

**Everything You  
Ever Wanted  
To Know About**

# **ANARCHISM**

**But Were  
Afraid To Ask**

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Introduction

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There is probably more rubble than any other political idea. Actually, it is a chaos, death and destruction. It is no accident that the word anarchy has been accepted. The State, the press and all the associated authoritarian types, use every means at their disposal to present anarchy as an unthinkable state. From power-hungry politicians to the TV, press and films all preach obedience, and when anarchy is mentioned at all, it is presented as mindless destruction. The alleged necessity of authority is so firmly planted in the average mind that anarchy, which means simply "no government" is almost unthinkable to most people. The same people, on the other hand, will admit that rules, regulations, taxes, officiousness and abuse of power (to name but a few) are irritating to say the least. These things are usually thought of in silence because the alternative — everybody doing what they please — would be anarchy. Yet there are a limitless range of possible societies without the State. Not all of them would be unpleasant to live in. Quite the contrary! Any kind of anarchist society would at least be spared the horrible distortions the State produces. The "negative" side of anarchism — abolition of the State — has to be balanced against what replaces it — a society of freedom and individuality. Various sorts of anarchists have differing ideas on what a society ought to be organized. The abolitionist anarchists believe that

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## Introduction

There is probably more rubbish talked about anarchism than any other political idea. Actually, it has nothing to do with a belief in chaos, death and destruction. Anarchists do not normally carry bombs, nor do they ascribe any virtue to beating up old ladies.

It is no accident that the sinister image of the mad anarchist is so accepted. The State, the press and all the assorted authoritarian types, use every means at their disposal to present anarchy as an unthinkable state of carnage and chaos. We can expect little else from power-mongers who would have no power to monger if we had our way. They have to believe that authority and obedience are essential in order to justify their own crimes to themselves. The TV, press and films all preach obedience, and when anarchy is mentioned at all, it is presented as mindless destruction.

The alleged necessity of authority is so firmly planted in the average mind that anarchy, which means simply 'no government' is almost unthinkable to most people. The same people, on the other hand, will admit that rules, regulations, taxes, officiousness and abuse of power (to name but a few) are irritating to say the least. These things are usually thought to be worth suffering in silence because the alternative — no power, no authority, everybody doing what they pleased — would be horrible. It would be anarchy.

Yet there are a limitless range of possible societies without the State. Not all of them would be unpleasant to live in. Quite the contrary! Any kind of anarchist society would at least be spared the horrible distortions the State produces. The 'negative' side of anarchism — abolition of the State — has to be balanced against what replaces it — a society of freedom and free co-operation.

Various sorts of anarchists have differing ideas on exactly how society ought to be organised. They all agree that the State must be

replaced by a society without classes and without force. It is because of this belief in freedom that we are reluctant to put forward a rigid blueprint. We offer only possible models backed up by evidence drawn from life. Actually, there has already been an anarchist society and it took nothing less than mass murder to stop it.

Another common misunderstanding from those who know slightly more about it, is that anarchism is a nice daydream, a



beautiful but impractical idea. In fact, the anarchist movement has a long history and it arose not in the heads of ivory tower philosophers, but directly, from the practical struggle for survival of masses of ordinary, downtrodden people. It has always been intensely practical in its concerns and its ways of doing things. The movement has come quite close to success a few times. If it is really so hopelessly impractical, then why is the State so determined to stamp it out?

## Elementary anarchism

Very few people seem to understand anarchism, even though it is a very simple, straightforward idea. It can be expressed basically as running our own lives instead of being pushed around.

There is nothing complicated or threatening about anarchism, except the fearsome arguments it can get you into. Such as the one about the chaos there would be if everyone did just what they wanted. But we have chaos already don't we? Millions are out of work, whilst others do too much boring, repetitive labour. People starve at the same time as food is being dumped into the sea to keep prices up. Our air is choked by the fumes from cars that contain only one person. The list of crazy, chaotic things that happen is endless.

Even the 'good' things that the State does are actually harmful. The Health Service, for example, patches us up just like an industrial repair shop — which in a sense it is. It serves to make us dependent on the State and, worst of all, it buys us off cheaply. It prevents us from creating the genuine, self-managed Health Service we need, geared to our needs not theirs.

Authorities by their very nature can only interfere and impose things. Surely, ordinary people can figure out some way of coping, without planners knocking down their houses to build yet more empty office blocks? It is a basic anarchist principle that only people who live in an area have the right to decide what happens there.

