

FREEEDOM

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50p

Democracy 'true or false'

When philosophers first turned to politics, in ancient Greece 2,500 years ago, one of their main interests was the analysis of the various forms of the state. They reached a consensus that there were three main patterns of government, based on whether it was controlled by a single person, a minority of the citizens, or all the citizens.

There were several ways of naming this triple pattern. Monarchy (rule of one), Aristocracy (rule of the best), and Democracy (rule of the people) did so as favourably as possible. Tyranny (rule of a usurper), Oligarchy (rule of the few), and Ochlocracy (rule of the mob) did so as unfavourably as possible.

There were other variants. Despotism (rule of slaveholder) was a special kind of oligarchy in which rulers treated the ruled like slaves. Timocracy (rule of the honoured) was a special kind of aristocracy. Kleptocracy (rule of thieves) was a special kind of oligarchy. And Anarchy (rule of no one) was of course the rejection of all government.

It has to be remembered all the time that none of these systems could be taken seriously according to our assumptions, because none of them took any account of women or of slaves.

In theory this sort of classification was considered to be rather mechanistic, but it was found to be a helpful entrance into political theory for students and lay people. In practice it survived not so much as a valid system, but rather as the source of some useful terms in political debate. A bad king could be described as a tyrant even if he hadn't seized rather than inherited his position. And an opponent of any regime could be described as a Democrat even if were an

Aristocrat and a Anarchist even if he were a strong Democrat.

Democracy eventually became popular, first in the West and then over most of the world, mainly because of the examples of the American War of Independence and the first French Revolution in the later eighteenth century. In both cases, as it happened, the imposition of Democracy led to the shift to Oligarchy in the former and to Anarchy and Despotism in the latter, just as forecast by Plato. The same phenomenon routinely recurred in later revolutions (Mexico, Russia, China, Cuba). However it came or stayed, whoever it was described by, however it succeeded or failed, it was seldom true but usually false.

As this pattern settled down, the old analysis was increasingly misused. The misuse of Anarchy is the best known example to Anarchists, but the misuse of Democracy is much more common. Democracy was used as a term of abuse even in progressive Western societies as

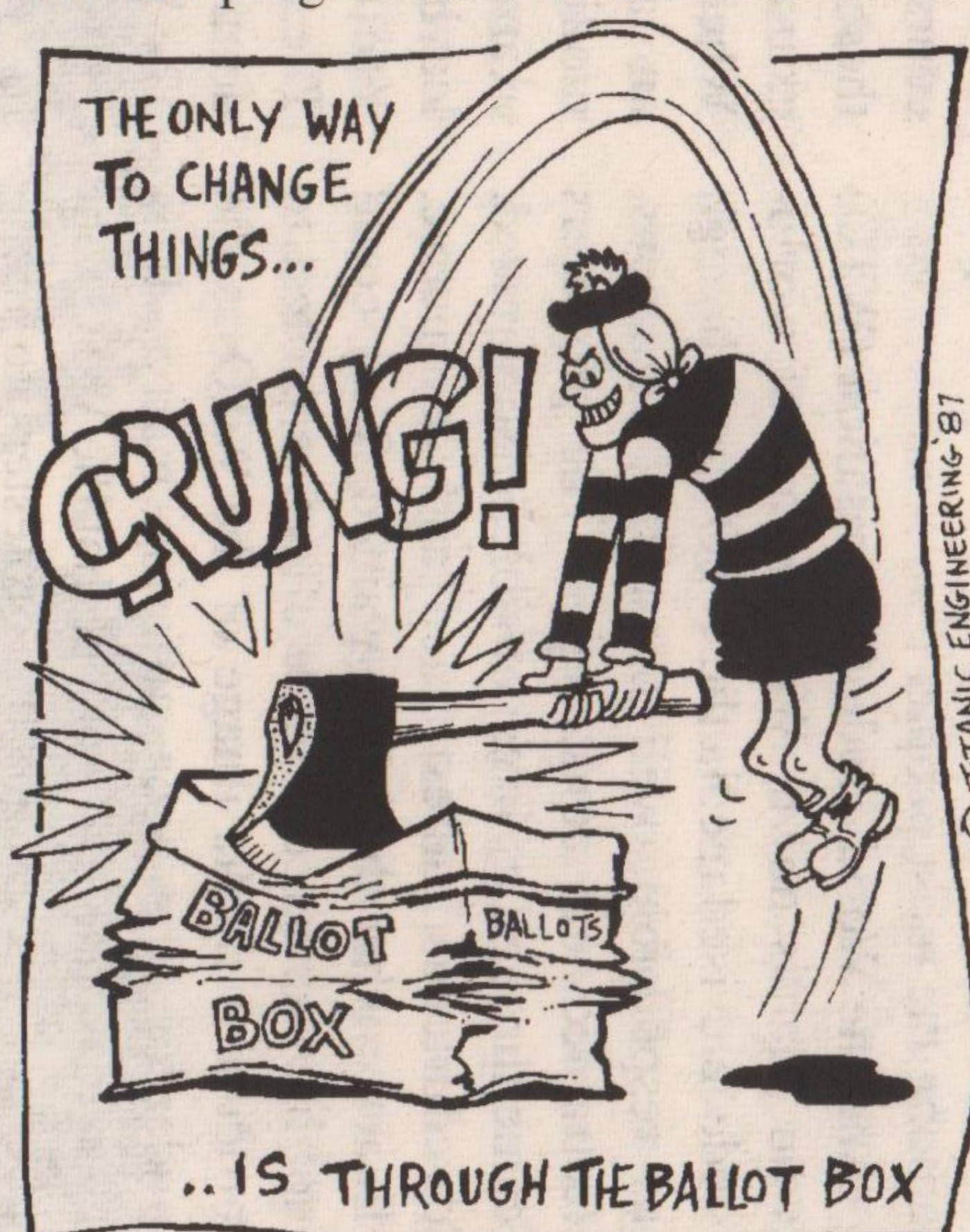
late as the nineteenth century, when it was replaced by Anarchy.

After that it became a cant term, gathering more and more meanings as it went. Nowadays it can be applied to the way a business is run, the way elections are run, the way meetings are run, the way bishops are appointed, the way a regime depends on elections or military government, the way right-wing parties claim to be democratic because they still take part in some elections, the way people enjoy freedom of expression.

In each case Democracy is a hurrah world, inducing feelings of approval. It is an especially powerful tool, so that was particularly helpful in persuading outsiders that the Communist regime in Russia was acceptable because it preserved at least the forms of Democracy.

One problem is that Democracy is impossible in large societies. It was intended for small societies, in which everyone knew everyone else, and everyone could take part in everything, in which everyone was a citizen and no one was a politician. A utopia, perhaps. But what it has become is a substitute for itself, based not on self-government in small areas but on representative government in large areas, not on direct elections but on representative elections, dominated by parties and cliques, by ambition and greed, weakened by scandal and corruption, lies and misrepresentation.

So what is the conclusion? Winston Churchill once said about Democracy: "It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time". Think on.



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The Freedom Party of Austria's programme ...

'A Mongrel of Lies'

The entrance of Jörg Haider's Freedom Party into a coalition partnership with the Conservatives, to form the new Austrian government, has thrown the European social democratic 'Third Way' project into chaos. European Union heads have refused to recognise the coalition government and EU meetings where Freedom Party delegates seek to participate have met with walk-outs from other EU delegates. Jörg Haider, meanwhile, has joked about the chickens panicking before the fox enters the pen, and compared himself to Tony Blair.

Regardless of Haider's own occasional attempts to pass himself off as a liberal, it is clear that the Freedom Party is, unmistakably, a fascist party, and that Haider aspires to put himself at the head of the resurgent European far right. Haider is defiantly committed to the pre-war National Socialist goal of a 'greater Germany' and the Freedom Party has incontrovertible links with that strand of reactionary German nationalism which has existed within Austro-German social thought since the late nineteenth century. The Freedom Party is the rehabilitated offspring of the post war Organisation of Independents (VDU) founded by former National Socialist Party members in 1949. The first chairman of the Freedom Party, Anton Reinthaller, was a former high-ranking member of the NSDAP. The Freedom Party's programme calls for the establishment of a 'Third Republic' with a neo-liberal conception of the role of the market as its basis. The Freedom Party programme declares that "egalitarianism is the enemy of freedom ... Liberty and equality are not only incompatible, but contradict one another ... As a general rule, the consequence of freedom can never be equality".

