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SICK OF WORKING?

A recent survey has brought home the dismal and even life threatening working conditions now prevailing across Britain.

Eurostat, the EU statistical agency, has published a report that claims nearly one third of the UK workforce is afflicted by long term health or disability.

The government has been proudly trumpeting its record levels of employment for months, ignoring evidence that most of these new jobs have been provided by the government itself as part of its massive spending on increased bureaucracy.

Yet very little has been done to effectively deal with a wave of sickness and disability claims from overworked and hyperstressed workers which has struck across the country.

In 1984 a 'mere' eight per cent of the workforce was registered as sick or disabled, but in the last two decades this has more than trebled to 27.2%.

To put this into context, that makes us the second least healthy country in Europe, beaten only by Finland.

Even more amazingly, we are significantly behind every one of the ten supposed charity case countries who will join the EU in May.

The reasons behind this are not hard to fathom. Britain is the only country in Europe to have an 'opt-out' cause allowing employers to push workers to waive the EU rule of a maximum 48 hour week.

As a result, the UK is now the only EU state where working time has increased in the last decade. One in five full-time workers work more than a 48

hour week, and 65% of companies have at one time or another pressured their workers to sign the opt-out.

The Commission found that these long working hours have contributed to accidents and increase the risks of heart attacks, mental disorders and other illness.

Although the Commission went so far as to say: "If the opt-out agreement must be signed at the same time as the employment contract, freedom of choice is compromised by the worker's situation at that moment." the government has made it clear they will not be volunteering to change these rules.

This is only to be expected of a government that lauds the outsourcing of jobs and wants to legalise gang-masters, but think about this for a moment.

This government, who was elected, among other thing, to sort out the NHS, has been told in no uncertain terms that a big contributing factor to the stretch on NHS resources is the UK's excessive working hours. It has been told how to solve this problem.

Yet despite the potential billions in public savings, for increased productivity from a healthier workforce, and for simultaneously better treatment for a vast swathe of the population, they have come out against it.

We are being sold down the river, and we are being made to pay for the outcome in taxes, our time and our own lifeblood.

In its bid to make us more attractive to big business, the government has



Cops: we don't care if this lot get injured at work

undermined our rights and stolen our very health. What's even worse is that this has had a knock-on effect in Europe, where most of the major economies including Germany and France are having to introduce opt-out clauses of their own to keep up.

Britain, in undermining its own working class, has weakened the ability of every other European state to resist,

and the outcome if these laws are not changed will be the eventual abolition of the maximum working week.

There are several ways in which we can have an effect on these horrific statistics. The EU commission are currently looking at opt-out agreements and are looking at how they can be revised. Pressure can be exerted through the unions, but only until the

31st of March.

On a more local level, make sure you stand up for yourself in the office. Do not under any circumstances sign that opt-out and encourage your workmates to do the same. This is your health, your quality and even length of life that's at stake. It's one of the most important things you can fight for.

Rob Ray

STRIKING AT H.E.

The last week in February saw the AUT and NUS take joint action.

Staff in the AUT had voted to take strike action against the new national pay framework because it is not about pay (it actually cuts wages in the long term, some lecturers losing more than £40,000 over the next decade) is not national (it aims to encourage local bargaining) and it is hardly a framework (more an imposition).

Picket lines were seen at universities in all over the UK from Monday 20th to Friday 27th February. The NUS had also called for a national day of action on the Wednesday but if London was typical, it was badly organised and few students knew anything about it.

However, the AUT strike was solid and had an impact. After all, it affects our pay and conditions!

As for the strike in London, if my workplace is anything to go by most AUT members went on strike but did not turn up for the picket lines. This, obviously, is a bad thing as it gives the false impression of the strike being without support. A culture of picketing is required in many places as collective displays of resistance are more powerful than individualistic ones. That way it will show workers who are thinking of building the strike that it makes sense to do so. One picket will not inspire confidence that solidarity is strength!

Another major issue was that the other

higher education unions did not take action at the same time. Many Unison members did, however, take leave and otherwise refused to cross picket lines. Because of them, for example, the libraries and computer services at UCL were shut down -something that would not have happened if AUT members had acted alone. This local militancy was expressed in the recent Unison ballot on the pay scheme. While accepted nationally, London Unison branches rejected it.

On the Tuesday, the AUT organised a rally. This was memorable for two things. Firstly, the militant talk of the union leaders and of the NUS. As far as

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WATER WARS

More months after Ofwat last agreed to allow water giants United Utilities and Northumbrian Water to raise their bills, it's considering doing it again. If accepted, a 74% rise in prices will hit the Northwest, affecting some of the country's poorest areas. An average rise of 30% is expected for the rest of Britain, which will increase water rates to £315 a year per household by 2010.

This is supposedly designed to raise money for a £21 billion investment programme into updating the sewage system. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the companies to justify the rises, with groups such as Unison calling for a 'root and branch' reformation of the

system. Given that water company requests last year for a one third increase in water rates was accepted, it is hard to see how the providers have still so completely undervalued the amount of money they will need for maintenance and repair.

MPs have said they expect between two and four million people in England and Wales will struggle to pay the price hikes. We hope that if introduced people will resist this blatant attack on our standards of living - when the Bolivian government privatised water in Cochabamba, and the prices went up, a massive direct action campaign bought them back down, this is something we can learn from!

Home and away

FREEDOM

Volume 65 Number 05

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject all government and economic repression.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice.

In our building in Whitechapel we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host a social centre and meeting space, the Autonomy Club. We're currently developing open-access IT provision for activists to use.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that human freedom can only thrive when the institutions of state and capital have been abolished. Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Zapatistas

We now stock organic coffee grown by the cooperatives in the autonomous region of Chiapas. A 250g bag costs £3.50 (mail order add 80p for postage and packing) and your money will help their struggle.

New network

A Bristol Anarchist Network has been formed to attempt to coordinate libertarian activity in the area. Email them at bristolanarchistnetwork@subsection.org.uk

Canterbury

The Stop the War march is assembling at 12 noon in Westgate Gardens. If anyone would like to help sell copies of Freedom, contact Richard on swaleagainstar@aol.com or look out for sellers on the day.

Donations

If you appreciate the work we do, please help us by sending cheques and postal orders payable to 'Freedom Press' to Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Circulation

We would like to increase the readership of Freedom, and an important part of this is getting better circulation. If you would like to help by selling Freedom or asking bookshops, libraries or newsagents to stock it please write to us or email circ@freedompress.org.uk

Next issue

Contributions are wanted for future Freedoms. The next issue will be dated 20th March 2004 and the last day for getting copy to us will be Thursday 11th March. You can send articles/letters to us at FreedomCopy@aol.com, or by snail mail to 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

If you are interested in writing regularly for Freedom we want to hear from you!

News from inside

Anti-war victory!

Anti-war protesters celebrated last month a judgement which ruled that the police acted unlawfully in detaining them for two and a half hours without arrests.

The High Court ruled that Police violated the Human Rights Act when they illegally detained 120 protesters en route to a demonstration at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire. This ruling will impact significantly on policing of future demonstrations and will have implications for the Mayday 2001/Oxford Circus cases against the Metropolitan Police later this year.



The ruling was welcomed as a clarification of a draconian power which Parliament has never debated or sanctioned. However the protesters feel that the judgement should have gone further and ruled that the police also denied them two other human rights: freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. The protesters have permission to take their case to the Court of Appeal.

Last March, the protesters and their coaches were searched for nearly two hours and forced back to London under a heavy police escort "to prevent a breach of the peace." The police argued that this was justified because the protesters were, in their view, 'well-armed'.

However, giving judgement, Lord Justice May commented that, "for practical purposes none of the articles seized were to be regarded as offensive. Two pairs of scissors would not make much impression on the perimeter fencing of the air base."

John Halford, the solicitor at Bindman and Partners representing the group, said that, "no crime had been committed. What the police did was arbitrarily detain on the flimsiest of pretexts. The Court has laid down a firm marker that

this must not happen in future."

Jane Laporte, the named claimant, said: "attending a demonstration is a basic freedom which everyone should enjoy if a society is to function as a democracy. We hoped that the Court would uphold this freedom, particularly in respect of a war so widely regarded as being waged on unjust grounds. Not only is this an attack on our freedom but the operation and the police's decision to contest the action is a waste of public money."