All this chaos, we believe, arises from authority and the State. Without the ruling class and its need to keep us in bondage, there would be no State. Without the State we would be in a position to organise freely for our *own* ends. Surely we couldn't make a worse mess than we are stuck with already? Free organisation could provide a much greater orderliness than a society that concentrates

on the systematic robbery and suppression of the majority of its members.

### Some common arguments against anarchism

We are often asked how an anarchist society would deal with, for instance, murderers. Who would stop them without the police?

Most murders are crimes of passion and therefore unpreventable by police or anyone else. Hopefully, however, in a saner, less frustrating society such 'crimes' would be less common.

Our rulers claim to be protecting us from each other. Actually they are more interested in protecting themselves and 'their' property from us.

If we, as members of a local community, owned and shared all resources it would become absurd to steal. An important motive for crime would be abolished.

These local communities would need to develop some means of dealing with individuals who harmed others. Instead of a few thousand professional police there would be 57 million in the 'United Kingdom' alone. Ultimately, our only protection is each other.

Prisons fail to improve or reform anyone. Local people aware of each others' circumstances would be able to apply more suitable solutions, in keeping with the needs of the victim and the offender. The present penal system, on the other hand, *creates* criminal behaviour. Long term prisoners are often rendered incapable of surviving outside an institution that makes all their decisions for them. How is locking people up with others of an anti-social turn of mind (the worst of whom are the screws) supposed to develop responsibility and reasonable behaviour? Of course it does just the opposite. The majority of prisoners re-offend.

Another question anarchists have had thrown at them for years is: "But who would do all the dirty and unpleasant jobs?". We imagine each community would devise its own rota system. What is so impossible about that?

Then there's the question: "But what about those who refuse to work?". Well, social pressure can be applied. People could, for example, be 'sent to Coventry', i.e. ignored. In drastic cases they could be expelled from the community.

But people *need* to work. People have a definite need for creative activity. Notice how many people spend their time working on cars or motor bikes, in gardening, making clothes, creating music. These are all creative activities that can be enjoyable. They are usually thought of as hobbies rather than work, since we're brought up to think of work as a torment to be endured.

In this society of course, work *is* a torment. Naturally, we hate it. This does not mean that we are naturally lazy, it means that we resent being treated like machines, compelled to do mostly meaningless work for someone else's benefit. Work does not have to be like that — and if it were controlled by the people who had to do it, it certainly would not be.

Of course some jobs just have to be done, and there are few methods in sight of making collecting rubbish a fun occupation. Everybody would have to take a share and everybody would have to see to it that nobody got away with shirking their responsibilities.

A further point worth making is that unemployment is only a problem created by capitalism. In a sensible world there would be no unemployment. Everyone would have a shorter working week, because they would only produce things that were needed. If we were to get rid of the parasitic ruling class, we would be free of most of the economic pressure to work.

If you still need to be convinced that an anarchist society could solve the problem of people failing to meet their responsibilities, then imagine yourself being compelled to face a meeting of the whole community you live in and being publicly discussed as a problem. Ugh!

Yet another common objection is: "Well, perhaps it would work on a peasant village scale, but how can you run a complex industrial society without the authority of managers?". Well, in the first place, we believe that society needs to be broken down to smaller-scale units as much as possible, so as to make them comprehensible to small groups of ordinary people. It is a noticeable fact of organisation, as well as a basic principle of anarchist theory, that small groups of people can work efficiently together, and co-ordinate with other such groups; whereas large formless groups are gullible and easily dominated. Expanding this point it is interesting to note that recently the famous 'economies of

scale' that justify steel works, for example, covering many square miles, have been increasingly called into question. Beyond a certain point factories, farms, administrative systems and so on, actually get much less efficient as they get larger.

As much as is reasonably possible should be produced and consumed locally. Some facilities, however, would have to be dealt with on a regional or even larger scale. There is no insoluble problem about this, in fact solutions were found by the Spanish working class in the thirties. The Barcelona Bus Company doubled services, made generous contributions to the City Entertainments Collective and produced guns for the front in the bus workshops. All this was achieved with a smaller workforce, as many had left to fight the fascists. This amazing increase in efficiency, despite the war and serious shortages of essential supplies, is not surprising on reflection — after all, who can best run a bus company? Obviously bus workers.