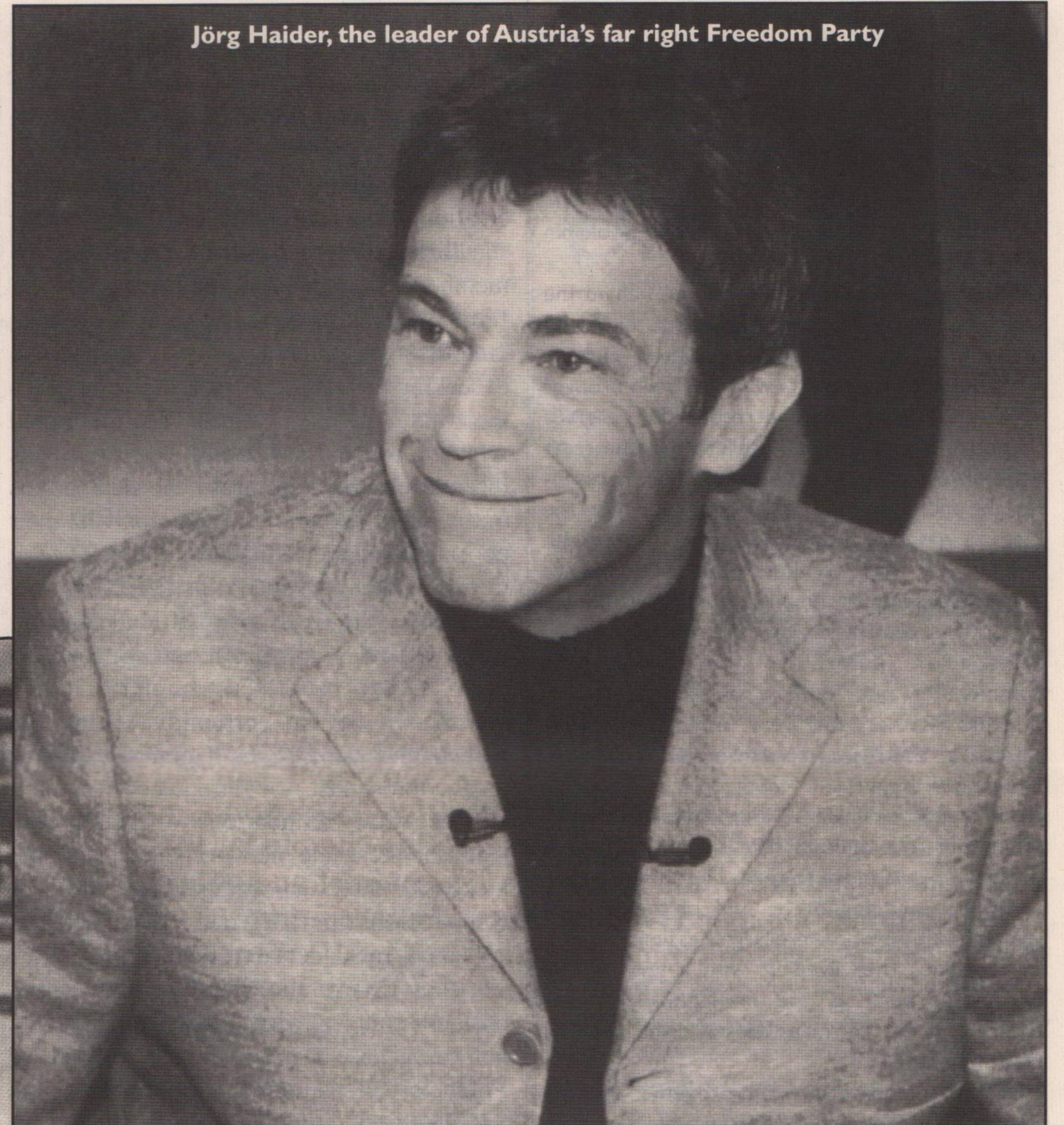
So why has an explicitly anti-egalitarian party become the voice of radical opposition for a growing percentage of working class Austrians? The answer to this makes a mockery of the strategies of opposition of the left, both in Austria and in Britain; for the strategies advanced proffer cause as cure and seek the rehabilitation of the very forces of

decay which have given succour to the anti-democratic ambitions of the Freedom Party. Most working class Austrians have seen through the post-war consensus and see the Freedom Party, regardless of its baggage, as an irritant to a rotten *status quo*.

Since the end of the Second World War, Austria has been ruled over by various forms of coalition engineered by the Social Democrats (formerly the Socialists) and the christian democratic Peoples Party. All important posts, from banking to the nationalised industries to academia, have been shared out between the two parties, leading to the creation of a Western European nomenklatura, and a general cynicism about the nature of party politics on behalf of the man in the street rightly equivalent to that found in the Stalinist states. Haider has



commented in relation to this that "for forty years, Austrians were very strongly politically repressed by the omnipotence of the two governing parties. Austrians don't want this closed society any more. They look to someone like me who represents a movement, who is a very proper Austrian, who has no scandals, who is independent, who is incorruptible, and who has done much for this country". Haider's claims for his own integrity might not add up to much, but his analysis of the basis for his support is



realistic. It is significant, moreover, that support for the Freedom Party in major cities such as Vienna, formerly bastions of entrenched social democratic voting, has been against, precisely, the Social Democrats.

In order to meet the Maastricht budget criteria for EU membership, the 'socialist' chancellor Franz Vranitsky, and his finance ministry successor Viktor Klima, pushed through a wave of austerity policies that left working-class Austrians with lower wages, less job security and more of them than ever before below the poverty line. Under Vranitsky, EU membership was delivered through the denationalisation of industry. Under Klima, social spending was slashed and the financial sector denationalisation commenced. Working class voters in such symbols of social democratic

ambition as Vienna's Karl Marx Hof housing project were left to watch the promises of state socialism literally rot around them in order for the Austrian bourgeoisie to feast at the EU trough. Ironic then, that Haider's opponents on the left see the EU as the best defence against the fascists' rise.

Examining the strategies put forward by the various strands of Austrian Trotskyism, what stands out most is their wilful blindness to reality. Faced with defections of working class voters from the social democratic status quo to the far right, they concede that "workers want a radical answer to the real problems Haider highlights" and then contend as a solution that "the Socialist Party should govern alone with mass workers mobilisations to defend and extend the welfare state and nationalised industries" (*Workers Power / Workers Standpoint*, February 2000). That the Socialist Party's dismantling of social welfare has caused the defection to the right appears to trouble them not at all. Nor is it the case that the Socialist Party can be portrayed as some rough approximation of a "dented shield" against fascism. The Socialist Party has, historically, been happy to exploit the potential of the Freedom Party to take votes from the conservatives, as a means of ensuring social democratic hegemony in Austria. In 1949 the Socialist Party secretly directed practical help (paper for election leaflets, etc.) to the

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Notes in the Margin

Anarchists and Jews: story of an encounter
An International Study Conference in Venice on 5th to 7th May

The large number of Jewish anarchists at the end of the last century and the first half of this one (some of them of considerable intellectual standing and/or prominent in the anarchist movement) is of historical interest to both those interested in anarchism and in Judaism/Jewish history. Until now there have been no systematic and thorough studies of this convergence of two apparently distinct traditions. This convergence was linked to a particular historical period and a relatively precise social context. It first appeared in the Pale, that immense area of eastern Europe, the cradle of Yiddish culture, where Jews were forced to live under Tsarist laws.

Then came the ever stronger attraction between the Jewish tradition and the libertarian utopian one, which became clear among Yiddish emigrants in England, Argentina and the USA (including Emma Goldman in the first generation, Paul Goodman, Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin in the second).

In these countries the driving force behind the emerging Jewish workers movement, made up primarily of immigrants from eastern Europe, were the young anarchists who had been brought up in the fear of God and respect for religious tradition, only to be later caught up in the great wave of revolutionary utopianism. They represented the radicalism of a proletariat for whom the Messiah was one of the spokesmen of libertarian ideology. It was not just that centuries of community self-government had made the people of Israel receptive to the theories of mutual association, federalism and autonomous communities put forward by the libertarian thinkers. Rather the very ethics of Jewish spirituality and Messianic thinking (which Martin Buber saw as Judaism's most original legacy to modern radical thinking) with their eschatological aspirations to a radically different future made a number of Jews move towards libertarian ideas.

The same could not be said of the Jews of western culture who were largely assimilated into the societies they lived in, with a few notable exceptions such as the Frenchman Bernard Lazare and the Germans Gustav Landauer and Erich Muhsam.

Judaism and anarchism came together again in Palestine and later in the Kibbutzim of Israel, both through the direct involvement of anarchists and even more strongly through the influence of the libertarian communist traditions on the guiding principles and organisational structures of the Kibbutz. One kibbutz scholar recently wrote that, whatever their founders may have thought and their current members may think, the Kibbutzim are the ideological heirs of the libertarian tradition: of Kropotkin rather than Marx and anarchism rather than marxism.

The international meeting on this subject, to be held in Venice on May 2000, is organised by the Centro Studi Libertari/Archivio 'Giuseppe Pinelli' of Milan, in collaboration with the Centre International de Recherches sur l'Anarchisme (CIRA) of Lausanne.

The three day meeting includes a Study Conference that will take place at the Auditorium located in Campo Santa Margherita on Friday 5th and Saturday 6th May and various events, including theatrical and musical performances, debates and original documentary films, that will take place at night and all day Sunday 7th May in the Venice Faculty of Architecture.

The Study Conference, sponsored by the Peace Foundation of the Venice City Council and the History Department of the University of Venice, will have participants from Europe and beyond, with simultaneous translations into Italian, English and French.

A more detailed program of the meeting will be available by the end of March 2000.

centro studi libertari
via Rovetta 27, 20127 Milano
tel. e fax 02 28 46 923
e-mail: csleleuthera@tin.it
<http://www.club.it/biblo/archivio.pinelli>

(continued from page 1)

Freedom Party's forerunner, the Union of Independents, and in the immediate post-war period set itself the task of rehabilitating the Austrian far right, seeking to make it *salonfähig* (respectable). In 1959 the Freedom Party and the Socialist Party agreed on voting regulations that enabled the Freedom Party to make its first gains in Vienna. During general elections in 1962, a trade union leader, Franz Olah (also at the time parliamentary leader of the Socialist group), handed Freedom Party leader Friedrich Peter savings books worth one million Austrian schillings to meet the Freedom Party's campaign expenses. According to Peter (in *The Guardian*, 16th December 1995) the Socialist Party subsequently advanced a further seven million schillings from Socialist Party coffers, and met with the Freedom Party to discuss common ground towards a possible coalition government. The 'outrage' of the Socialist Party today sits ill with the fact that the Freedom Party is at least in part its own creation, and its purported loathing of Haider sits ill with its embrace of the former SS member Peter.