Irish Hunger Strike

Anti-War activist Eoin Rice is on a hunger strike in Limerick jail. Eoin Rice has refused to accept a ban from County Clare as an extra condition on his bail conditions and has been jailed.

Judge Joseph Managan has been issuing these 'bans' to most of the anti-war activists who have been brought before him after arrests for protesting at Shannon warport. Mr Rice had been before the bench for motoring offences and this new condition was introduced by the judge himself and not the prosecution. It seems that you only need to be associated with anti-war protests to receive this ban from Mr Managan.

Eoin hopes to challenge this jailing and bail condition in a higher court.

Write to Eoin at: Eoin Rice, D wing, Limerick Prison, Mulgrave Street, Limerick, Ireland

Support group attacked

An injunction has been served on the Earth Liberation Front, c/o UK Earth Liberation Prisoners Support Network. The injunction prevents Earth Liberation Front activists, as well as a number of other named groups and individuals, from certain forms of protest against Bayer (one of the largest European GM crop companies). Within the injunction it is implied that ELP's website is a means for communicating information to the ELF and it has been ordered, by the courts, that ELP publishes the injunction on their website or else face being in contempt of court. ELP says that they are "seeking legal advice on this injunction and we will naturally keep everyone informed as to what happens. In the meantime, when our web-person gets around to it, do check out the injunction on the ELP website as it does make interesting reading." For more information please visit the ELP's website at www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk

LISTINGS

Buckinghamshire

19th to 21st March Self-build Geodesic Domes - build your own low-impact dwelling/storage/spare room/retreat ... from cheap, sustainable materials. For more info see www.lowimpact.org or contact lili@lowimpact.org or call 01296 714184

Bradford

6th March Bradford Trade Justice Network event, meal, live music and drama at the 1in12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street, tel 01274 734160, for info see www.1in12.com

Bristol

19th March Critical Mass no war for profit, cycle against capitalism, meet at 5.30pm outside the Arnolfini, by the harbourside. Calling anything and everyone on wheels without a petrol engine!

19th March Benefit for Bristol magazine, at the Porter Butt pub, London Road, Bath, from 9pm

20th March Day of action against war, part of Bristol's weekend of action called in solidarity with the call for a global day of action. Meet at 12 noon in the city centre, opposite the Hippodrome.

20th March Benefit gig with Robb Johnson/Rita Lynch plus support in aid of Bristol Stop The War and Columbian solidarity, from 8.30pm to 1am at Bristol County Sports & Social Club, Colston Street, £4/2 on door.

Canterbury

6th March Stop the War march is assembling at 12 noon in Westgate Gardens.

Cardiff

14th March Disarm Dsei planning meeting at Cathays Community Centre,

36-38 Cathays Terrace, start 1pm, email dipseylalabo@yahoo.co.uk

Glasgow

6-7th March Frock On!! Women's music/skill-sharing festival in honour of International Women's Day, at the Pearse Institute, 840 Govan Road, from 10am to 6pm day, 8pm to midnight night. Day, everything free; night £3-£5, email info@frockon.org or see www.frockon.org/march04.htm

11th March Freedom readers' group monthly meeting, for more details contact glasgowfr@hotmail.com

London

6th March Ganja Festival benefit party with Headfuk, Negusa negast, Stonka soundsystems and The Brixton Tea Party, with chillout cafe and cannabis info. Central London venue tbc, call after 10pm 07092 230023 or 020 7644 5170 or 07906 957855

20th March First anniversary of the US bombing and invasion of Iraq, march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square.

For info see www.stopwar.org.uk
3rd April Freethinkers' Book Fayre from 11am to 4:45pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1 (nearest tube Holborn), stallholders include Freedom Press, South Place Ethical Society, Chronos, and others. For info or bookings contact Black Cat Press, c/o 12 Lambs Conduit Passage, London WC1R 4RH, call 0778 8945143 or email black_cat_pub@yahoo.co.uk

Every Monday Libertarian parent and kid drop in from 4.30 to 6.30pm at the Autonomy Club, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, for info email libertarianparents@yahoo.co.uk

Every Wednesday the LARC Library from 1pm at 62 Fieldgate Street, E1.
Every Saturday Vigil for the release of Mordechai Vanunu from 12 noon to

2pm at Kensington High Street near the Israeli Embassy. For more info see www.vanunu.freereserve.co.uk or call 020 7378 9324

Menwith Hill

19th March Block the Base, non-violent blockade and demonstration as part of an international weekend of action, see www.blockthebase.org.uk, contact Yorkshire CND on 01274 730795 or email info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk

Nottingham

13-14th March Grassroots opposition to war gathering at the Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, for info see www.grassrootsoppositiontowar.org.uk

Animal rights

All across the country hunt saboteurs are working directly in the field to protect wildlife from the huntsmen contact: Hunt Saboteurs Association, PO Box 5254, Northampton NN1 3ZA www.huntsabs.org.uk

World

8th March International Womens' Day event - a special information and discussion website has been set up at www.enrager.net/m8

19-22th March Dragon Festival at Los Tablones, near Orgiva, Granada, Andalucia, Spain, given permission for the first time, for info email groundzerosoundsystem@yahoo.com

Nationwide groups

Anarchist Federation c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX www.afed.org.uk

Class War Federation PO Box 467, London E8 3QX www.classwaruk.org

Earth First!

www.earthfirst.org.uk

Industrial Workers of the World PO Box 74, Brighton, BN1 4ZQ www.iww.org.uk

Solidarity Federation PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX www.solfed.org.uk

For details of smaller and local groups see www.enrager.net/britain

Social Centres

Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE) 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh www.autonomous.org.uk

The Cowley Club 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA www.cowleyclub.org.uk

Freedom

84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1

Kebele 14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol B55 6JY www.kebele.org

Lancaster Resource Centre (LaRC) The Basement, 78a Penny Street, Lancaster

www.eco-action.org/lancaster
London Action Resource Centre (LARC)

62 Fieldgate Street, London E1 www.londonlarc.org

SUMAC Centre 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX

www.veggies.org.uk/rainbow/
Use Your Loaf

227 Deptford High Street, London SE8 www.squat.freereserve.co.uk/useyourloaf.html

1in12 Club 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2LY www.1in12.com

56a Infoshop 56 Crampton Street, London SE17 www.safetycat.org/56a/

Britain

Strikewatch

February 2004

- Bus drivers in Lincoln manned the picket lines on 19th and 23rd February in a strike over pay – but their employer RoadCar, claimed services remained unaffected even with around 150 workers from the travel firm taking part in walkout over pay. Strike leaders claim votes cast by members of the Transport and General Workers' Union were disregarded.

- Other Trentbarton bus drivers threatening to strike over pay have been offered a deal, which could avert any industrial action. The TGWU met with bosses on 21st February. The company has described the talks as 'most constructive'.

- About 5,000 driving tests could be cancelled as more than 1,000 examiners joined a strike by office staff at the Driving Standards Agency. The strike has added to what is already the worst outbreak of industrial unrest in the civil service for thirteen years.

- Tube workers are threatening wildcat strikes in support of eight maintenance workers sacked after empty beer cans were found in a mess room, even though all eight passed breathalyser tests and proved that they hadn't been drinking. Members of the Rail Maritime and Transport (RMT) union are being formally balloted over taking action. But leaflets circulated among workers warn of unofficial stoppages in solidarity with their colleagues, which would cause travel chaos. Metronet, which employs the men, said they were sacked because of its 'robust' policy on drink and drugs. So robust they sack people for working while sober.

- 550 members of the broadcasting union BECTU, employed in telecom company ntl, have voted on industrial action. As tensions begin to mount regarding proposed changes to the terms and conditions of employment. On 22nd February they voted overwhelmingly to reject these changes, which could cost some members up to £4,000 a year in salary, in addition to increased unsociable working hours, leading to deterioration in members' work/life balance. 85% of the membership voted in the ballot, with 78% voting against ntl's proposals.

- Workers at Land Rover have accepted a pay offer ending the threat of further strikes. Employees had initially rejected a 6.5% pay increase offered over two years and recently staged two 24-hour strikes at the company's Solihull plant in the West Midlands. A second ballot was held with 65% of those voting conceding to the two-year offer, with management finally agreeing to negotiate changes in working practices.