All the Barcelona workers were organised into syndicates — groups of workers in the same enterprise, sub-divided into work groups. Each group made its own day-to-day decisions and appointed a delegate to represent their views on wider issues concerning the whole factory, or even the whole region. Each of the delegates was instructed in what to say by their workmates and the task of being a delegate was frequently rotated. Delegates could be changed at short notice if it was felt they were getting out of line (the principle of recallability). These show the basic anarchist principles of free federation in practice. By adding more levels of delegation it is possible to cope with organising activity on any scale, without anyone giving up their freedom to work as they choose. This idea of federalism is illustrated again in a later section called 'Local action and organisation'.

Let's move on to another objection — "Wouldn't a society without a State have no defence from attack by foreign states?"

Well, it must be said that having a State hasn't prevented us from being taken over by the US Empire. In fact 'our own' armed forces are used against us as an army of occupation. The State does not defend us. It uses us as cannon fodder to defend our rulers, who, if the truth be untangled, are our real enemies.

Returning to the question, a classic anarchist answer is to arm the people. Anarchist militias in Spain very nearly won the civil

war despite shortages of weapons, treachery by the Communists and intervention by Germany and Italy. Where they made their mistake was in allowing themselves to be integrated into an army run by statist. An armed population would be difficult to subdue.

But yes, we could be destroyed. We believe that the real nuclear threat is from 'our side'. The American rulers would probably exterminate us all rather than willingly allow us our freedom.

Against the threat of destruction our best defence is the revolutionary movement in other countries. Put another way, our best defence against the Russian nuclear bomb is the current movement of the Polish workers. This may well spread to the rest of the Soviet Empire. Conversely their best hope of not being vapourised is that we might succeed in abolishing 'our' bomb. (CND has not yet realised that banning the megadeath weapons means banning the State!)

It is instructive how the Russian revolution was saved from wholesale British intervention by a series of mutinies and 'blackings' by British workers.

True security would be guaranteed if we could develop our international contacts to the point where we can be sure that the workers in each 'enemy' country will not allow their rulers to attack us.

The last few pages have been a very brief introduction to the way anarchists think. There are plenty more ideas and details to be found in various books on the subject. But basically you understand anarchism by living it, becoming involved with other anarchists and working on projects, so this is the theme around which the majority of this little book is written — anarchist actions.

## Anarchism in action

If you have followed this pamphlet so far, you should have a fairly reasonable idea of what an anarchist society is. The problem is how to get from here to there.

Within anarchism there are many different but related ideas. There are complete systems of anarchist political theory going by names like federalism, mutualism, individualism, syndicalism, anarchist-communism, anarcha-feminism, situationism, and so on.



The arguments between different brands of anarchism have been going on for a long time and are too involved for an introductory pamphlet.

However, if we think in terms of what anarchism says needs to be done now, it turns out that there is considerable agreement between brands. Each strand emphasises the importance of action in a particular area of life.

If you begin to put the ideas of the following pages into practice, you will start to work out your own version of anarchism. By doing this you will be adding a new member to a movement that always needs new members, particularly ones who have thought things through. Try your ideas out on your friends, read more on anarchism, talk with other anarchists!

*Be an independent thinker. There is no other sort.*

## Organising in the workplace

Traditionally, anarchists believe that the main problem with the world is that it is divided into masters and 'wage slaves'. If we could get rid of the bosses and run industry ourselves, for the benefit of our own needs not theirs, it would clearly make a big improvement and would transform every area of life.

There are, however, some anarchists who believe the working class is so used to being enslaved that some other route to revolution will have to be found.