Equally, looking to the EU to provide some kind of 'moral alternative' is somewhat akin to seeking the values of the Enlightenment in the vaults of the Vatican. As the noted African journalist Gamal Nkrumah has recently observed: "In truth, the rich nations of the North have more in common with their poor counterparts of the developing world in the South than first meets the eye. North and South have strikingly parallel inadequacies; their political establishments are rotten to the core" (*Al-Ahram*, 27th January 2000). Whether it be the corruption of the EU bureaucracy itself, or the flagrant venality of its overlords, post-war Europe has been built on the same foundations of clandestine malaise, the same network of bribery and kickbacks that such paragons of virtue as Helmut Kohl (now revealed to have acted as a channel for undeclared funds/bribes to the Christian Democratic Union from 'invisible' business sources), Francois Mitterand (who helped channel over \$44 million to Kohl via France's Elf-Aquitaine corporation, and \$15.7 million to provide electoral support for the CDU) and Bettino Craxi (forced to live and die in exile in Tunisia to escape imprisonment on corruption charges in Italy) regularly denounced in the Soviet Union and the so-called Third World. Can we really believe that the Europe of Edith Cresson is a positive alternative to the Europe of Haider and Le Pen?

And there's the rub, as they say. The German sociologist Max Horkheimer once claimed that "whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism". The fascist revival is predicated on the disillusion of thousands of ordinary people with a rotten, corrupt, undemocratic status quo. Fascism appears as the radical alternative; in fact it is capital's last line of defence. In one sense, Haider's self-comparison with Tony Blair isn't as wide of the mark as it first appears. Both talk of radical change, but offer in practice a yet more voracious market capitalism as a 'Third Way' out of the swamp. Both are more than willing to use social stigmatisation and racism as means of fostering division within society-at-large, and both to the same ends. As the decadence of bourgeois democracy appears ever more transparent, the solution for capital is to deflect the increasingly critical gaze elsewhere – to blame not the system itself, but the 'underclass' or 'asylum seekers'. The best way to avoid a coherence of working class opinion against capital is by fostering division within that class itself,

through allusions to "thuggery, noise, nuisance, anti-social behaviour" (David Blunkett), "an underclass of people cut off from society's mainstream without any sense of shared purpose" (Blair); so that rather than the mass of people seeing themselves as poor and disenfranchised against the wealth and power of the rich, they come to see only their relative deprivation with regard to, and consequent division from, each other. Working or workless, native or foreign. The oldest trick in the book. The difference is only that the respectable proponents of division propagate their filth from within the system, while the likes of Haider do so from without, ready to pick up the gauntlet if/when the mainstream parties come to be too discredited to succeed in fooling most of the people even some of the time. Thus, fascism is, as Sergei Eisenstein once noted "a mongrel of lies" – it talks of revolution in

becomes politicised only from the right, while the left seeks to deny the social antagonism that engendered Haider's ascendancy in the first place. Resistance to reaction cannot be accomplished through a defence of bourgeois democracy but only by a challenge from the left, a revolutionary challenge to the system itself. A left shackled to the state through its tailing of social democracy is incapable of mounting such an attack. Against their equivocation, we should seek to develop the anti-fascism of Durruti as the only alternative. The Slovenian philosopher and activist Slavoj Zizek has commented that "it is only right wing populism which today displays the authentic political passion of accepting the struggle, of openly admitting that, precisely in so far as one claims to speak from a universal standpoint, one does not aim to please everybody, but is ready to introduce a



Picture by Clifford Harper

order to safeguard reaction. Its message to the disenfranchised working class is, as Mark Neocleous has so accurately observed, "why identify with an oppressed class when you can identify with the (racial) aristocracy? Racism is thus a substitute for the class struggle, the racial other being the new enemy for the newly unified peoples' community. By subsuming class under a racial form the question of class struggle and the possibility of communism are obliterated" (Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*, Open University Press 1997).

The danger of the forms of opposition offered up against the Freedom Party thus far lies in its seeking the alternative to Haider in the status quo Haider's support seeks to rebel against. The end result is that society thus

division of 'us' versus 'them' ... We are thus more and more deeply locked into a claustrophobic space within which we can only oscillate between the non-event of the smooth running of the liberal-democratic capitalist global New World Order and fundamentalist Events (the rise of local proto-Fascisms, etc.) which temporarily disturb the calm surface of the capitalist ocean ... Today, more than ever, one has to insist that the only way open to an emergence of an Event is that of breaking the vicious cycle of globalisation-with-particularisation by (re) asserting the dimension of Universality against capitalist globalisation" (Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject*, Verso 1999).

Nick S.

The Unhappiest Days of Their Lives

The *Times Educational Supplement* recently declared that, "the introduction of the National Curriculum, testing, the OFSTED regime and the literacy and numeracy hours have given unprecedented power to the central state to control what goes on in the classroom" (28th January 2000, page 24). Not long ago the British education system was heralded as a model of devolved, child-centred excellence, now it has been recreated as a hideous, child-hating, state-controlled leviathan.

Back in 1947 the first post-war Education Minister, Ellen Wilkinson planned optimistically for the liberation of education: "The schools must have freedom to experiment, room to grow, variety for the sake of freshness, for the fun of it even. Laughter in the classroom, self-confidence growing every day, eager interest instead of bored

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conformity" (Ministry of Education, Pamphlet No. 9, 1947). Wilkinson's government cheerfully devolved responsibility for the running of schools to Local Education Authorities, who largely allowed schools to organise themselves. Secondary schools soon fell prey to the demands of examination boards but primary schools became increasingly adventurous, autonomous and progressive. Whilst exam timetables and syllabuses dominated the secondary sector, in many primary schools young children were encouraged to create their own kinds of learning. Child-centred, discovery methods became the norm in many primary classrooms across the country.

In 1967 the Plowden Report gave official sanction and encouragement to this widespread movement for the liberation of learning. Plowden promoted the role of the teacher as an adviser, helper and friend of the child: a supporter rather than a director. Children were considered naturally curious, creative and good and, "it cannot be too strongly stressed that education is concerned as much with the personal development of the child as with the teaching of subjects" (Plowden Report, HMSO, 1967, page 3).

Plowden also claimed that "the best preparation for being a happy and useful man or woman is to live fully as a child" (*ibid.*, page 188). Plowden valued children as living, feeling, developing human beings not just as intellects or acquirer of facts and passers of exams.

Of course all was not sweetness and light, many schools remained bastions of reaction but in the 1960s, '70s and early '80s many young children were able to experience an unprecedented taste of freedom and excitement as they learned and grew. Most primary schools abolished uniforms, kids sat in friendship groups instead of rows, they were encouraged to chat and work co-operatively, corporal punishment was abolished, testing and competition declined, and children gained increasing control over the content, method and evaluation of their own learning. When, in 1972, the Schools Council asked primary school teachers to

identify their main aims in education from a list of 72 suggestions they rated three aims above the rest:

- Children should be happy, cheerful and well balanced;
- They should enjoy school work and find satisfaction in their achievements;
- Individuals should be encouraged to develop in their own ways.

It may not have been anarchy but for many children it felt like freedom. British primary schools were viewed, from abroad, as a beacon of liberated learning. European educationalists arrived in droves to study how children were organising their own learning, whilst 'progressive education' was introduced to America by a widely read series of magazine articles entitled, 'The Primary School Revolution in Britain'.

Predictably the counter-revolution was not far behind. Some teachers resented any challenge to their classroom authority, some parents thought if their kids didn't hate school it couldn't be doing them any good and most employers preferred schools to turn out skilled robots rather than artists or philosophers. A wave of adverse criticism erupted when a distinguished collection of authoritarian commentators published a series of unofficial 'Black Papers' claiming that:

- "Children are not naturally good. They need firm, tactful discipline from parents and teachers with clear standards. Too much freedom for children breeds selfishness, vandalism and personal unhappiness" (*Black Paper*, 1975, edited by Boyson & Cox, page 1).
- "If the non-competitive ethos of progressive education is allowed to dominate our schools, we shall produce a generation unable to maintain our standards of living when opposed by fierce rivalry from overseas competitors" (*ibid.*).

Instead of defending children's freedom Prime Minister James Callaghan threw in his

lot with the reactionaries. In a notorious speech delivered at Ruskin College in 1976, Callaghan commended his vision of a thoroughly authoritarian education system. He questioned "the methods and aims of informal instruction" but was enthusiastic about "The strong case for ... the core-curriculum of basic knowledge ... a national standard of performance ... the role of the inspectorate in relation to national standards and their maintenance ... and the need to improve relations between industry and education". Callaghan's speech set out what were destined to become the main planks of the Thatcher government's devastating, Education Reform Act, 1988.

The 1988 Act created a sort of martial law throughout the entire school system. The rich diversity of educational practice that schools had developed since the war was swept away at a stroke. The Minister of Education now held all the cards and could direct all aspects of school policy and practice from Westminster. The role of Local Education Authorities was minimised and the role of children completely denied. Where any glimmerings of freedom survived the immediate effects of the Act they were later hunted down and eradicated through the energetic spying and bullying tactics of OFSTED.