- On 24th February Bradford council was forced to backtrack its plans to outsource its IT department without consulting its one hundred affected staff members. Only days before planned strike action the council agreed to UNISON demands that staff won't lose their jobs as part of a £100m-outsourcing move. Instead, when the third-party firm comes in to run IT, probably by June, staff won't be transferred out and lose their existing terms and conditions, but instead will be seconded.

Looking at the right

The BNP have councillors nationwide and are looking to win seats as MEPs – how can we stop them?

Under Nick Griffin, the British National Party has become the most successful far-right party in British history. Neither the National Front (NF) nor the British Union of Fascists ever managed to gain a single councillor. The BNP has nearly twenty, a figure it expects to increase dramatically in 2004. John Tyndall and a group of supporters who had been involved in the NF founded the BNP in 1982. But it is now the biggest far-right party in the country, throughout the '80s and '90s the BNP tried to follow a strategy of controlling the streets but due to the efforts of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) this failed. Under the leadership of Griffin though it has moved towards an electoral strategy and community politics – attempting to fill the political vacuum in white working class areas. This is forcing militant anti-fascists to re-think their tactics.

The party is attempting to become seen as 'respectable' and move away from its image of being a bunch of thugs and football hooligans – and is starting to succeed. They have recently picked up a Conservative councillor who defected to them, which ten years ago would have been beyond belief. Because of these changes the BNP believe they are on the verge of a political breakthrough. They are standing a full slate nationally in the European elections, and because the elections are by proportional representation look like they could gain some MEPs. Whether or not this would make much of a difference to anything is something we don't really know – although it will give them more credibility and publicity.

The BNP's main areas of strength lie in the North West, the Black Country, and West Yorkshire, although it is still marginal in many of these areas and has been able to get so many councillors because of the low turnout in elections. This is itself a sign of the large numbers of working class people alienated from mainstream politics. It has been exploiting racial tensions between whites

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and the latter goes, such talk did not seem to be reflected on the ground. Secondly, the list of former union and NUS leaders who were listed as either being in the Labour government or in favour of what it is doing to higher education. A clearer case for anti-parliamentarian unionism would be hard to find! Wednesday saw a joint AUT-NUS rally where the AUT pickets outnumbered the students quite considerably. Clearly, the union leaderships was unable to turn its militant words into real action. One AUT member was angry at the union's lack of militancy: "We need to take action that will have more effect than this. Two days is not enough" one researcher stated.

The attack on staff pay, sometimes little more than £20,000 in London,



Who ate all the pies? These fine members of the master race demonstrating outside the NUJ last month

and Asians in the North West. With the help of the mainstream media and political parties they have been able to profit from the demonisation of asylum seekers, managing to pick up a significant number of votes from the disenfranchised inhabitants of many former industrial areas.

Recently the BNP managed to hold two demonstrations on the same day in central London. One against the Commission for Racial Equality in Borough and one against the National Union of Journalists near Kings Cross, they both managed to pass off without any major incidents – a change from a decade ago. Although anarchists did manage to give two BNPs a beating when they tried to return to the morning

and conditions is part of a wider Thatcherite onslaught against Higher Education and public services in general. This means that the links to top-up fees is pretty obvious. It also makes worker-student links important but not the key. From my branch SWP member, I get the impression the SWP is trying to submerge the struggle into the Fees one. This will not inspire workers to take action as it does not make it clear how it will affect them. Higher education will benefit in the long run from decent pay and conditions for its staff. That is what should be stressed, rather than forgetting the obvious fact we are taking action to defend our interests as people in favour of the all too English trait of only fighting for others.

What now? It is doubtful that another strike will happen soon. Simply put,

demonstration with coffees, but whilst this is something to be encouraged, it is not smashing the fascists off the streets.

Other far-right parties have managed to profit from the rise of the BNP. The White Nationalist Party, whose leading lights have nearly all been expelled from other right-wing parties for links to either the state or Searchlight (same thing really) got just over 13% of the vote in a Lancashire by-election. The Freedom Party, a BNP split, have had a small amount of electoral success – although are still small and irrelevant. The re-formed National Front under the leadership of Terry Blackham have tried to copy the BNPs success with forays into electoral politics. Although have not been making the same gains,

many union members are aware. As such, the idea of one big union for all higher education workers would be a popular idea (Natfhe is talking about this). On the positive side a postal worker did refuse to cross the line and deliver the mail. If CWU members working in the post office can show solidarity with striking university staff it is a real shame other high education (HE) unions can't.

The Anarchist Workers Network could be a means of achieving this co-ordination, if so desired. No matter how it is done, we should not miss this opportunity to getting our ideas across particularly as they are so relevant to so many militant workers. The AWN site is at www.awn.org.uk, and the libertarian Education Workers' Network (part of SolFed) website is at www.ewn.org.uk

they have continued with the strategy of attempting to control the streets but due to their lack of numbers, this doesn't seem to be working. Recent marches they have held in London have been poorly attended.

One thing is clear about the future, that we need to mobilise to stop the rise of fascism. We need to physically confront fascists at every opportunity, and we need to become more active in our local communities and tackle the problems which drive people into the hands of the far-right – namely poverty, poor housing and inadequate public services. To these problems the likes of the BNP can offer ordinary people nothing but racist rhetoric.

Jim M.

International

Spanish practices

The dispute between workers and management in Spain's shipyards escalates during wildcat strikes last month

On 17th February hundreds of masked workers occupied their Izar shipbuilding plant in Seville and defended it by firing ball bearings, crescent-shaped metal discs and home-made rockets at police, injuring several.

Simultaneously, strikers in Cadiz blockaded a main road and a bridge while Bilbao workers shut down a major motorway with burning tyres and thousands marched in La Coruña and Orieto.

Police later stormed the occupied plant hurting many workers, one of whom was hospitalised after being hit in the eye with a rubber bullet. The anarcho-syndicalist union the CNT collected some of the munitions fired at them and the other strikers by police (see picture below).

The next day, 1,200 workers of the Bilbao yards again took to the streets and blocked the highway to Santurce with burning barricades. Police attacked very violently with rubber bullets and tear gas, injuring thirty. Police in Cadiz also took the unprecedented action of photographing and frisking individual

pickets as they left their workplace.

The struggle concerns 11,000 employees based in eleven areas all over Spain who are demanding a 6.8% pay increase. Fears of yard closures and job losses are also high in the workers' minds however – and with good reason. Izar bosses have tried to push through destructive 'modernisation' before. In 1987 cutback attempts in the Puerto Real plant in Cadiz were smashed by an all-out strike involving most of the local community. Later in 1995, threats to close the Cadiz yard were met with a 100,000-strong demonstration and workers battled police throughout the summer.

One key aspect of the recent strikes, particularly for anarchists, is that they have been largely self-managed – as were the stoppages of Italian transport workers reported in the last Freedom. The actions were all decided upon by the workers themselves in mass assemblies. This is the kind of organisation argued for by the CNT and other anarchists, and was prevalent in the 1987 strikes. The assemblies set up then involved the whole town and continued meeting after the strike was won well into the '90s, where they were successfully used to address numerous concerns of the community, including fighting tax rises and environmental destruction.

However recently the main trade unions, the socialist UGT and communist CC.OO have been attempting to consolidate control of the struggle and pacify the workers. In the week of the 23rd February they called for seven days of no protest but of 'informing public opinion'. Since Izar was formed by two shipbuilding companies, each with their own union representation, the UGT and CC.OO have entered into



Strikers in Puerto Real confront police on the Carranza bridge, 17th February 2004

damaging agreements with the owners and maintained divisions between the workers.

The official union reps are seen by many as being 'bought off' by the company – and indeed the two big unions both have a history of receiving big payoffs from employers following capitulation to job losses. The CNT are very excited about the way in which the industrial action has united workers

across the company.

A CNT leaflet being distributed in the Seville yards states: "We say: put on the pressure and negotiate at the same time. Are we saying something that is not common sense? A union which worries about the company more than the industrialist himself does, is a weak union. A union that negotiates more than it puts on pressure is a weak union ... A union that fragments the interests

and the unity of the workers is a weak union. And all of this is happening at the present time, the unions are getting discredited more each time it happens and the conclusion and the only way out is class war. This is what we've always known: that when the other means fail, to take the conflict to the street and to push politically opens any door."