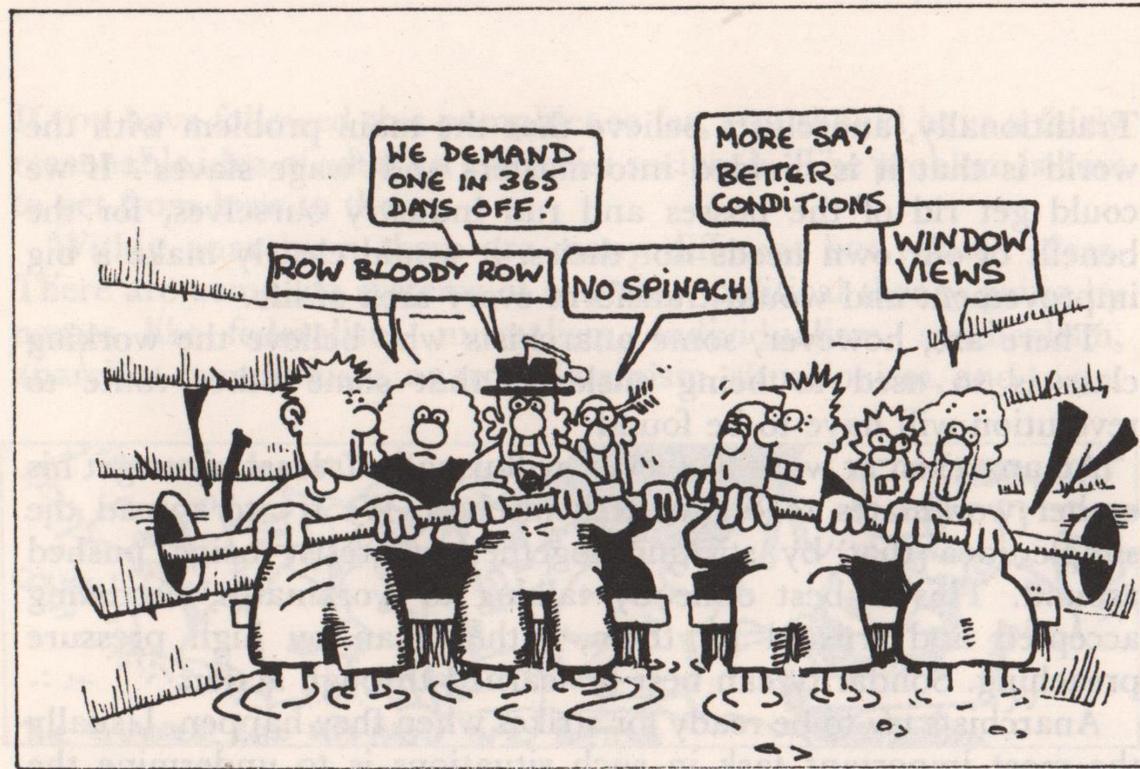
An anarchist at work, however, will usually at least try to get his or her workmates to organise themselves. We try to spread the simple idea that by sticking together we resist being pushed around. This is best done by talking to workmates, becoming accepted and trusted by them, rather than by high pressure preaching. Solidarity can best be learned through action.

Anarchists try to be ready for strikes when they happen. Usually the most important task in such situations is to undermine the power of the official union line and get people working together directly rather than through the 'proper channels'. The point of anarchism is to seize control of our own lives, not to hand it over to an official for a sell out. As it happens such direct action is the tried and tested way of winning industrial battles. Unity is strength.

To the anarchist, strikes for more small changes, demarcation disputes, and so on, are not especially revolutionary. To us, the only real point in such actions is that in the course of them people may begin to learn how to organise for themselves and gain confidence in their collective power. Eventually this experience could prove useful and begin to allow workers effectively to challenge the industrial power structure and build towards complete workers' control of production.

We have a long history to draw on and many useful techniques

that have worked elsewhere. There are ideas like slowing down till we reckon we are working at a rate appropriate to the wage. Or 'good work' strikes, taking care to do a good job irrespective of the time it takes. Such actions only make sense if taken by a group of people in a united fashion. They are examples of direct action. We don't ask the bosses, we tell them. By contrast the indirect (so-



called democratic) method is to wait five years and put a cross opposite the name of a labour politician, who turns out to be in the same freemason's lodge as the opposition candidate.

We would hope that self-organisation among workers will once again (as at other times in recent history) reach the point where they are prepared to act together and confront the State in its entirety. If the next time around there is adequate experience, organisation, preparation and awareness, it will be possible to dispose of the State and bosses and move towards an anarchist society and an anarchist world.

There are a variety of ways differing anarchists believe this could come about. Some anarchists support the idea of building giant unions controlled from the bottom up, rather than the usual top down structure. This — syndicalism — is a clear strategy for

revolution which has been shown effective in the past. The union ideally includes all the workers in each place and aims to develop self-organisation to the point where the workers can easily take over the factories. Strikes can, where necessary, be backed up by solidarity action from other workers.

Eventually, enough workers will have joined and become active for a general strike. The State is paralysed and can do nothing if it cannot trust the army to kill its own relatives. The general strike may be a general takeover by the people, or develop into one. At this point the work of building Utopia can begin.

Some anarchists reject aspects of this plan. They doubt the wisdom of forming unions at all, even if decentralised. They worry that a layer of professional leaders will develop. There is also the danger of getting lost in the swamp of everyday compromise over petty issues.

In any case this difference in approach does not prevent working together. In the 'United Kingdom' (joke phrase) the existing Labour-mafia controlled unions have already got it all sewn up. The prospects for forming anarchist unions are obviously dismal.

