavellian calculations', *Freedom*, 21st August) had I not already despatched a reply of my own when Jonn's letter was published. But Nick is clearly resolved to give no ground, not even to the extent of conceding that other interpretations than the one he presents may have some validity. So, reluctantly, I feel impelled to return to the fray.

I won't emulate Nick's eagerness to lap up his fair share of insults by jumping to the conclusion that his charge-sheet of Clinton's iniquities is intended to teach me something he supposes I don't already know. I'll assume he considers it necessary for the case he is making to establish conclusively that Clinton

is a villain whose principles are at best extremely flexible friends. Sure! It is also true that the 'Comeback Kid' is a consummate democratic, politician who, before the eyes of the American populace, conjures his very faults of conduct and character into triumphs. I called him a 'clown', in the context of Kosovo, to underline his indecisiveness, his incompetence, and his pusillanimous anxiety over the state of his popularity. And I say the same about his conduct throughout the disintegration of Yugoslavia. A 'conspirator'? Who could think otherwise? The point at issue is the nature and quality of conspirators, and my reading is that most of these guys are stupid enough to believe their own propaganda about democratic leadership, acting in the national interest, and whatever. As I argue in *The Rape of Socialism*, that, paradoxically, is part of their strength. It is that general inability to really understand the world of capitalist competition so confusingly mixed up with state rivalry that in my view should be the basis of anarchist propaganda – if only because devils are few and the misguided are many, amongst the elites as well as the multitudes.

Nick writes as if he is quite unaware of the constraints on an American president and administration, particularly when the executive is faced by a largely hostile Congress, not to mention a volatile electorate. Yellow ribbons and body-bags, Nick! US disinclination to act tough goes back to Vietnam. The big exception to this strategy of no-risk soldiering is the war to 'liberate' Kuwait! but the difference there is explained, of course, by oil, plus strategic concern for Middle East stability and the interests of America's tail-wags-the-dog client-state, Israel.

Which two subjects, geopolitics and geo-economics, bring me to two absolutely fundamental objections to the Pete-Gowan-Nick-S thesis. One of its essential premises appears to be that America welcomes instability, even to the point of the displacement of whole populations fleeing for their lives, because it gives the US the opportunity to intervene in the chaos and to license, as it were, American businessmen to operate as legal looters. In the penultimate paragraph of his article, Nick ambitiously expands on Gowan's 'screw loose' (Roe) speculation re the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade with the even crazier remark that 'we should beware the US's attempts at developing a strategy of tension in the Pacific.' What purportedly supports this dire warning are moves for a "joint US-Japan ... theatre missile defence system" as a counter to "North Korea's desperate sabre-rattling and China's verbal battles with Taiwan". But the collective wisdom among thinkers (and this really is both of those things) is that one should beware of adding to the payload of what seems to be an adequate explanation. America may be the strongest country in the world, but its penchant is for bullying little countries, not for rousing the wrath of other Titans.

In the modern world geopolitics subserves global economics. The writ of nation-states, *per se*, runs almost nowhere these days, even, ultimately speaking, within their own borders. Big guns are no longer the way to dominate the world. The WTO and the IMF are more formidable warships. Besides which, capitalism has no frontiers and capitalists, *per se*, have no natural loyalty to their own country. Nor are they a true fraternity, but thieves forever falling out, with interludes of conspiring collectively against the public interest quite regardless of nationality. I make these observations to draw attention to

Nick's insistence on his 'US of A against the Rest' case as being the major cause of tragedy in the break-up of Yugoslavia. He talks of "the wars of position between European and US capital", of "the US desire to carve the Germans out", and says: "The US's main aim was to frustrate EC and German positions at the UN".

To this totally unsubstantiated assertion, he tacks on the most outrageous statement in his article: "the appalling conflict which engulfed Bosnia was entirely the result of the US strategy of using Yugoslav developments to further US aims in Europe". As Jonn Roe points out, in his article Nick performs the extraordinary feat of writing about the Kosovan war, and the Bosnian war which preceded it, without once mentioning the devil at the heart of it, Slobodan Milosevic. He and his crusade for a Greater Serbia are only introduced into Nick's exposition in reply to Jonn's ironic comment on his absence.