Alex Allison



News in brief

Canadian wildcat

Towards the end of February several members of the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) walked out on a wildcat strike action with the active support and participation of the Community Solidarity Coalition, anarchists, and concerned community members. A picket was erected at the Royal Jubilee Hospital where picketers admitted only patients through. There was a heavy police presence of about two dozen, a large amount considering there are about 64 on duty officers at any one time in Victoria. There were some minor altercations with police, who tried to subtly break the line a few times, but nothing major and all situations were diffused with no arrests and the integrity of the line held.

Picket's then moved into the Hospital cafeteria.

The wildcat was in response to a move by the Provincial Government to announce cutting 1,400 HEU positions, as part of a continuing bid to break the union and de-unionise the healthcare profession, contracting out essential services to private companies that are non-unionised. This move comes as HEU is in the middle of collective bargaining, and is a further attempt to break the union.

FNAC

Against war in Chechnya

On 23rd February more than fifty people marched in an unauthorised demonstration to the centre of Moscow. The demo lasted for about thirty minutes

and ended with a five-minute rally. The last participants in the demonstration left just a few minutes before the appearance of the police. The purpose of demonstration was to express protest against the arbitrariness of the Russian army in Chechnya, the theft and the violence against innocent civilians in Chechnya, the harassment of ethnic Chechens throughout the entire territory of Russia, the militarist and chauvinist propaganda from the official media. The action was accompanied with banners reading: 'No to war in Chechnya!', 'Our enemy is not in Chechnya, our enemy is in the Kremlin!', 'Putin – shit of our native land', 'People are more important than profit', etc. Participants in the demonstration shouted 'Down with the FSB', 'No to war in

Iraq and Chechnya', 'We don't want to go and serve, what we really want is to live!', 'Fatherland! Fascist reptile!'.

"We do not want to be cannon fodder for this war", said one participant, through a megaphone, to those gathered, many of whom were not more than twenty. "We are issuing a call to boycott the presidential elections, because this is the election of those who unleashed this war. Boycott is the action of direct action, in which everyone can participate".

"Only a mass anti-war movement can force the authorities to end the cruelty which is carried on in Chechnya with their consent", stated participants in the demonstration.

Autonomous Action – Moscow
<http://www.avtonom.org>

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Feature

Council housing crisis

As the government subsidises privatisation with almost a billion pounds, where's the cash for decent housing, asks LAF

O riginally a Tory idea, the transfer of council housing to private control has been taken up with vigour by the Labour government. In setting standards for all council housing to reach by 2010, the government is forcing cash strapped councils to push for the sell off of housing stock they cannot afford to maintain. The transfer of ownership to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), or Housing Associations as they used to be known, means that private money not available to councils can be spent on doing them up.

Very, very wrong

This policy has started to go very, very wrong for Downing Street bureaucrats. In order to transfer housing stock, the relevant Council has to obtain a 'yes' vote from a majority of its council house residents. Despite large sums of money being spent by Councils on propaganda drives for 'yes' votes, tenants the length and breadth of Britain have voted 'no'.

So if voting 'yes' means extra cash to be spent doing homes up, why are so many voting 'no'? According to Defend Council Housing, rents are an average of 16% higher under RSLs, evictions

"When a black flag bearing the words 'no rent' floats over a single slum, when streets are torn up and barricaded, when from the windows and roofs of the houses there comes a shower of hot water and storm of stones and brickbats, what can the police or bailiffs do?"

John Grealge in the anarchist Commonwealth in 1891, on a rent strike in the East End helped win the London Dockers Strike

14% higher, and 'service charges' are added to the bill. RSL boards are run as businesses, dominated by bankers and even more unaccountable than councils. Additionally, once transferred privatisation can't be undone. There's no way to transfer back to council housing if RSLs turn out to be even worse.

Government dismay

To the dismay of many councils and the government 35 sets of residents have voted no to housing transfers, with a particularly spectacular and influential residents victory taking place last year over Britain's largest council –

Birmingham. One local demanded, "The growing number of no votes and abandoned privatisation ballots should tell the government that we want our homes improved, not sold off to any Jack the lad who thinks they'd make a good housing magnate."

These defeats have led the government to create two additional options for residents in the hope that they will be conned in to accepting one of these. The first is the controversial private finance initiative (PFI) – where homes are improved by a private sector consortium typically over a 30-year period. The second option is arm's length management organisations (ALMOs), under which homes remain in council ownership but are run separately from council control.

However, residents are showing signs of seeing these options for what they are – a more subtle and creeping form of privatisation. Critically, only a few weeks ago, Camden residents, who had already rejected wholesale transfer to a RSL, voted by more than four to one against the transfer of control of their homes to an ALMO. The government had pledged £283 million to the ALMO should they have won the vote. This amounted to little more than a bribe for a 'yes' vote. Residents are now calling for the government to give this money to Camden council to spend on their homes directly.

One Camden council tenant explained "Throughout this campaign no one has been able to give a satisfactory answer to the simple question: if £283 million of additional investment would be available to an ALMO why the government cannot give it to the council direct – if that is what tenants say they want?"

In fact the government has recently admitted that it plans to spend £800 million in 2003/4 subsidising privatisation by writing off 'overhanging debt'. This is just less than the £840 million available as housing investment for all 2.7 million council homes in England and Wales. They could almost double direct investment in council housing if they stopped privatisation.

Vote No!

Unfortunately for Tony Blair and his rich mates, people aren't falling for their bribes and phoney propaganda. If your house is up for transfer, vote no, and campaign for a 'no' vote locally.

Meanwhile, in the private sector

If more reason to prevent the privatisation of council houses is needed, we only need to look at the effect of the already existing shortage of it. Already absurd waiting list lengths – 75 years in the London Borough of Waltham Forest! – are forcing more and more people on to the open market.



Still public – council housing in Shadwell

Spiralling property prices, which have accelerated away from wage increases have meant that many people, particularly young people, are finding it impossible to get any sort of housing bar renting privately. Sometimes even the cost of this is prohibitive.

Likewise, growing families are confined to cramped accommodation, the cost of moving to a bigger place ruled out by the price increase.

Mortgages biased towards the well off, such as 'buy-to-let' schemes lead to lower value properties being snapped up by entrepreneurs and rented out again at 30% on top of the monthly mortgage cost. This extra demand pushes up property prices further, keeps more would be first time buyers out, and so creates the very demand for renters that 'buy-to-let' supporters claim it is servicing!

By late 2002 an estimated 275,500 buy-to-let mortgages had been taken out.

The result? While first time buyers are at the lowest level for twenty years, at the same time 1.5 million Britons own a second home.

People have to stretch themselves financially to an ever greater extent to get a 'foot on the ladder'. Last year, the average first-time buyer borrowed close to three times their salary compared to

just over two and a half times in 2002. It is now possible for a person to get a 100% mortgage for over four times their salary. Given the huge difference between salary and property prices, it is by being so 'generous' that the lending banks and building society can keep prices rising. Estate Agents and lenders are more than happy to encourage this while interest rates are low. Should they go up, and property prices, in turn, start to fall, we could well see a return of that late eighties/early nineties nightmare – hundreds of thousands of repossessions and negative equity cases almost immediately.

The refusal of first time buyers to carry on paying ridiculous prices for a home seem to be leading to a slowing down of property price increases. Some lenders and government bureaucrats have to admit to prices decreasing in places. Those with fewer vested interests, such as Professor Oswald of Warwick University, are predicting a full on housing market crash soon: "I expect British house prices to fall by around 30% ... Sell now. As in most markets, when things get over-valued, the decline in prices does not merely return to long run par value. It overshoots downwards. When people start selling, they get carried away, and go too far down."

As anarchists we see only absurdity in a system that leaves such a basic need as housing to the whim of market forces. Forces driven mainly by profit mad speculators and anonymous bankers that leave working class people with no or little say. People have been reacting to the housing shortage and price increases though, mainly through strike action aimed at securing higher wages.

Many fire fighters cited housing problems as a reason for their 40% wage demand, and the public sector workers 'four grand in the hand' strike campaign seems to be motivated by the same cause. A step in the right direction would be for strikers to break out of advancing their own sectional interests (something trade unionism encourages) and put forward social demands such as affordable housing for all.