As the *Times Educational Supplement* recognises (above) the central state now decrees precisely what is to be taught in schools. The state has decreed that every primary child must follow a prescribed literacy hour and a prescribed numeracy hour every day, it has provided teachers with precise, minute-by-minute instructions on how to teach these lessons. The central state has decided that Science, Maths and English are by far the most important 'core' subjects and accordingly at the ages of 7, 11 and 14 children have to set a battery of written, national examinations in each of those subjects. The results for every single school are entered into a league table, which is published, annually, in national and local

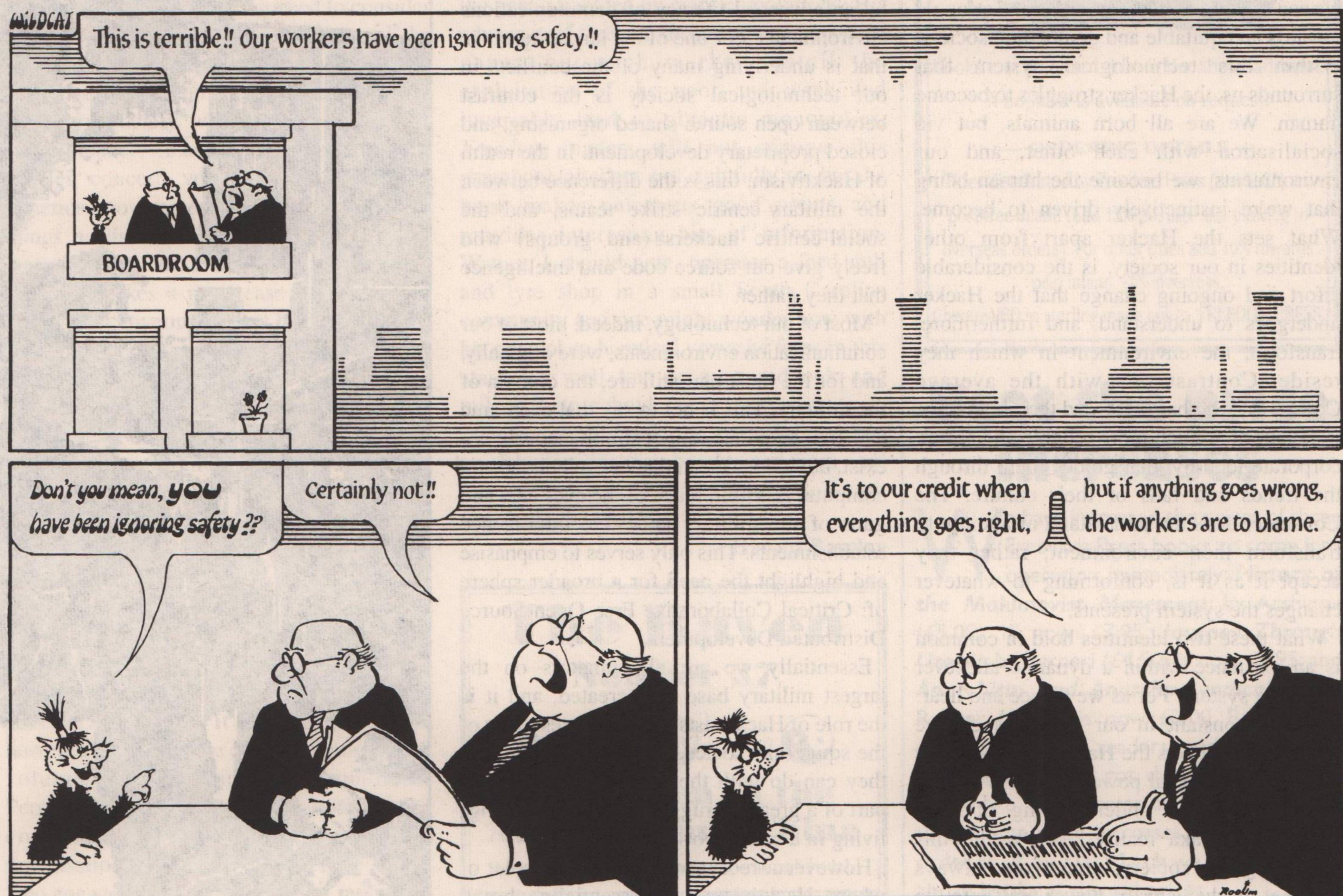
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newspapers. As if this didn't create enough competition and stress the results are picked-over by school governors, OFSTED inspectors and parents. It seems that the state even intends to tie teachers' pay to the exam results of their pupils. Autonomy, creativity, fun and love could hardly survive in such a system. Where Ellen Wilkinson once sought "laughter in the classroom" and Plowden wished for children to be given the opportunity to "create and to love, to learn to face adversity, to behave responsibly, in a word, to be human beings" (*Ibid.*, page 188) the state now asserts that, "a society where enterprise and competition must be increasingly valued ... must be a main determinant of what schools teach" (*Times Educational Supplement*, 1988, page 1).

Anarchists are right to be sceptical about state institutions but we shouldn't throw out the baby with the bath water. The German anarchist, and sometime education minister, Gustav Landauer, argued that whenever we create free, non-exploitative relationships we create a fragment of anarchy. For several years young children in many of our primary schools had the opportunity to catch a glimpse of freedom, to feel how things could be different. We should recognise and value those times, work for their return, defend the few free-schools that survive and above all keep alive in our heads and our hearts the feeling of freedom.

Dora Russell, who co-founded Beacon Hill free school in 1927 beautifully captured that all too rare spirit of libertarian schooling: "...the aim of teaching should be not to possess or project ourselves upon the younger generation, nor to teach dogma, but rather to seek to set them free so that they may — in very truth — create themselves and their opinions and, in time to come, shape their own future and that of the world which will belong no longer to us, but to them".

Christopher Draper



Thoughts on Hacktivism: post Y2K

It would appear that the most important, if not essential aspect of surviving in this 'post-Y2K' society has become the task of 'Understanding Reality'. That is to say, our society has reached such a high level of media saturation, that reality is not so much an objective experience, but more a subjective construct facilitated by a sprawling economy that combines tele-

communications, computers, marketing, and entertainment, to generate a facility that more and more permits the customisation of reality, when and where possible. Power in this system manifests as the ability to control, contain, maintain, and escape one's constructed reality. As with most political systems, power is centralised and continuously accumulated into the hands of the few, while the appearance of distributed wealth is enabled by the reality of distributed computing and communications. For every remote control there is the illusion of change, even when we all know that everything is the same, regardless of the channel.

For most people, however, reality bites, and it bites hard. The values that the society presents as the bonds of its existence, include accumulative and possessive individualism, often at the expense of the society (and social fabric) itself. We are told that happiness is in success, that success is in power, and that power comes with money, so we need to get mo' money and mo' money, by any means necessary.

'Hacking Reality' is the means by which we can reclaim our communities and struggle towards an equitable and democratic society. Within this technological system that surrounds us, the Hacker struggles to become human. We are all born animals, but via socialisation with each other, and our environments, we become the human being that we're instinctively driven to become. What sets the Hacker apart from other identities in our society, is the considerable effort and ongoing change that the Hacker undergoes to understand, and furthermore, transform, the environment in which they reside. Contrast this with the average Consumer, who has discarded their humanity, in favour of a much more reliable and secure corporate identity, that guides them through the trends and fads of their culture. The Consumer does not understand or attempt to transform their environment; rather they accept it as it is, conforming to whatever changes the system presents.

What these two identities hold in common is an existence within a dynamic and ever changing system. For as we all see and hear: the only constant in our world, is change itself. Yet what sets the Hacker apart, is their possession of social power, which is largely derived from an understanding of their environment (aka reality). For within this technological society, there are always inherent mechanisms of power built into the

logic and operations of its systems. Colloquially this is referred to as 'God Status', and most frequently manifests as a systems' root account. While these powers generally exist (and were intended) for administrative purposes (and control) they can also have countless secondary and tertiary applications, especially when it comes to unintended applications or possessions of said power.

As a culture, and as a set of social networks, Hackers have been uniquely successful in both understanding the presence and role of this power (within the system) as well as being able to both subvert and broaden the access to said positions and mechanisms of power. Out of this particular ability, if not potential social role, has emerged the concept of Hacktivism, which while widely used (by the mass media) really does not have a consensual definition that is accepted by all actors in the culture. For the purpose of this discussion however, let us define Hacktivism as: Social Activism augmented by an advanced literacy of communications environments. For one of the largest tensions that is underlying many of the conflicts in our technological society is the contrast between open source shared organising, and closed proprietary development. In the realm of Hacktivism, this is the difference between the military-centric strike teams, and the social-centric hackers (and groups) who freely give out source code and intelligence that they gather.

Most of our technology, indeed, most of our communication environments, were originally, and for the most part still are, the domain of the military. This is not to say that economic and civil activities cannot simultaneously co-exist, but it does mean that any telephone and computer is within reach of the eyes ears and guns of the military and state intelligence establishments. This only serves to emphasise and highlight the need for a broader sphere of: Critical Collaborative Free Open Source Distributed Development.

Essentially we are all squatters on the largest military base ever created, and it is the role of Hacktivists to help the residents of the squat (aka society) understand what it is they can do with the facilities (Internet) as part of a greater struggle to be human beings living in a social world.

However a recent, and potent example, of where Hacktivism was essentially absent,

when and where it was desperately needed, was the ideological exercise that was presented to the public as the Y2K Bug. At no time did a coherent transcendence of Y2K emerge, that simultaneously addressed both the dependence on technology that our society possesses, as well as the mythology (and ideology) embedded in the Y2K spectacle, that had nothing to do with technology, nor even the messianism and eschatology that was adjacent to Y2K. For Y2K served two primary purposes, that are in and of themselves, central to the existence and prosperity of our current political economic system. The first was to reinforce the primacy of the focused self-interest. The second was the further normalisation of an insular and pragmatic culture.

Y2K as a spectacle, or in some respects, a social concern, was more about a 'Me, Myself, and I' rather than a 'We, Us, and I and I'. What

arose was more of a 'Bunker Mentality' rather than a sense of shared conditions. The emphasis was on stocking up on personal supplies, driven by a fear that stems from a combined sense that nobody really knows what could (or would) happen. Even those administrators and experts who in the final days assured all that nothing would go wrong, still holed up in bunkers and control rooms of their own, to safely monitor what they perceived as potential (if not falsely promised) social chaos.