In these circumstances, it seems that the way forward is to try to promote links between workers that by-pass the mafia controlled union HQ's which try to monopolise information so as to maintain control. Any action such as flying pickets, which puts control in the hands of strikers themselves, should be encouraged.

It would be useful if anarchists working in the same industry were in contact. Where contacts do not already exist, a conference is a good starting-off point.

## 'National' issues

### Large scale campaigns

Anarchists usually make a poor showing in influencing large scale campaigns. This is partly because the christians, liberals, trotskyists, and so on, who generally manage to control them, often make them so lifeless, ineffectual and generally wet that no self-respecting anarchist will go near them.

In fact we see the leaderships of these groups as an important part of the system, whose function is to control protest by steering it harmlessly into 'proper' channels.

An example of this process at work was the attempt by 'Friends of the Earth' to contest the public inquiry into the Windscale nuclear reprocessing plant. The result was that a good deal of energy and money was directed into an entirely useless argument between rival experts. The illusion was fostered that the government is fair and reasonable and has a right to make this kind of decision. The verdict was of course a foregone conclusion and the go-ahead was given. The net effect was to misdirect and defuse protest about the nuclear power programme.

On the other hand, many anarchists believe that it is a good idea to get involved with campaigns such as CND, the anti-Nazi League, animal liberation, and so on. This is because there is some prospect that joining one of these campaigns may be the first step for some people in becoming anarchists. An anarchist's presence might help this process. Also, campaigns which bring important issues to public attention provide opportunities to show how particular evils relate to oppression in general and the need for revolution. In some cases it is worth urging anarchists to join such organisations in order to prevent domination by the more noxious political types. Sometimes it is actually possible to introduce anarchist methods of organising and direct action tactics.

For example, an anarchist involved in CND would try to point out the relationship between nuclear weapons, nuclear power, militarism, the State and class society. We would point out the futility of asking the State to behave nicely and would recommend instead asking the workers who build the bombs and the aircraft, and so on, to do something more useful instead. We would also do our best to prevent our old enemy the Labour Party from taming the anti-missile movement and then quietly burying it, as they did in the early sixties.

We would also try to spread more decentralised methods of organisation, based on small groups federating with each other. This would have the advantages of greater flexibility, giving each member more chance of being fully involved, and of preventing a ruling clique from developing.

Few anarchists would claim that a movement like CND is likely to bring about the revolution, or even to get anywhere near banning nuclear weapons. The best we can reasonably hope for is that it will cause increasing numbers of people to think about how this society really works.

### Interpersonal relationships

As we have said earlier, there is a concern for the rights of the individual running through anarchism. There is no point in all our activities and theorising if it is not eventually going to make life better for individuals like you and me.

Unlike marxists and other fake socialists, we believe in at least trying to live out our principles in everyday life. If you believe in equality you should treat people as equals as far as you can. An anarchist would be less likely to forgive Marx's ill treatment of his servants and his wife than a marxist would!

The ways people treat each other add up to make society as a whole. In an insane society like this one, people treat each other badly.

Sadly, though, the hippies were wrong. It is not 'all in your head'. Individual solutions like dropping acid and living in the country turn out to be not solutions at all, but simply escapism. Before the revolution it is not possible simply to choose to live as though you were free. Society will not let you.

Before the revolution it is up to us to behave as if we were reasonable human beings in a reasonable world as far as possible. It is difficult, but not impossible, with a little help from your friends, to grow to something more than the state of infantile dependence this society tries to keep us in.

### The authoritarian family

A common myth, both in fascism and in everyday anti-humanism, is the 'sanctity' of the family and the 'holy' institution of motherhood.

Many women today are fighting against being pushed into the role of mothers and nothing else, and against the everyday domination of women and children by men, which is what the family is really all about.

The reality of family life is quite different from the sentimental ideal. Wife battering, rape and child abuse are not accidental or isolated events — they are a result of conditioning in the family and by the media.

Until we have freedom and equality in our daily lives we will have no freedom or equality at all, nor will we want it sincerely.

You have only to look at the 'master and slave' content of any porn magazine to see that sexual repression leads to domination and submission. If power is more important than fulfilment in your sexual life, then it will be more important in the rest of your life also.