RSLs should be truly democratic, that is, under the control of tenants and local communities rather than business people. Campaigns with the aim of resisting the privatisation of existing council housing will hopefully develop to the point of realising that council bureaucrats are as unnecessary as business people for the organisation our housing needs.

Some useful information can be found at www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Editorial

Over the last few weeks Home Secretary David Blunkett has been engaged in a cat and mouse game with the civil liberties lobby. Having originally threatened to extend the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 – which has seen fourteen people detained indefinitely without trial – to UK citizens. Blunkett has now moved to introduce provisions for wiretap evidence to be admitted in terrorism cases, an increase in MI5 staff by a thousand and the creation of secret courts with hand picked judges to hear terrorism cases.

Moves are also afoot to target the funding of those 'at the fringes' of terrorist activity. This last can be seen most obviously as an attempt to target the resources of any group which dares to organise against this government's agenda.

Blunkett's tactic is always to promise the worst then – amidst the uproar – push through equally draconian but less dramatic changes which go almost unopposed because the civil liberties lobby is so desperate to avoid the threat originally suggested. What gets forgotten is that not only that the powers already rushed through have allowed detention without trial for fourteen men. But that the state has also introduced a form of internment by default which allows the remanding of suspected terrorists on dubious charges, with no trial date seeming ever to be fixed. Remember the sarin bombers, or the family and friends of the British suicide bombers, arrested here after suicide attacks in Palestine? All rotting alongside the detainees at HMP Belmarsh – as also Amar Makhulif – still awaiting deportation to a US kangaroo court.

There is a myth that any off this has anything to do with September 11th or a 'terrorist threat' to the UK. What gets forgotten is that as far back as December 1998 the 'anti-terrorist' agenda was spelt out. The Home Office proposed the making permanent of the temporary, emergency provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and their extension to mainland Britain, at a time when the six counties was supposedly enjoying the peace dividend of the IRA ceasefire.

The anti-terror obsessions of Blair and Blunkett are part of a series of attacks on the working class. You cannot run a low wage, high-tech globalised economy with a permanent threat from the exploited.

Flexibility implies vulnerability – and the only way the security of capital can be maintained is through the criminalisation of any and all effective extra-parliamentary opposition. The next time you're asked to show solidarity with the detainees in Belmarsh, and wonder what it has to do with you. Remember this: if Blunkett has his way, you might be next.

Quiz answers

- UB40.
- He says they called him a racist. Lee says that fifty years is a "blink of the eye" when it comes to ethnically cleansing London, but calling him a racist hurts his feelings. Poor love.
- Queen Margrethe of Denmark, in 1977. She used the pseudonym Ingahild Grathmer. Who said the royals couldn't do anything useful?
- He said, "the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage" (or maybe his management consultant did).

Commentary

Good point

You throw some light on the cavalier customer-care policy at Freedom (page 2, 21st February): "regrettably we cannot personally acknowledge everything we receive but would like to encourage people to continue helping us to produce this paper."

Why can't you acknowledge contributions? Why do you find it regrettable? And why would readers want to contribute if they don't know when copy has been received?

Despite all the differences among anarchists, I believe the first step in living in a free society is that we hold each other in respect. We don't have to wait for the revolution to do that.

Peter Good

We are a small collective, already stretched for time and money. With more volunteers maybe we could acknowledge them. Please help us out!

Ellingham errs

Francis Ellingham improperly quotes me (Commentary, 21st February). What I actually wrote in my book, *The State* [published by Freedom Press, publishers of this newspaper] was this: "we must acknowledge that entrenched in the human psyche is a potentiality for a will to power as there is at the same time a potentiality for a will to submit and a will to freedom."

Perhaps I should have expanded on this, but I intended to convey the notion that all of these may operate in the human mind in a dialectical fashion. Furthermore, the fact that all humans have a potentiality for violence doesn't mean that violent behaviour is an inevitable habit of all human beings.

Earlier in my book, I defined power as the ability to get others to do what you want them to do. This is achieved by various means, of which the use of force – that is, state power – is only one. Others include convincing people by logical argument, by the prestige of one's status or rank, by money or by bribe.

In addition I stressed the role of 'self-organisation' and the existence of stateless societies. I'm not very optimistic that we'll ever abolish the state, but I didn't suggest that "we're stuck with the state forever."

Finally, Francis makes some sweeping and questionable statements about all "animals" as "violent, greedy, acquisitive and competitive". Don't these characteristics also apply to humans? Even in the behaviour of a pride of lions there's much behaviour which demonstrates mutual caring and sharing.

One can't make such generalisations about all animals and also imply that this is their only behaviour. One should recognise that, in addition to the above characteristics, animals exhibit mutualist characteristics a well. And if humans are only part animal, what's the other part? I'd recommend that Francis read Kropotkin's classic, *Mutual Aid*, particularly chapters one and two. There are also much more modern studies of animal behaviour.

Harold Barclay

Quack remedies

In his response to me AR again proposes that we should fight for our freedom by rejecting fixed categories and binary oppositions (Commentary, 21st February). But when it comes to dealing with the practical issue of challenging, say, the BNP's 'rights for whites' argument, he's forced to abandon the idea of 'difference' in favour of a position of 'rights for all'. I agree that

the rights-for-all strategy is the best means of combating the BNP's ethnic particularism, but I believe that in practice this means AR has to ditch the 'deepening of differences' and resort to a norms-based approach.

At the risk of repeating myself: it's not possible to advocate a politics of pure difference. Politics is, in the end, the identification of needs and desires in common and the formation/reformation of institutions to meet those needs and desires. We each of us have biological needs in common. We live in a society that denies the equal satisfaction of those needs in favour of the satisfaction of the needs of some through the exploitation of the rest.

What many of us have in common is, therefore, both similar needs – food, clothes, shelter – and the similar obstacles which are placed in our path. For me, that's the logical place to start in any argument for a politics of solidarity. Politics based on pure difference would completely dissolve the ethical and political decisions that are essential to any effective revolutionary practice.

As for binary oppositions, so far as I can see, revolutionary politics is about transforming the social situations which create such oppositions; but these can't be overcome simply through thinking differently. If you're for strikers in a given situation, you have to be against scabs. If you're for the right to choose, you have to be against anti-abortionists. For the poor against the rich. For racial equality against racists.

I agree with AR that, in abolishing the ruling class, we lose the relational basis for working class self-definition. My point is that it's the act of abolition that ends the binary opposition, by overcoming the oppressive element of that binary. This is a matter of political practice, not discourse.

As far as Monsieur Dupont is concerned (Commentary, same issue), I think we agree more than we appear to. But I don't believe, just because Dupont and I are both working class critical thinkers, that this is a reason merely to applaud each other for having managed to think things through without a degree. I also disagree with him that the revolutionary milieu should reduce its activities to 'knowing itself'. After all, if (as Dupont says) "the reduced political language of the left could never touch what the working class was feeling," then the deficiencies of the milieu suggest it can't be an end in itself.

Dupont says that the working class has struggled enough already. "To politicise it would be a burden, not a liberation," he says. This is the fundamental point of our disagreement. Capitalism fosters fear and insecurity in every aspect of daily life, as a strategy. If, by politicisation of struggle we mean winning more people to support each other through practical activity (whether against bailiffs and police, helping each other with benefits, setting up a breakfast club or whatever), then surely we're starting to reduce the fear rather than adding to the burden?

If the revolution is, as Dupont says, about force rather than quack remedies, then working to organise ourselves as a class force has to be the way forward. This, in turn, has to mean activity within the working class rather than within the milieu (which is surely the source of most of the quack remedies). As for bulldozing the lot and wanting champagne, I'm right with you there. And yeah, we have to know why so many of us are fucked up on Tennants, Diamond White and skunk, and why sometimes you need something just to

take the edge off life. My problem is that I've never seen recognition of any of this within the milieu, or any understanding of our class at all.

Paul Maguire

Passionate plea

I'm writing to seek the solidarity that anarchism offers (a part of many other things). I'm a recently enlightened soul (six months) with a passion of anarchism running through my veins. The first issue of Freedom I read was the 21st February one, but I found myself agreeing with Monsieur Dupont on most of what he said, especially his seeing "alienation all around us" and feeling frustrated.