Indeed it is the social construct of the Bunker that serves to contain (and protect) the culture of the possessive individual. Surrounded by globalisation in all its myriad of forms, the Y2K spectacle allowed the industrialised world to cocoon themselves in a social reality that was insulated from the misery and poverty of the rest of the world. While a minority of people were concerned they may lose their running water, electricity, or telephones for a day or two (because of the Y2K bug), most of the people in the world had never even made a telephone call, let alone have access to clean running water, or affordable housing. What Y2K has illustrated is just how exclusive the systems that we once thought of as universal really are. The so called industrialised world is desperately trying to insulate itself from the social reality of the rest of the world, and one only has to look at the rising poverty and homelessness in what was once arrogantly referred to as the first world, to see that in fact, times are hard for people all over.

Y2K as ideological exercise was really an initiation of a select few into what little remains of the prospering and developing future. The beauty (sarcasm) of its execution is the way in which it inculcates its inhabitants to thinking that everyone is like them, and everything is as good as it is where they are. Imagine a sphere, with mirrors (as monitors) on the inside, in which the Consumer is contained, and encapsulated with the constant site of their own ever-changing image. What appears as infinity, is really an inverted self-reflection, that displays everything as an image of one's self. This sphere used to be described as 'Plato's Cave', but now it might be appropriate to call it 'Einstein's Egg',

(continued on page 7)



Brief Bookshop Bites

News from Angel Alley on new books, special offers, price increases and out-of-stock publications

Cambridge University Press reports that its current edition of **Thomas Paine: Political Writings** is out of print and that a new edition should be ready by the end of the month, at £7.95.

Issue no. 4 of **Animal** magazine is out (unpaginated, 95p) and is divided into two sections: football and non-football, apparently in response to a perceived demand for a libertarian magazine covering issues of interest to football supporters. For my money the most interesting piece is an interview with a 62-year-old Israeli anarchist.

21st Century Class War is a 21-page illustrated pamphlet published by the Class War Federation (mark two). In it they explain the background and politics of Class War, so it's a bit like the more theoretical publication that the old Class War Federation used to produce, *The Heavy Stuff*. Hey: New Labour, New Class War Federation. £1.00.

Red Lion Press has issued a new edition of Larry Gambone's informative essay on Chilean anarchism. Called **The Libertarian Movement in Chile: mutualism and anarcho-syndicalism from 1840 to the present**,* it comprises 28 pages, including bibliography and footnotes, and is £1.65. An earlier version was published in *The Raven* (no. 37 on 'The Americas and China').

From the same stable, and the same author, we also now have in stock **Revolution and**

Reformism: the split between 'moderates' and 'revolutionaries' in French anarcho-syndicalism,* at £1.10 for 17 pages, again with bibliography and footnotes.

A new updated edition of Noam Chomsky's **The Fateful Triangle: the United States, Israel and the Palestinians** has just been issued by Pluto Press. With 578 pages, including masses of footnotes and an index, the £14.99 price tag is still quite reasonable by current prices. It remains an indispensable work of reference for anyone wanting to understand America's relationship with its favourite client state, and Middle East politics. Edward Said contributes to the foreword.

Attentive readers of *Freedom* and regular visitors to the shop will be aware of the many bargain price books we stock, and here are a couple more: **Evolution and Revolution: an introduction to the life and thought of Peter Kropotkin*** by Graham Purchase, published by Jura Media, normal price £6.95, yours for only £3.50. A useful, if flawed, perspective on 'the anarchist formerly known as Prince' as someone recently described him. 173 pages, with notes and bibliography. And **Redemption and Utopia: Jewish libertarian thought in central Europe - a study in elective affinity*** by Michael Löwy. This is a 276-page hardback with bibliography, index and notes. The fact that the French anarchist weekly *Le Monde Libertaire* has

already published lengthy extracts both from the chapter on Franz Kafka suggests that there is some very worthwhile material here, and we are promised a review for *Freedom* in a forthcoming issue. Athlone Press published this title at the alarming price of £40, but we can offer it to you, dear comrades, at the ridiculous price of £3.99. This, for those of you who are still recovering from the millennium celebrations or who are just useless at maths, is a reduction of 90% - and it doesn't get much better than that.

The following publications have gone up in price, with immediate effect: **Homage to Catalonia** (Penguin Books) up by £1 to £7.99; **Necessary Illusions: thought control in democratic societies** (Pluto Press) up by £1 to £14.99; and **Levellers in the English Revolution*** (Spokesman Books), the classic by H.N. Brailsford, which has not had a price increase since the second edition was published in 1983, has finally had to be reprinted, with the inevitably large increase in price from £9.95 to £18.00. Given that it is even longer (715 pages) than Chomsky's *Fateful Triangle*, it is actually not an unreasonable price for a book. In addition we are keeping it post-free for UK mail order customers, saving you a good £3 in postage and packing.

Please note that in the absence of official notification we sometimes have to assume

that the prolonged non-appearance of a periodical means that it is no longer being published, and this we believe is the case with two magazines on our booklist, **Here and Now** and **Green Line**. The magazine **Squall** did announce their cessation of publication, and floated the idea that they might instead bring out the occasional pamphlet, but so far we have not seen any, and we suspect that the people concerned have become involved with other things.

David Petegorsky's newly republished book on Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers, **Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War**, mentioned lately in these columns and on sale here at £7.99, is being sold at Waterstones at £20! Just thought you might like to know.

Mail order customers wishing to order reduced price books from us, please remember that any postage and packing payable must be calculated on the original price of the book. Titles with an asterisk mean that they are post-free in the UK.

KM

I Must Speak Out

I Must Speak Out: the best of the Voluntaryist 1982-1999 selected and edited by Carl Watner Fox & Wilkes, San Francisco, 1999

Since 1982 Carl Watner has published *The Voluntaryist*, probably "the only journal in the world that consistently upholds individualist anarchism (by which we mean self-government), rejection of

electoral politics, and the advocacy of non-violent means to achieve social change. This after all is what we signify when we use the term 'voluntaryist'." He has been influenced among others by Lysander Spooner and Murray Rothbard and so we might add to the above that he is an advocate of the so-called free market economy.

I Must Speak Out is a collection of "the best of the *Voluntaryist* 1982-1999". All of the essays are short (rarely more than ten pages) and most have been written by Watner. The initial essays seek to expand on a definition of voluntaryism and then proceed to consider such issues as the ethics of voting and the case against democracy. There is an extensive section on methods to achieve a voluntary society with an emphasis upon non-violence - that is, pacifism. A dozen articles concern voluntaryism versus the American government in which among other things he lists the major crimes of the US government 1776-1993.

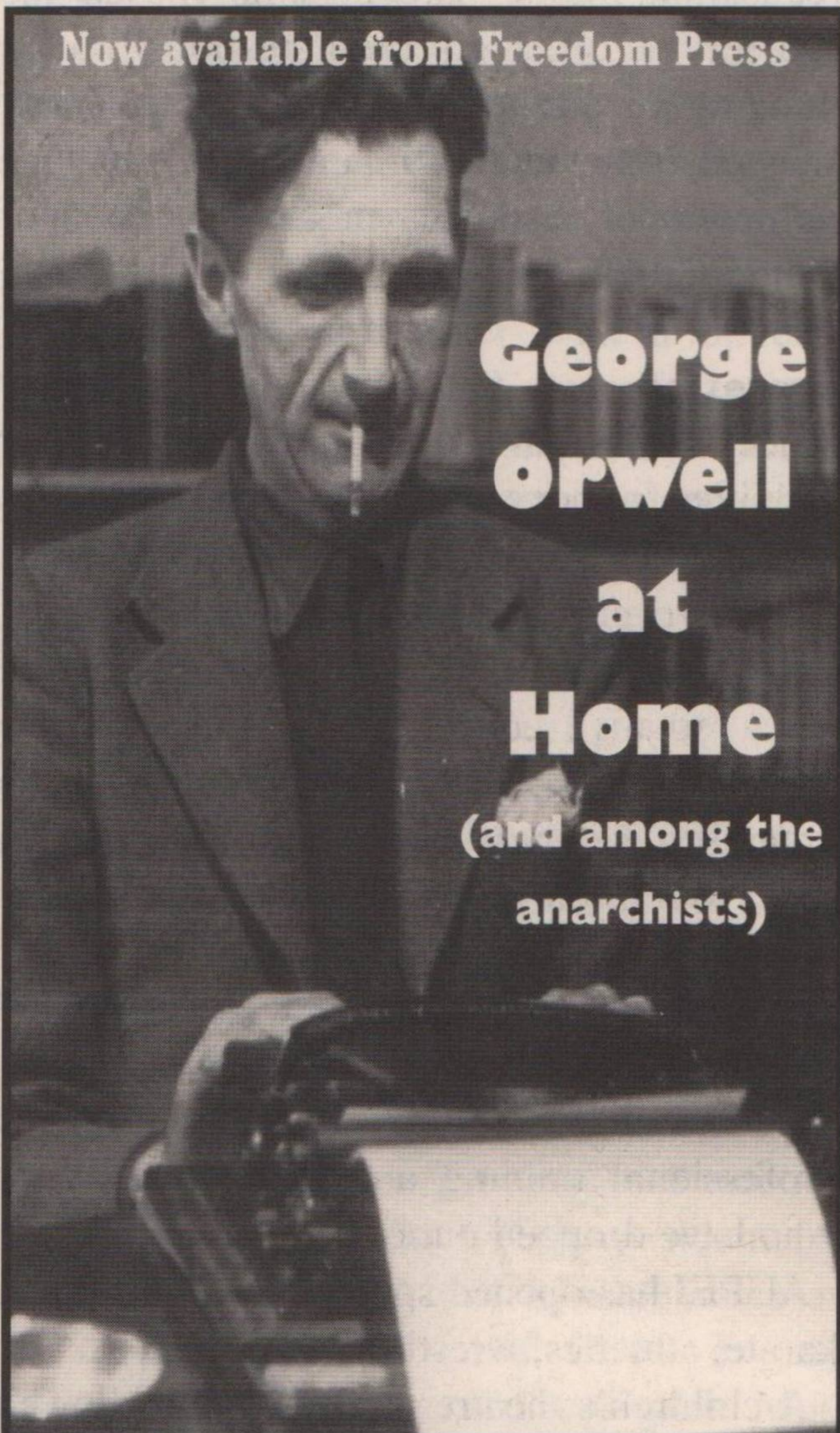
Watner makes a good case against voting and against government, but he places a great deal of stress on the evil of government invasion of property rights. A final group of articles covering about a third of the book's 489 pages presents examples of efforts in voluntary spontaneous organisation to achieve such things as standard time, public libraries, industrial standards, gold coinage and proper weights and measures. One selection on philanthropy seems to be suggesting that charity is an appropriate way to deal with poverty. Nevertheless, I believe this part of the book called 'Voluntaryism in History' is the most interesting of all its several segments. It should be noted, however, that no where does he mention such voluntary organisations as Proudhon's Peoples' Bank, credit unions, labour unions, cooperative societies, or communal organisations (he speaks highly of the Amish who engage in mostly agricultural individual