The question thrusts itself upon one: Why does Nick so faithfully follow the line taken by those nostalgic leftists who really convinced themselves that Tito's Yugoslavia was inspirationally different from the other 'people's democracies, which remained till the end under Soviet Russia's hegemony, and who apparently – and most astonishingly of all – after the collapse of communism, persuaded themselves that Sloba was Tito's spiritual heir?

These are the kind of 'socialists' who rape socialism. The truth is that it was Serb moves to dominate post-'communist' Yugoslavia which led to its disintegration, and the coverage of these events in the media and in

a number of excellent books has been so thorough that there is no excuse for anyone choosing to discourse on this matter not to know it – and much else besides which has for the most part been missing from *Freedom's* coverage.

What is at stake here is the credibility of *Freedom* as the most audible voice of anarchism in this country. If Nick is speaking for *Freedom*, he would be well advised to study his opponents more closely before attempting to despatch them with a final contemptuous thrust by contriving to dismiss them as innocents. There is absolutely nothing in Jonn Roe's letter to warrant Nick's concluding slur that "Jonn appears to think that ethics rather than economics underwrites foreign policy". Against me his telling blow takes the form of an admonition that one of *Freedom's* duties is "the debunking of the 'official fictions' of our age", for which, he implies, I am a right sucker. He demonstrates this conclusively, to his own satisfaction, by mocking my observation that "all of us are prisoners of our circumstances". It is no surprise that he discreetly omits my qualifying words, "to a greater or lesser extent", which unless we are magicians surely makes them undeniable. Less black-and-white analyses, please, *Freedom*, and more recognition of the complexities of people as well as of situations. Prominence always for economics, to be sure, but not at the expense of ethics. Hard heads but never hard hearts for anarchism.

Donovan Pedely

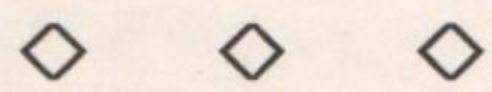
[For reasons of space this letter has been cut, and this correspondence is now closed – Editors.]

Bouquets

Dear Freedom Press,

Please send me a copy of *Millennium Wildcat*. I am not qualified to compare him with other brilliant cartoonists in the past. My memory is that they required a few seconds to recall the topicality and the point of their cartoon. *Wildcat* is spontaneous, immediate. His is not a sabre slash, but a poniard thrust, smeared by wit and wisdom. He would be worth the cost if the rest of *Freedom* was blank – without any disparagement of that excellent journal.

J.T. Caldwell



Dear *Freedom*,

Here's a cheque for renewal of a joint subscription to *Freedom* and *The Raven* plus a bit over for whichever fund needs it most.

Freedom is like a breath of fresh air coming through the letterbox.

Zeb Korycinska



Donations

October 1999

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Total = £52.50

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The cartoonist Donald Room is perhaps best known as the political cartoonist of *Peace News* during its heyday in the 1960s. An anarchist since 1944, since January 1980 he has been contributing the *Wildcat* strip to the anarchist fortnightly *Freedom*. The cartoons are copied and translated from *Freedom* (and the *Wildcat* books) by various anarchist publications in other countries.

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Freedom Press

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
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anarchist quarterly

Number 40

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£3.00 each (post free worldwide)

FREEDOM PRESS
84b Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

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 —

26th November The Charity Organisation
Society and the secret origins of 'The Welfare
State' (speaker Peter Neville)

3rd December General discussion

10th December Discussion on the programme
for the year 2000.

17th December Christmas social

24th and 31st December no meetings

7th January General discussion

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 28th November

Derbyshire walk to Alport Heights. Meet at
Wirksworth Market Place at 11am. Walk
leader John.

Sunday 19th December

Woodthorpe, Beacon Hill, Windmill Hill: Meet
at the Crematorium car park at 10am. Walk
leader Mike.

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

**I understand that the Cambridge
Anarchist Group is no longer active.**

**If anybody in the area wishes to
make a connection, please contact me
(A. Stone) on Cambridge 328906.**

Tuesday 30th November

**RECLAIM
THE
RAILWAYS!**

**a rally with speakers and music
to oppose tube privatisation.**

**This is the main London event of
an international day of action to
coincide with the World Trade
Organisation meeting in Seattle
on 30th November.**

**It was initiated by Reclaim the Streets
and the Strike Support Group.**

**From 5pm to 7pm
at Euston Station**

for more info phone 0171-281 4621

**What on earth is
humanism?**



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