I'm studying philosophy at university and have come across some utopian ideals, but anarchism certainly isn't one of them. Society would benefit from the abolition of government in such a way that anarchism should be classed as an innate idea; an idea of the true path to freedom rather than 'a nice idea'. In a different tradition, that of Locke, empirical evidence demonstrates the failings of government through experience and the senses.

I've recently become familiar with Emma Goldman's philosophy and I feel the need to set off on the road to anarchy, but as a young person I'm frustrated by the slow progress! I've found email addresses for some local anarchist organisations, but I hope that anyone with any helpful information or who's interested in chatting will feel free to lend me their intellectual stimulation!

Anarchism has opened my eyes to what was always there but which I couldn't put any name to. As I grew up I could only ever ask 'why' when faced with human cruelty and, even going back to my schooldays, I could never understand other girls' attitudes to each other. I soon realised that they were copying their parent's behaviour and hadn't learned the simple infant lesson of sharing.

But why were their parents failing? I realised that it was because of the falsity of marriage, the church and of the government forcing unnatural laws on natural people.

Anarchism is freedom and, once the misguided preconceptions are revealed for what they are, then more will see the truth and stop associating anarchism with Johnny Rotten and disorder.

Tina Williams
torpedoe@tiscali.co.uk

Correction

Thanks for printing my contribution to 'Words we use' (21st February). But – forgive me for being a pedantic old dear – your editing of one point left me saying something much stronger than I'd intended. Whereas you printed, "activists too are (or could be) terrorists," what I actually wrote was "activists too are (or could be) terror-ists." To me the distinction is an important one, particularly at a time when the legal punishments for giving moral support to 'terrorism' are so alarming.

Johnny M.

Beers in

Steve misunderstands a few things (Commentary, 7th February). Neither myself nor Ireland's Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM), of which I'm a member, are interested in 'attacking' anarcho-syndicalism. Indeed, the article he criticises was far from hostile and gave credit to syndicalists for their achievements, as well as pointing to our differences. We're working for the same

goal: a free socialist society, based on individual liberty and grassroots democracy.

Where we disagree is about how best to achieve that goal. Friendly debates between class struggle anarchists over how to be most effective can hardly be considered attacks. Co-operation doesn't mean we have to engage in some sort of self-censorship when we disagree. And disagreement doesn't stop us co-operating when it makes sense to do so. We've been able to work with Irish syndicalists on many projects, including the Grassroots Gatherings and speaking tours for anarchists from abroad.

Steve also makes a rather silly assertion, saying that our being in favour of specific anarchist organisations means that we want to "guide the ordinary workers' union and keep it on the 'correct' path". He goes on to say that it's a "mirror image of the Leninist argument for the revolutionary party" and that the article "could be written by a member of any Trotskyist group".

This is rubbish. The WSM doesn't want to act as some sort of FAI, protecting the 'purity' of a revolutionary union. What we do want is to combat the capitalist/reformist/Leninist ideas which influence our workmates, and to make anarchist ideas the most popular. It's about creating the conditions for mass self-managed struggle, and so for a self-managed anarchist society. If anarchist ideas aren't the most popular, then some other ideas will be, whether they're about trusting a minority to sort out our problems for us right now, or even trusting a minority to take over society on our behalf. History shows us very clearly what a cul-de-sac that is.

Now, if this mirrors Leninism, there must be something seriously wrong with Steve's mirror. And if he really does believe that my article "could be written by a member of any Trotskyist group" then I suggest he send a copy of the article to all the Trotskyist groups he knows of. If just one group, under their letterhead or in their journal, will say that they agree completely with its content, then I'll buy him all the beer he can drink at this year's Anarchist Bookfair. That's a promise.

Alan MacSimoin

For more information on the Workers Solidarity Movement, visit www.struggle.ws/wsm.html

Moving on

In recent weeks and months, the pages of Freedom have been witness to the healthy condition of contemporary 'anarchism': debate, disagreement, polemic, vitriol and incisive argument combined with occasional appeals for consensus. The exchange of letters between Peter Gibson and Brian Morris, the review of Harold Barclay's *The State* and the writings of the Wildfire Collective and their detractors have largely been responsible for this outburst of activity. Interestingly, some of this talk about talk revolves around a common, if temporary, 'centre': social anthropology.

Vis-à-vis the debate between Brian Morris and Peter Gibson about 'the state' and Harold Barclay's analysis of it, each has adopted a position so polarised that they have largely been talking – or perhaps more correctly shouting – past each other in their respective efforts to define what anarchism is through outlining a particular approach to the state. I will suggest an alternative approach to the analysis of states that privileges cultural and historical specificities rather than grand narratives

REVIEW

Iain McKay greets the excellent exposure of neo-liberal capitalism contained in Doug Henwood's latest book, *After the New Economy*

This is an excellent book and highly recommended. It cuts through the crap associated with the rhetorical excesses which accompanied the American bubble of the 1990s. It exposes the various claims of the 'new economy' to the harsh light of reality. It shows that, while they were taken dreadfully seriously by the mainstream media at the time, they actually reflected little more than wishful thinking.

The book is broken into five main sections. The first, 'Novelty', asks whether the 'new economy' was, in fact, that new. As Henwood points out, capitalism experiences similar hype fests whenever it goes into an extended boom. You know a crash is coming when the pundits proclaim the end of the business cycle. At last the beast's been tamed!

The next section, 'Work', explores the myth that technology can revolutionise work and productivity. Simply put, the US 'miracle' economy of the 1990s simply can't be explained in terms of an IT revolution. It can, however, be explained by workers working longer for less. Henwood also sticks the boot into mainstream economists and their definitions of productivity. And quite rightly too.

The third section, 'Income', exposes the myths of income and its mobility in the land of the free. Basically, since the 1960s the United States has become increasingly polarised into a very large poor majority and an amazingly wealthy elite. And mobility up and down the social hierarchy isn't much different to that in Western Europe (while the poor in America find it even harder to get out of poverty in the land of opportunity than in 'old Europe').

This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to discover the real nature of class in the USA. The analysis is considerably deepened by Henwood's discussion of the effects of sexism, racism

and homophobia on income.

The fourth section is called 'Globalisation'. Henwood makes good points on the vagueness of this term and the undesirability of localist capitalism as an alternative. Similarly, he notes some obvious benefits of internationalism and the importance of fighting a globalised system with a globalised movement.