enterprise, but is silent on the closely related but communal Hutterites).

The entire thrust of the book is against the power of the state/government. No mention is made of the enormous power and wealth of the banks and other corporations, of the exploitation of workers, nor of the authoritarianism of many religious organisations. On the domination of males in society he is silent. Thus, he fails to appreciate the various facets of power. He fails to appreciate the fact that the power wielded by the state is hardly different from the power wielded by giant corporations. His advocacy of free markets may sound good on paper, but such markets entail the exploitation of the poor and weak and invariably lead to gigantic monopolies. *Freedom* readers will not approve this anarcho-capitalism and rightfully so, but the book makes numerous good points and provides interesting bits of information. Watner, I should note, operates a feed mill and tyre shop in a small South Carolina community and one might wonder how with his outspoken heretical views he fares in this state, so well known as a redneck and militarist stronghold.

Copies of the book and more information on voluntaryism may be obtained from Carl by writing Box 1275, Gramling, South Carolina, 29348, USA.

Harold Barclay

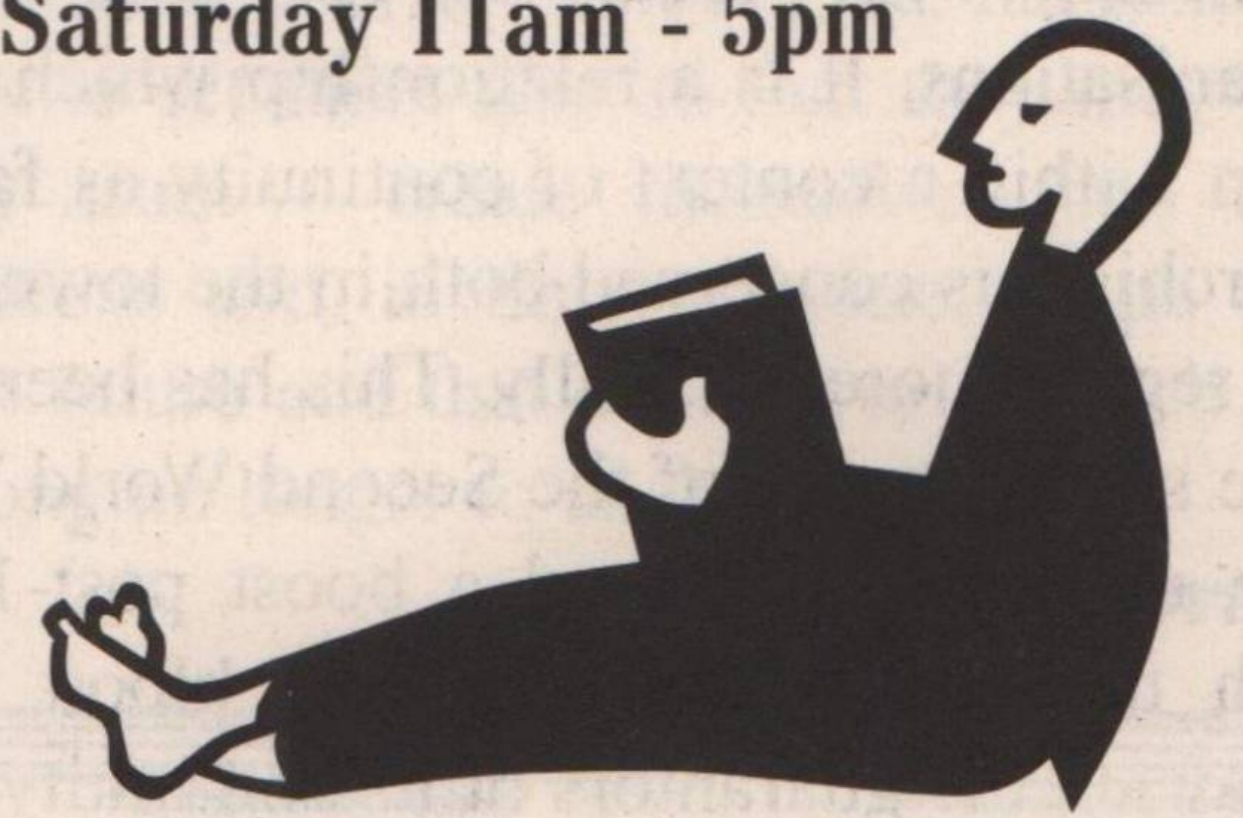


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We have increased the prices of three Freedom Press books, to come into operation immediately: **History of the Makhnovist Movement** by Arshinov (£5.00) is now £7.95; **Journey Through Utopia** by Berneri (£4.50) is now £5.95; and **Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism** by Rocker (£1.25) is now £2.00. But we are offering *Freedom* readers and subscribers who have not yet got these titles, or who would like extra copies, an exclusive chance to beat the price increases. If you get your order to us by 31st March we will supply the above books at the old prices.

The Raven Number 37

Anarchism in the Americas and China
96 pages £3 post free worldwide

An experiment in popular education in Senegal

Senegal, situated on the West coast of the African continent, has a population of some 8,000,000 nearly half of whom are under the age of twenty. With an annual growth rate of 2.1% of GDP and a population increase of 2.8% per annum, the country is one of a group of states which suffer from the weakest of developmental achievements. The agricultural sector which accounts for 20% of GDP and 60% of employment has seen production fall by 0.8% per annum from 1967 to 1997 which is to say a fall of 40% in thirty years.

The privatisation of state owned companies (water, electricity, telephone, transport, etc.) has brought with it a loss of some 20% to 30% of all jobs and this employment crisis has given rise in turn to a rise in the unemployment figures.

Access to basic services, notably education and training, is becoming more and more problematic for children and young people because of high costs for schooling and low incomes of the parents.

School is characterised by an unprecedented crisis due to its selectivity and the inadequacy of work training. The Senegalese education

system is still unable to address the needs and preoccupations of the people. Every year the failure rates for national examinations hover around the 80% mark. Many of those with university degrees can't find work. Apprenticeships and professional training are too academic and place no emphasis on skilled craftsmanship, which offers real training possibilities.

The AUPEJ programme

The programme starts from the basic principle that people do not just learn in school and that the area we live in brings together a totality of educational situations which have to be assessed within a perspective of promoting apprenticeships in order to develop knowledge and know how. The programme focuses on local lore and the totality of resources which are available to help build the idea of popular education. The

development of an educational programme is the work of all people in the area. Parents, teachers, children, young people – all are an integral part of the education and training programme.

The latter includes cultural, social and economic perspectives. There are classes where games are played, singing classes, theatre workshops, workshops for craftwork and artistic expression. Excursions, discovery trips, workplace visits are all part of an attempt to introduce children and young people into their natural environment and to learn how to manage it.

This programme, the initiative of a group of educators and parents affected by the incoherence of the Senegalese education system, is located in Tivouane – a town some 90 kms from Dakar. It is a semi-rural, semi-urban town. Tivouane brings together several

villages. Its population is about 45,000. The level of schooling is low – only 30% of the children attend school. In Tivouane nearly three hundred children fail their school exams each year. Because of this they are thrown out of school onto the streets and thus are without even the remotest chance of participating in the almost non-existent professional training programmes.

Beneficiaries: This programme was set up for children and young boys and girls aged from 3 to 22. Each year the holiday programmes bring together five hundred children, that is to say in total 2,500 from 1993 to 1998. The educational creche welcomes children from 3 to 6 years of age (250 children). The training programme for girls aged 12 to 22 brings together three hundred girls. The library has five hundred subscribers.

Methodology

The AUPEJ implements an active teaching method by means of games, dance and sport. Theatre and story-telling are the means by which the objectives are delivered. The cooperative, for example, is a space for apprenticeship and where administration, wealth creation and negotiation is managed. It is a tool by means of which the children can participate in the decision-making process. The children's and young person's forum is a space for liberation and where the words of young people are seen to be of value.