*Support free love. If it's not free, it's not love.*

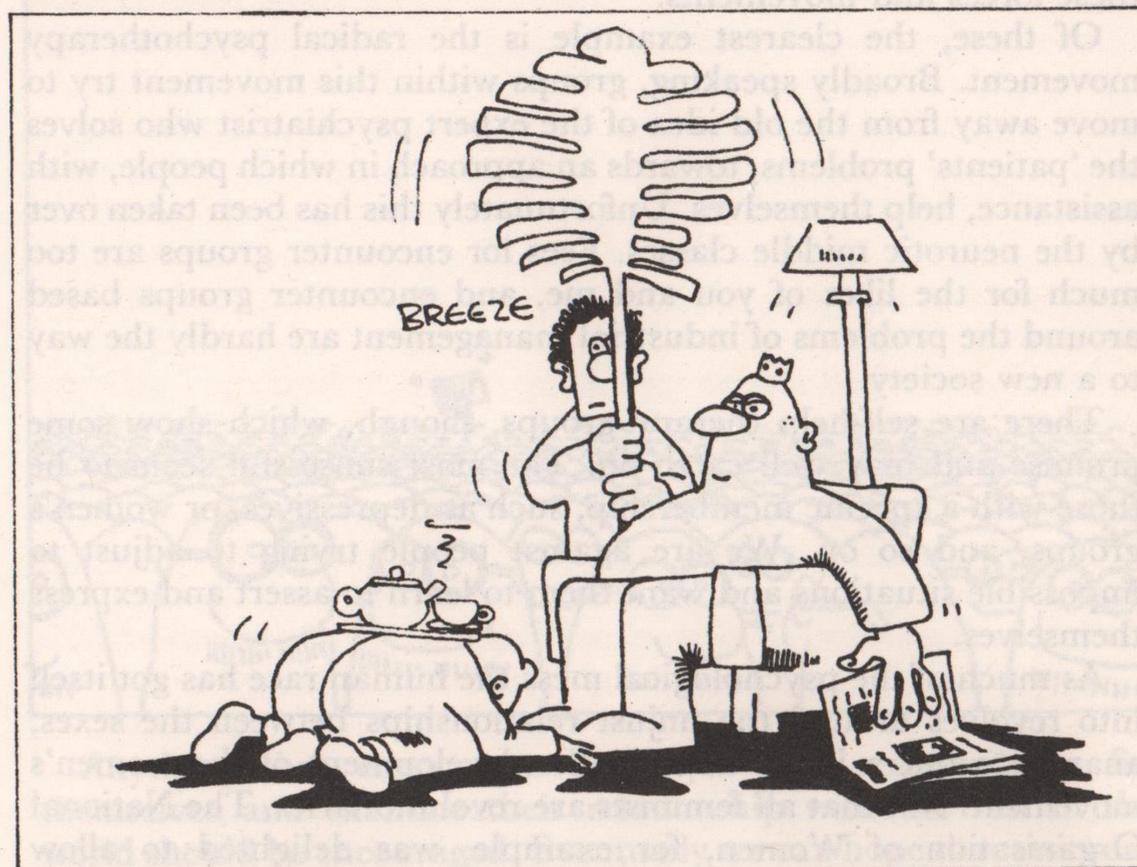
Right wing people talk a great deal about sex and what they call 'sexual morality' and 'purity'. Even 'racial purity' is a largely sexual idea. It is based on fear of the sexuality of 'inferior races', feared because it threatens their own sexual control and power.

Racists ask: "Would you let your daughter marry one of them?". Who are you to say what 'your' daughter should do with her own sex life anyway?

Anarchists generally do not hold with conventional marriage. They do not accept that it is any business of the church or the State what people do with their sexual relationships. True emotional security for both children and adults is less likely to be found in a legally enforceable and artificially 'permanent' tie between two

people of either sex, than it is in a wider network of relationships that may or may not have a sexual component.

Many anarchists have seen living in communes as an important way in which to change society. But living in the same house as nine other people is not in itself the key to the ideal future. The important thing is to change our attitudes: to become more open and generous and less competitive and afraid of each other. The important thing is to have plenty of real friends rather than hiding in the family nest. We can do this as workmates and neighbours as well as home sharers.



Forming communes now, or trying to, is riddled with problems. Communes at the moment frequently fail either through isolation, or through squabbles within the group, or for a variety of other reasons. People brought up in this society do not easily develop more open, generous and honest relationships. Most anarchists settle for being just a little less isolationist than most. We just do the best we can, and realise there is no such thing as perfection in an oppressive society. There are no anarchist saints.