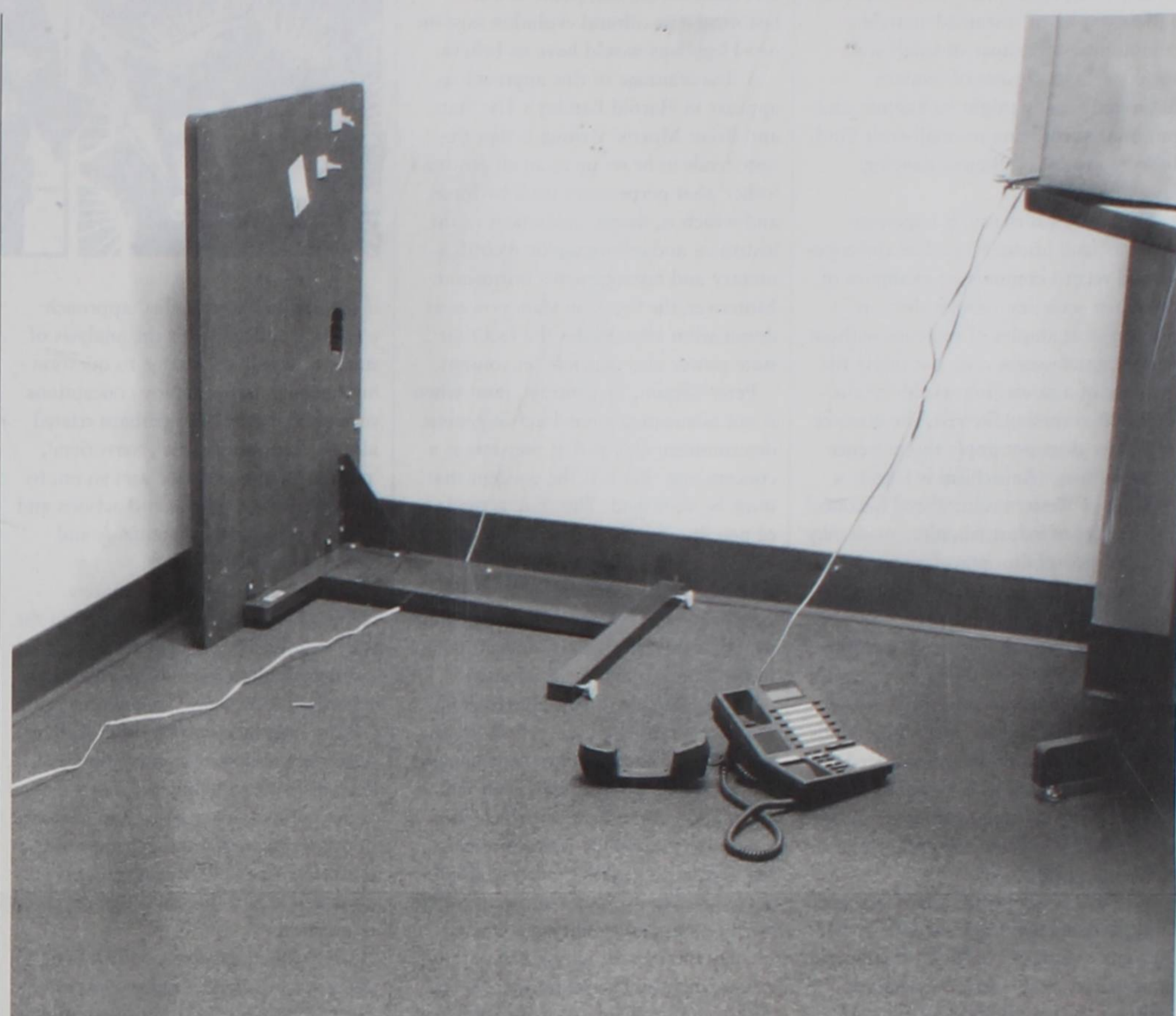
After all, as he stresses, capitalism has always international. Blaming globalisation as such for our current problems is to let capitalism off the hook. And given that most of these problems can't be linked to increased international trade or investment, the roots are better found in the class war at home (which uses globalisation as one of its many weapons).

This, in fact, is the message of the fifth section, 'Finance'. In some ways, it's a summary of Henwood's previous book, the equally excellent *Wall Street*. As in that book, he exposes how finance capital works and for whom. In *After the New Economy*, he summarises his previous arguments and brings them up to date. He again usefully shows how economic theory is deployed as a weapon in the class war.

He notes, for example, the way in which the idea of an 'efficient market', while having little empirical evidence to support it, has been a useful tool in promoting the interests of capital over labour. If the market is always efficient, then promoting the interests of those who own society is, by definition, also efficient.

Henwood exposes how this 'efficiency' translates into higher corporate profits at the expense of the workers, their wages and their job security. His account of how the central banks operate to keep unemployment at a level sufficient to make employees fear the sack (and so remain as compliant workers) should be required reading for all anarchists.

Ultimately, the economy is all about



power. Mainstream economics exists to justify the power and profits of the wealthy. As such, it has little to say about money or finance or the internal workings of a company but a hell of a lot to say about how capital deserves its share. Henwood hammers home his view that profits, interest and rent are simply the unpaid labour of workers and that it is them, not managers, who produce wealth which finance so successfully concentrates in a few hands.

If changing the world first requires understanding it, then Henwood's book

is essential reading. Where it's weak is in making constructive suggestions. From Henwood's analysis, it's clear that a militant labour movement is essential for ensuring a decent standard of living for workers under capitalism. That would be a good place for anarchists to start their own constructive work.

Equally, the moral of the 'new economy' hype is that the appeal of a better world still strikes chords. He ends by saying, "if all challenges to capitalism were dead, why did we hear so much about democratisation and the

overturning of hierarchy? Evidently the message has appeal, even in apparently conservative times".

Henwood exposes the reality of that rhetoric extremely well. He ends on a positive note. "If a little hierarchy-overturning democratisation is such a good thing", he asks, "then why not more?" Well, why not, indeed?

After the New Economy by Doug Henwood, published by The New Press, costs £16.95 and is available from Freedom (add £1.70 postage in the UK, £3.40)

ART EXHIBITION

"What makes something a work of art?" a teacher asks her students as they gather around Roy Lichtenstein's painting, 'Whaam!' (Haywood Gallery, London, until 16th May). This is a legitimate question to ask of an artist whose most famous works are near-exact reproductions of the work of others. Some of these originals (including the inspiration for 'Whaam!') can be seen at this exhibition, the first for Lichtenstein in London since the 1960s.

I didn't hear what the teacher's answer was. My initial thought was that, under capitalism, what makes something a work of art is the willingness of collectors to buy it and punters to pay £8 a look. Of course, the question has a specific relevance for Lichtenstein.

The unknown cartoonist who drew the picture in an obscure and long-forgotten American teen magazine called Heart

Throbs (and which Lichtenstein's 'Oh, Alright' is based on) probably got paid peanuts for the strip. Lichtenstein's large canvass reproduction, almost identical except for its scale, is worth millions and its artist is famous.

But this doesn't diminish the art. For one thing, Lichtenstein's body of work, spanning four decades (all represented here), shows considerable continuity in style and feel. This is mainly due to his fidelity to particular styles and techniques of painting, which amount to much more than just cartoons and speech bubbles. Moreover, the production of 'cartoon' works like 'Whaam!' or 'In the Car' were painstaking affairs, not simply making copies.

The dots which are such familiar elements of his work were individually painted or stencilled on to the canvass. Their use was a deliberate attempt to recreate the 'Benday dots', a technique

fundamental to mechanical printing. This touches on the essence of pop art, of which Lichtenstein was a founder. Like Warhol he took the everyday and the ordinary – cartoon strips, adverts and instruction manuals – and turned them into art. The subject didn't matter in itself. It could be a coffee cup, rib of beef, golf ball, radio or washing machine (all subjects of his art and on display at the Haywood). What mattered was the image itself, particularly its strength and clarity.

These images were taken straight from the American dream, but a dream that was only available to the middle classes. Lichtenstein was born into a middle class Manhattan family, and his art says little about working class life. His paintings are consciously middle class, even his celebration of trash culture like pulp novels.

There's also no hint of subversion or

political awareness in his work. Lichtenstein himself said that, "I'm not sure what social messages my art carries, if any." At the end of the day this is art for art's sake. Pop didn't mean 'popular' in the sense that it reached out to ordinary people. It fails to do so because it stands aside from their experiences.

In artistic terms Lichtenstein was part of a revolution. It's hard to imagine now, when his images are so familiar, but he and his contemporaries created a break in art which, at the time, was shocking. In 1964 *Life* magazine wrote a profile of him under the title 'Is he the worst artist in the US?'

But at the end of the day this exhibition is about art, and the art is good. My personal favourites are his late (1990s) Chinese landscapes. In these, Lichtenstein uses Benday dots to create large panoramas – sea, sky and mountains.

Tiny details, a bridge or a boat are added or small smears of paint.

If you can afford the £8 entrance (£6 concessions) get yourself down to the South Bank. But leave your politics at the door and enjoy some great images.

Richard Griffin

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Commentary

page 6

or sociobiology.

Vis-à-vis the debates provoked by the articles of the Wildfire Collective and their detractors, the relevance of social anthropology lies in the ethnographic record and what it says about non-industrial and non-state societies. I will take the latter first.

Like Iain McKay, I worry about the Wildfire Collective and their supporters. Karen Goaman, contributing self-consciously (though not as a member of the Wildfire Collective) to the recent debates in the pages of Freedom and against Iain McKay's criticisms of 'primitivism', claims that "the only models and examples of sustained anarchist communities are those of small-scale societies" and "lovers of modern industrial society might be happier and more satisfied living in small-scale land-based cultures ... singing, dancing, laughing, talking."

This, needless to say, is hopelessly romantic and orientalist. The anthropological record contains no examples of anarchist societies, though there are numerous examples of societies without states. Statelessness does not imply the absence of a power/knowledge nexus – quite the reverse. Likewise, the absence of a state does not imply the presence of anarchists. (Anarchism is largely a product of Western cultural and historical experiences of industrialisation, modernity and politico-philosophical humanism, which is ironic given that the Wildfire Collective eschews them all).