Difficulties

Difficulties encountered have been of a material and financial nature. It is hard to find partners who are interested in financing programmes where the results are not immediately evident. Families are not accustomed to joining in with a participatory dynamic. The majority of them have little in the way of resources. They have little experience of designing educational programmes and of participating in their realisation. Some parents simply used the project to off load their responsibilities thinking we are here to fill their place. They showed little interest in investing even the minimum of resources in the education of their children.

Successes

Since 1993, AUPEJ has organised holiday activities for boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 15: games, excursions, discoveries, sporting events and exchange workshops.

AUPEJ has opened a multi-purpose centre for alternative education in Tivouane. The parents of children from seven villages have organised savings and credit activities in order to reinforce a positive image of parenthood in the children.

AUPEJ has set up a newspaper called *Regards pluriels* run by local people.

AUPEJ has set up a programme of professional training aimed at young girls who have dropped out of school.

AUPEJ has opened sports classes: football, karate, athletics, wrestling, etc.

A children's theatre workshop has allowed its participants to develop artistic potential. The theatre is used as a teaching tool to give rise to effective social communication concerning all the questions which affect our social lives.

Moussa Diop

AUPEJ (Actions Utiles Pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse), Quartier Fogny, BP 76, Tivouane
(taken from *Le Monde Libertaire*, 13th October 1999)

Interview with a Sicilian anarchist

Pippo Gurrieri is an activist within the anarchist group in Raguse (Sicily) and is in particular a prominent member of a grassroots railway workers' union. He is also on the editorial board of the monthly *Sicilia Libertaria* which has a circulation of some 1,200. It is the oldest 'local' anarchist journal in Italy.

ML: How has your group managed to establish itself within the local community and what is your relationship with that community?

PG: Some groups have built up solid, deep roots within the community whereas others only have a more superficial existence. In Raguse, where I live, we have very good relations with local people and local organisations. It is a relationship which was born within a context of continuity as far as anarchism is concerned both in the town and the region more generally. This has been the case since the end of the Second World War. The movement received a boost post-1968 with the arrival of some new blood who today are the guarantors of its continuity. We are very active in public campaigns and we are a recognised presence even at the institutional level in so far as the local powers that be know of our existence and either tries to put the brakes on our activities or takes us into consideration and is forced to accept – grudgingly – the fact that we exist. All this means that we enjoy some political space within our locality which allows us to launch some initiatives such as the recent festival in Spezzano because we have access

to public buildings, etc. At the same time our premises in Raguse is very busy and not only frequented by anarchists but also more generally by those on the left who want to enter into debate with us and have access to our publications and other sources of information. This allows us to distribute a lot of information, not only anarchist stuff, but rather alternative in general.

ML: Can you tell us something about the anarchist presence in Sicily?

PG: Two years ago we set up the Sicilian Anarchist Federation (FAS) in order to bring together a certain fringe of the libertarian movement which, for some time, had not participated in activities on a regular basis. The aim was to reinvigorate the local anarchist presence by leaning on the more reliable local groups such as the group in Raguse, those in the Catania area and a few others. This federation has succeeded in reactivating the movement in Messina within the province of Enna and indeed in areas where up until that point there had been nothing for some considerable time.

We, the FAS, are now active in six out of nine provinces; we have succeeded in establishing a solid base in the region of Agrigento where we have friends who are very active in the organic and communal movements and who are well established in the local community and in Messina we have established 'social centres'. However, we still face difficulties establishing ourselves in cities like Palermo where there is only a slight rebirth. Also we don't have enough premises in the area since these only exist in Raguse and Messina. In Palermo the local shut down for economic reasons and those members of the FAS who are based in that area meet in private homes or at the university. Our movement has been growing these last two or three years and we are now capable of a respectable degree of mobilisation. Thus, during the crisis in Kosovo we were very active and enjoyed a higher profile than more traditional groups like Communist Reform, etc.

ML: We know, of course, that there is a Mafia tradition in Sicily; has this ever been a source of problems for you?

PG: Yes. This causes problems because it is precisely in those areas where we are at our

weakest that the Mafia are strong. This has prevented us from finding out just how far such and such a Mafia grouping is able to exert its influence. Moreover, as soon as we start to put our finger on a delicate subject there is an immediate response. In Raguse the Mafia is not very strong – simply a couple of families who oversee some networks of delinquents. It was these people who torched our premises in February 1998. This underlines the fact that when we are involved in sensitive local issues the response is that of the old-style Mafia that is to say provocative and terroristic. We are very present in some areas of struggle, such as the railways – I, myself, am a railway worker – through the grass roots unions and also we are active in environmental and health movements which bring together hundreds of people. When we get involved in activities like these, which tend to destabilise the status quo we are often threatened. This is so much the case that when our premises were torched there were at first several possible groups which could have been responsible – we have many enemies!

ML: We are also well aware that the Italian state is very repressive in particular right now and with regard to the anarchist movement. Have you had problems coming from that direction?

PG: There have always been problems in this area – very widespread and very discrete but for the last three or four years we have had no direct problems. I can't say why but prior to that period the authorities would try to put a spanner in the works whenever possible – any demonstration, any initiative, any fly-posting. It came to such a head that whenever new people joined the group older members would be persecuted for any banality simply to create a climate of intimidation.

Now the situation has calmed down considerably. We should perhaps bear in mind that Raguse is a town with a population of some 70,000 where we do not find the problems associated with 'marginalisation' in 'difficult areas' associated with the cities nor the type of heavy handed social control of the isolated individual in a small town. Maybe that is why we enjoy a privileged position with regard to policies of repression.

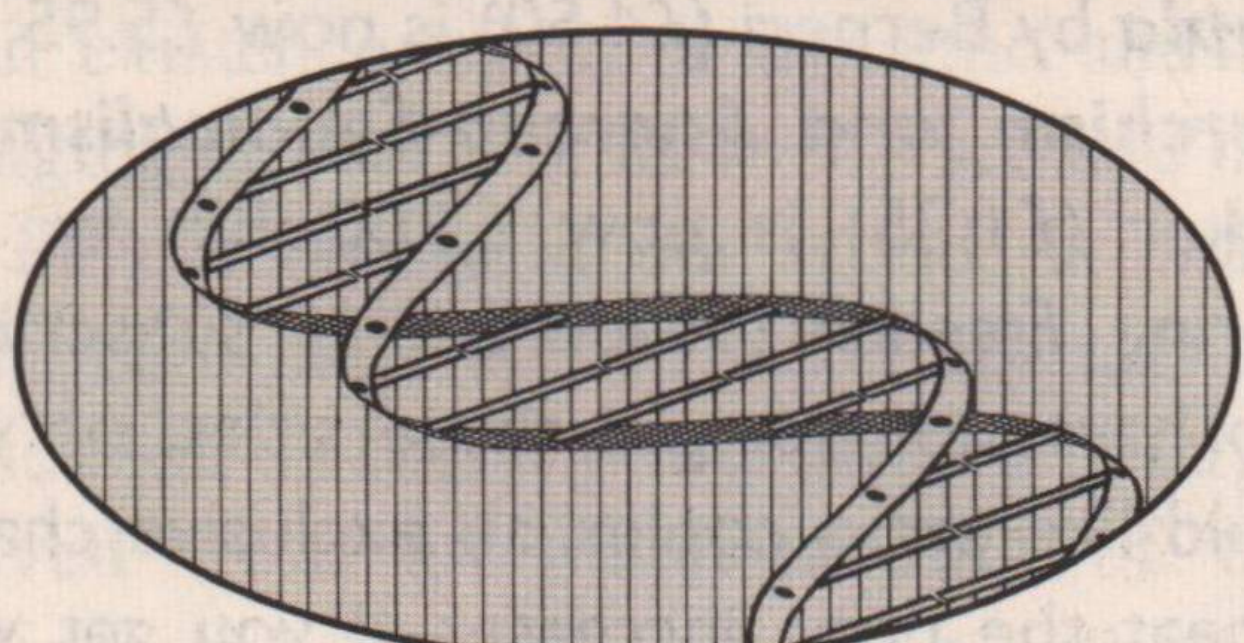
interview and French translation by
Marisa, Xavier and Azzurra (Besancon)
(taken from *Le Monde Libertaire*, 29th September 1999)

Number 40 of the anarchist quarterly

The Raven

on

Genetic Modification



96 pages for £3.00 post free worldwide

Who won in Seattle?

Dear *Freedom*,

Now that the Battle of Seattle has moved to the letters page of *Freedom*, it's time to ask who actually won that battle – and with whose aid. The battle was clearly a struggle for public approval. A propaganda fight to see who could find the greatest support among the most people.

And the World Trade Organisation (WTO) won. Hands down. With the aid of world-wide televised media the WTO came through as responsible, well organised, courteous, restrained and constructive. The protesters came through as irresponsible, disorganised, discourteous, unrestrained and destructive. Exactly what the WTO wanted. They could not have ordered a more effective protest to produce a media image of the WTO as the underdog, the poor suffering martyr. It is even reasonable to suspect that the WTO sent hired agents among the protesters to incite them to riot, smash windows, block traffic and to invite a brutal police crack-down. If the WTO did not actually provide the agents provocateurs it is only because they knew there were plenty of compulsive exhibitionists willing and eager to exhibit their own violence. If only to get themselves on television. And only too eager to call themselves 'anarchists'. These destructive protectors – who chose to call themselves 'anarchists' – could not have done more to arouse public sympathy for the WTO if they had actually been on the payroll of the WTO. And all dressed up in their black masks (wasn't it the Lone Ranger used to wear a black mask?) they could not have done more to arouse public contempt for the very idea of anarchy.