## Changing everyday life

Unless we can help people, including ourselves, to become less dominated by fear, anxiety and insecurity, there is little point in expecting them to behave sensibly and to start building a free, creative society. Authoritarian ideas and unreasoning hatred of scapegoats such as blacks and homosexuals are part of a mass mental illness.

Fortunately, there are forces operating in the direction of greater mental health, and anarchists should do what they can to assist these forces and movements.

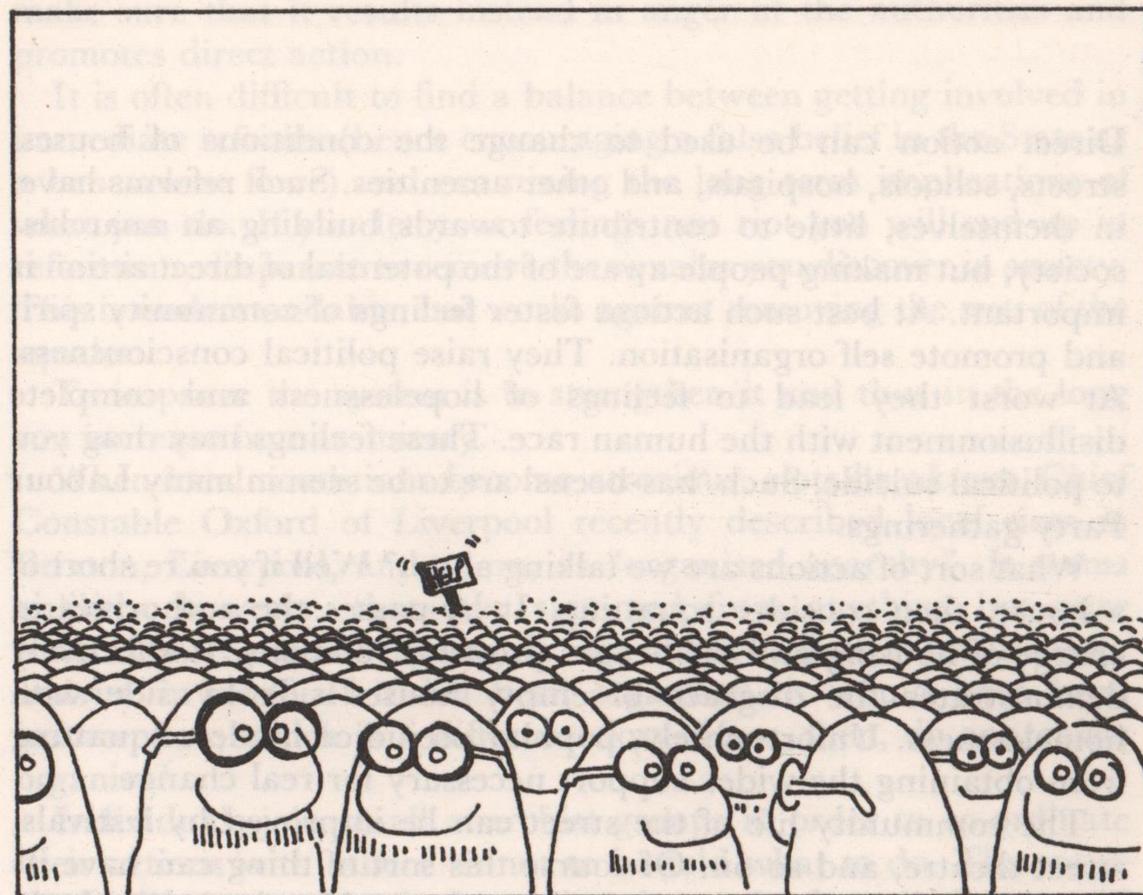
Of these, the clearest example is the radical psychotherapy movement. Broadly speaking, groups within this movement try to move away from the old idea of the expert psychiatrist who solves the 'patients' problems, towards an approach in which people, with assistance, help themselves. Unfortunately this has been taken over by the neurotic middle classes. Fees for encounter groups are too much for the likes of you and me, and encounter groups based around the problems of industrial management are hardly the way to a new society.

There are self-help therapy groups, though, which show some promise and may well catch on. The most successful seem to be those with a specific membership, such as depressives, or women's groups, and so on. We are against people trying to adjust to impossible situations and want them to learn to assert and express themselves.

As much of the psychological mess the human race has got itself into revolves around the unjust relationships between the sexes, anarchists put a lot of hope in the development of the women's movement. Not that all feminists are revolutionaries. The National Organisation of Women, for example, was delighted to allow women to person nuclear missile control rooms. Nevertheless, there is a strong anarchist strand to the women's movement, in the emphasis on small leaderless groups, self-help and the importance of women coming to terms with each other's feelings. Challenging male domination should logically lead on to challenging all domination.