While anthropologists have sometimes represented the lives of minority peoples in terms of closeness to nature, social egalitarianism and so forth, these kinds of (orientalist) representations need to be understood not as accurate reflections of reality, but as representations embedded within historical and cultural as well as academic 'traditions'.

As such, tuberculosis, infant mortality and parochialism might equally well describe the 'facts' of life in small-scale land-based (and river or sea-based) cultures. I, like Iain McKay, do not reject technology or science: the task is to de-couple these forms of knowledge from purely utilitarian concerns that privilege a calculating goal-oriented rationality from which the life-world has been ruthlessly excluded.

If the writings of the Wildfire Collective and their detractors have revolved around rather polarised and unimaginative imaginings of post-state sociality, the argument between Peter Gibson and Brian Morris, though superficially concerned with the state, has actually been about defending/challenging differing positions concerning what anarchism is (I'm aware that others have contributed to this debate, but I take the positions outlined by these two as broadly representative of the debate so far. I apologise in advance to anyone who may feel that they have been left out and/or wrongly subsumed under or within the Gibson or Morris 'camps').

Harold Barclay – who has unwittingly become part of this debate – in his book *The State*, emphasises that the nation-state is an historically and culturally specific institution. Other forms of social organisation also systemise ranking and hierarchy, though these formations cannot properly be called nation-states.

The advantage of an anthropological analysis of states is the emphasis on the cultural and historical specificity of particular social forms. If, for example, the nation-state is a relatively recent phenomenon dependent on quite specific cultural and historical factors, then it can only be one possible form of social organisation among others and is not inevitable or the end point of our historical and cultural evolution as some neo-Hegelians would have us believe.

A disadvantage of this approach as it appears in Harold Barclay's *The State* and Brian Morris' writing is that the state tends to be set up as an all-powerful 'other' that perpetuates itself by force and which is, despite references to the historical and ethnographic record, a unitary and homogeneous institution. Moreover, the focus on state power as domination alone elides the fact that state power also depends on consent.

Peter Gibson, by contrast, (and when is not advocating some kind of genetic determinism) claims that the state is a concept and that it is the concept that must be abolished. The state is made up of people, and it is perpetuated and reproduced through their everyday actions and thoughts. Importantly, these people are not sinister conspirators, but us. We carry the state around inside our heads more or less unconsciously.

The advantage of this approach is that it requires that 'we' reflect on our willing (and not so willing) entrapment within social, political and economic webs and structures from which there is no escape and which we cannot help but reproduce (I don't mean to disallow the possibility of praxis or agency, but wish to emphasise that even where change is initiated, it's framed within pre-existing limits and horizons). The disadvantage of this approach is that it fails to take account of the historically and culturally conditioned contours of this concept. It uncritically assumes that 'the' state is an homogeneous and unitary idea that has no time or place. Moreover, it ignores the fact that élites frequently do resort to force to silence opposition.

Given the de-temporalising and de-contextualising effects of the kinds of analysis of the state advocated by Brian Morris, Harold Barclay and Peter Gibson, I will turn to social anthropology and the much maligned and fetishised practice of fieldwork as a means of introducing a culturally and historically sensitive methodology for the analysis of states and state power.

Fieldwork fundamentally involves talking, listening and asking questions, whilst paying particular attention to the ways people speak about certain subjects or problems that the anthropologist has identified in advance as an issue for study.



If this kind of 'nominalist' approach were to be adopted for the analysis of states, it would allow one to question how people use or deploy conceptions such as 'the state' and perhaps related ideas of 'authority', 'law', 'terrorism', 'morality', 'rogue states' and so on, to justify their statements and actions and to de-legitimize the statements and actions of others.

For example, anarchists share a common concern: they've identified the state as a problem. What kind of state emerges in anarchist writing? Does 'the state' as it is presented in late nineteenth century anarchist writing differ from the state as represented in contemporary anarchist writing? How are states spoken about, written, represented and imagined in other discourses and genres, or by Western city dwellers as oppose to Southeast Asian (for example) highland minorities?

Do these contradict, confirm or complicate anarchist representations? Further, how are (self) representations of states/anarchists legitimated – what are the processes through which particular ideas and experiences are remembered, forgotten, excluded and/or authorised? To what extent are all and any representations dependent on the cultural and historical situatedness of the representer?

I, like Brian Morris, Harold Barclay and Peter Gibson (and Karen Goaman, Iain McKay and the Wildfire Collective) believe that it is possible for human beings to organise themselves without recourse to the state or the capitalist system of exchange. I also believe that there are ways out of the state and capitalism which are egalitarian but which are not necessarily part of the current anarchist imaginary. Culture and history will be critical factors in determining the forms that any future anarchist societies may take.

Paul-François Tremlett

A sideways look

Like most people, I can tell that something's wrong with the weather. It's unseasonably hot in summer, mild winters are followed by harsh snowfall (which comes after the first signs of spring). All of this signals that there's something up. Now it seems this message might finally have got through to some people with power, as a recent report commissioned by the Pentagon (of all places) goes to show.

The United States government isn't the bogeyman of the left for nothing. Its twin pillars of a military-industrial complex and the big energy companies are responsible for much of its foreign policy, all in the name of securing cheap petrol for the American consumer (and keeping up the consumer demand which fuels modern capitalism). All major recent US military adventures have an energy connection (why else is North Korea the least likely of the dreaded Axis of Evil to be attacked, apart from its nukes?).

So what's changed? The job of the Pentagon isn't just to exert a Dr Evil-style grip on the world, but also to assess threats to American interests. Now the brasshats have finally woken up to the fact that rising sea levels might mean more migration, coupled with wars over resources such as water and agricultural land. These will be exacerbated as droughts threaten more countries.

That the threat is grave is undeniable, but the reason it's starting to be treated as such is down to national security, not to concern for poor people with different coloured skin. They've been dying in wars and famines for some time without a lot of notice being taken (Irish pop singers notwithstanding).

The Pentagon report speculates that Europe (including Britain, for anyone who thinks it might be something brought on by Brussels bureaucracy) might get up to six degrees Fahrenheit colder over the next twenty years. This would be caused by the collapse of the North Atlantic Thermohaline system which would accompany the melting of the Greenland ice sheet.

Forget all those tabloid jokes about Berkshire being the new Bordeaux. It'll be more like the new Labrador, except windier. In this scenario, Africa will get drier and Asia more prone to storms. Crops will fail or become harder to grow. Fish will move elsewhere, if there are any left. Diseases which affect both people and crops will spread.

We can already see that politicians really do take this sort of thing seriously. It's just that they don't want to do anything to mitigate its effects, for fear of losing office to the next bunch of people who promise cake and eating it as well. Israel's security wall is as much about controlling West Bank water as it is about stopping suicide bombers.

Fortress Europe has its own scenario – millions of famine-hit Africans and Asians flocking to these shores.

The Pentagon report notes that future wars will be over "a desperate need for natural resources such as energy, food and water rather than [being driven] by conflicts over ideology, religion or national honour." It's not merely our climate which may become chillier in the not-so-distant future.

Svartfrosk

Words we use

GOD: Most anarchists are atheists or at least agnostics of a particularly committed kind. This means that, on the whole, they've seen death as the end, the final curtain. It's a preoccupation with the life we have that makes most of us determined to make it as pleasant as possible when there ain't no pie in the sky and our earthly life is all, we want to get everything from it that we can.

Yet there's nothing in logic to say that anarchists must be unbelievers in the divine. In principle at least we might believe that god exists, even if we'd be committed to opposing his dominion over us. 'No gods, no masters' is plainly a call to action rather than a statement of fact.

All of which is to ignore that tiny current which is sometimes called 'Christian anarchism' (as much, I suspect, by its opponents as by its friends). This contains everything from the otherworldliness of Tolstoy to the pragmatism of Ammon Hennacy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, what it contains little of is the traditional Christian teaching – that the roots of humanity's impoverishment lie in our self-imposed separation from god.

Opinion on whether 'Christian anarchists' are really anarchists tends to conclude that they aren't. For the present writer, the one excludes the other. I defy anybody who disagrees to read the gospels and still maintain that the two can be reconciled.

Johnny M.

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