The general public's ignorance of anarchy and anarchism creates a vacuum the media easily fills with its carefully selected images of 'anarchists on a destructive rampage'. In the last two centuries the mindlessly destructive, who liked to call themselves 'anarchists', have done more to destroy the anarchist opportunity and promise than all the police brutality and repressive legislation could ever have done. And with more people waiting for a chance to release their explosive, bottled-up hostility – unconscious hostility

bottled-up during a repressive childhood – many are always ready to take part in any destructive demonstration under whatever label, 'anarchist' or otherwise.

But isn't the WTO one of the worst examples of capitalist domination and exploitation of lives and resources? Yes, of course. And shouldn't revolutionists attack these worst examples? Attacking the worst examples is reformist – not revolutionary. When you single out the worst example for an attack you send the message that modifying or getting rid of this worst example will produce the desired society by leaving us with the other 'better' examples. You confuse the disease with the symptom. The disease is the hierarchical, power dominated society also known as capitalism. The WTO is only one of the symptoms. And we can only abolish the disease by appealing to the intelligence, understanding and sympathy of the general public. You do not abolish the disease by turning off people with irresponsible and destructive demonstrations.

We should appreciate the efforts of Ed Stamm to bring this problem to our attention.

Lynn Olson

Correction

Some unfortunate errors crept in to the letter from Nick S. which appeared in *Freedom* on 12th February 2000: in column 4, line 12, for 'colon' read 'opinion' and, at line 26, for 'debacle' read 'debate'.



On direct democracy

Dear *Freedom*,

I am grateful to Amorey Gethin for his reply (*Freedom*, 12th February) to a letter of mine in which I briefly mentioned direct democracy. Since writing that letter (at the time I was not at all convinced that direct democracy was compatible with anarchism), I have had the benefit of reading through an excellent anarchist site on the Internet. 'Anarchist FAQ' is an outstanding resource put together by various anarchists around the world, and can be located at www.anarchism.ca/faq/. Every question imaginable about anarchism is asked, and answered in great detail. There is a section on anarchism and democracy and it argues the case for direct democracy far better than I could. I can provide a hard copy of the relevant section to anyone interested who doesn't have access to the net.

But can I just reply briefly to one of the points Amorey makes in his letter. I don't agree that direct democracy would be a 'system of rule'; rather it would be a means by which people could express themselves politically. There would be no compulsion. Minority views would be respected. Dissent is absolutely essential to the development of ideas and should never be discouraged. Voting would be used to assist decision-making, it would not be a means of enforcing majority rule.

Consensus decision-making is often cited as an alternative to direct democracy. Murray Bookchin's observations on consensus decision-making are quoted in the 'Anarchist FAQ' website. He accepts that in some circumstances consensus decision-making works very well. But he also points out that, for the sake of consensus, and to avoid being the only one who (by disagreeing) spoils the consensus, people may choose to opt out of the decision-making process. Consensus decision-making could discourage dissension and thus creative discourse. Direct democracy could provide a better forum for the expression of ideas.

I am sorry that Amorey finds it depressing to hear an anarchist supporting direct democracy. However, I think most anarchists

do support it and hopefully, if he gets the chance to look at the relevant section of the website I mention above, he may reconsider his position.

AH



Dear *Freedom*,

On reading the letters of Amorey Gethin, Declan McCormick and Paul Petard (*Freedom*, 12th February), I found myself wondering why they chose to conclude them with slogans ('voluntary co-operation', 'anarchist resistance', 'creating global communistic human relations') instead of examples of their achievements.

Are not examples of achievements more enlightening than slogans?

John Desmond

Darwinian left

Dear *Freedom*,

Ilyan (letters, 12th February) is mistaken in supposing that Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace had different theories of evolution. Wallace's book on the subject is entitled *Darwinism*.

Ilyan's use of the term co-evolutionist might seem to suggest that he also embraces the error common among creationists, that Darwin originated the idea of evolution. When Darwin and Wallace presented their joint paper in 1859, evolution had been taught at University College London since its foundation in 1815. Darwin's theory, which Wallace had arrived at independently, concerns the *mechanism* of evolution.

Wallace opposed the right-wing nastiness of Herbert Spencer's 'Social Darwinism'. But he did not confuse this with Darwin's theory, which has no more to do with politics than Einstein's theory.

Donald Room

(continued from page 4)

where instead of representation (and reflections) upon a wall, we perceive the world as relative to our own insularity.

Enter the Hacker, the child of the networks, the animal of light, the human inside the system. From this individual identity, now emerges the culture of Hacktivism: a collaborative, and networked agent of social change. Hacktivism has been adept at engaging the public mind and furthering the level of debate around particular social issues. Employing spectacular and situational techniques, Hacktivists have been able to rapidly and contagiously, distribute and broaden political participation. Whether organising networks, or mobilising with them, Hacktivism does offer the tools to engage and effectively appear in the (technological society's) political arena.

Paradoxically, Hacktivism is a force for the demystification of the technological society, where open multifaceted and distributed processes allow participants and observers to learn about the communications, technical, and political infrastructure that surrounds (and may contain) them. In this public education comes through demonstration, as stunts, hacks, and performances, highlight different elements or tensions within the system. Most often this comes in the area of network security, but increasingly, will involve more

lucrative areas, such as trade policy (WTO) and social controls (Genetic Engineering). The power of Hacktivism resides largely in the development of more tactile and tangible notions of communications, that involve the politics of occupation, rather than abstention. Why stay in your bunker, when you can occupy the whole system? When we can occupy the routers and the streets at the same time we will find that we outnumber those still huddled in the (remote) control room.

However with that said, Hacktivism, as a self-identified culture, is still juvenile, and does not possess the breadth or diversity that enables greater effectiveness and accessibility amongst (and for) social movements. At present the Hacktivism milieu can be categorised into three groups: the Artists, the Techies, and the Politicos, all three of which need to come together in a much more coherent manner (and setting) if Hacktivism is to live up to its potential. For while all three groups involve elements of each other, each one is defined on that which they choose to focus on.

The Artists (such as the Electronic Disturbance Theatre and RTMark) focus on their artistic attributes and activities, often as an excuse to ignore criticisms from their counterparts, even though they do employ elements of technology for political purposes. The Techies (such as 10pht.com and

2600.com) on the other hand, are largely focused on the development of technical tools and platforms, as well as engaging in activities that are centred around said technology (and related issues). While there is certainly an artistic and political element to the activities of the Techies, they at times neglect both the aesthetics and political dynamics of their work, which results in their alienation or distance from other social movements. Similarly the Politicos (such as tao.ca and iww.org) emphasise the political dynamic of their activities, often at the expense of the technical or aesthetic (accessible) elements of their work. Yet, as a result of their political background, it has been the Politicos who have done the most so far to bring these three divergent groups together, with <http://hacktivism.tao.ca> as one example.

Yet it is in this need or desire to forge greater cross-cultural links, that Hacktivism may offer a model for social movements in general, in terms of enabling a singularity of multiplicity, where many identities and movements can co-exist. The ability to (optionally) emulate successful (political and organisational) models is the innovation that stems from the emerging network culture of experimentation and open development. Ongoing situational diversity nurtures a desire for difference that fuels the breadth that provides the dynamism and strength resident in the notion of

Hacktivism. It is something of a self-referential feedback loop that given the right balance of social agency and distributed networking can provide a myriad of options to those involved in social struggles.

However socialising the technology is difficult, if not treacherous, due to the immediate and constant presence of the military and state actors. It is not to suggest or encourage paranoia, but rather recognise the immediacy of conflict, and the inherent class war mechanisms that are ceaselessly operating against us. Thus openness is essential, if not catalytic to our ability to not only survive, but demonstrate what human life can be like in the here and now. Sharing what we do have, rather than hoarding that which we seek to keep, is a potent means by which to subvert the very system we find ourselves residing in.

Hacktivism is the existentialism of the Network Society. It is the way of being for those of us who want to become human, leaving behind the corporate consumer identity that has enshrouded our world. While the flood of information torrentially subsumes people, we learn to swim against the current, while helping others regain their senses, so as to find their bearings, and join us in this social struggle.

Jesse Hirsh
<jesse@tao.ca>

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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 2000 —

25th February What is Situationism?
(symposium)

3rd March General discussion

10th March Effective Action: what do you
think we should do on May Day?

17th March General discussion

24th March The Poll Tax: an anarchist
approach (video/discussion)

31st March General discussion

7th April Chomsky's Anarchism: an
illustrated discussion

14th April 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

Mayday 2000

A festival of anarchist ideas and action from

28th April to 1st May

Mayday 2000 will be a four-day gathering of
revolutionaries to be held across London.

We would like to hear from groups and
individuals interested in joining us in
co-ordinating the activities.

Mayday 200, BM Mayday, London WC1N 3XX

www.freespeech.org/mayday2k

mayday2000 - subscribe@egroups.com

**Northern Anarchist
Network Conference**

on Saturday and Sunday

1st and 2nd April 2000

at the 1 in 12 Club, Albion Street,
Bradford BD1 2LY

for further information please call
Martin on 0161 7079652

**Libertarian Socialist
Discussion Group**

(forming now)

will meet on the second Wednesday of the month
for action and discussion

at 8pm in The Vine, Kennedy Street

(off Fountain Street), near Manchester Town Hall

Joint meeting of the

Bury Unemployed Workers' Association,
Tameside Unemployed Workers' Alliance and
the Libertarian Discussion Group

will be held on 2nd March at 1pm

at Bury Unemployed Centre (off The Rock)
12 Tithebarn Street, Bury

Mumia Must Live!

demonstrate to save the life of
Mumia Abu-Jamal

Saturday 4th March

in Central London

assemble at Embankment tube at 1pm
and march to Trafalgar Square
for a rally

Contact Mumia Must Live! campaign
for more details at:

BM Haven, London WC1N 3XX

tel: 020 7358 5821

mumia@callnetuk.com

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