The women's movement also illustrates another promising development — the tendency to organise in small groups and

collectives. Where these work well they provide much needed support and a sense of worth to the individuals involved. Other movements, such as parts of the gay movement, claimants unions, squatters, self-help health groups, and so on, are good for the same reason. This way of organising tends to help the development of sanity.



Anything that encourages people to take responsibility for themselves and examine their relationship with the rest of the world should be encouraged. Eventually we can hope that attitudes will change enough to allow people to have the confidence to take back power over their own lives.

## Local action and organisation

Direct action can be used to change the conditions of houses, streets, schools, hospitals, and other amenities. Such reforms have, in themselves, little to contribute towards building an anarchist society, but making people aware of the potential of direct action is important. At best such actions foster feelings of community spirit and promote self organisation. They raise political consciousness. At worst they lead to feelings of hopelessness and complete disillusionment with the human race. These feelings may drag you to political suicide. Such 'has-beens' are to be seen in many Labour Party gatherings.

What sort of actions are we talking about? Well if you're short of a house, then consider squatting. It by-passes the authorities in charge of housing and challenges property relations. It effectively demonstrates the disgrace of empty houses side by side with homelessness. Unfortunately, popular prejudice hinders squatting from obtaining the wider support necessary for real change.

The community life of the street can be improved by festivals, street theatre, and so on. Of course this sort of thing can have its drawbacks too, unless you're the sort of anarchist that's into Lady Di and her mates!

Anarchists have participated in and often dreamt up all sorts of self-help schemes. These include making better use of land, labour swapping schemes, consumer product sharing schemes. Again these encourage independence and demonstrate that alternative forms of economic exchange are viable. Beware paid community workers wishing to professionalise the idea and destroy its real benefits by making it part of the system.

Another common area of anarchist activity is getting involved in local campaigns. These may be useful in developing organisation and awareness and can have the virtue of making people think

about political issues. A campaign against the closure of a local hospital, for instance, raises questions about who controls the hospitals and for whose benefit? Unfortunately, people are often led astray by their illusions about 'democracy' and politicians, and wind up getting fobbed off or conned. This can result in disillusionment and apathy. The role of the anarchist is to try and make sure that it results instead in anger at the authorities and promotes direct action.

It is often difficult to find a balance between getting involved in immediate reforms (hence encouraging a false belief in the State as a benevolent force) and examining the long term implications of what you do. If you let your feelings run riot you will end up in reformism, desperate to remove the squalor you discover in society. This is understandable, but works against removing the *roots* of the squalor.

To improve the system is to strengthen it and thus in the long run increase human misery.

When local conditions become atrocious, riots break out. Chief Constable Oxford of Liverpool recently described local riots in Brixton, Liverpool, and so on, as "organised anarchy". It seems unlikely, however, that they stemmed from anything but pure frustration. Sporadic rioting is not a particularly revolutionary activity in itself. If it *had* been organised, it would have been insurrection, which is a different story. How, then, do anarchists organise?

Individuals join small anarchist groups in order to co-ordinate their actions with others — not to be told what to do. The entire group discusses a particular action, but only those in favour will perform it. This contrasts completely with trotskyist groups in which each individual member must follow the party line.

Disagreement on an important issue, or lack of shared action, simply means that a new grouping will come into being. In various parts of the country, groups have formed larger federations to co-ordinate the actions of these small groups (in a non-authoritarian way, of course).

This model of organisation has already become common in other strands of political activity, like women's groups and some community groups. If anarchism grows, one would expect to see an increase in this way of organising.

Groups of people in a street, or perhaps at a particular workplace, can organise in this way to take the decisions that affect them. They can send delegates to larger meetings, taking this task in turn, instructing the delegate what to say, kicking him/her out if s/he gets power hungry. A utopian idea? It is already working now on a small scale (for example in the CND). What's so difficult about it? All we need is a total revolution in everyday consciousness! In this way, a non-authoritarian system of organising all aspects of our lives from the cradle to the grave could emerge — it would be a federalist type of anarchist society.

Anarchists see it as vital to educate people for a new society. Some would go so far as to say that it is all we can reasonably do. To attempt a revolution as a tiny minority is just not on and with the best of intentions could lead only to a new slavery. A genuine revolution can only be made if the great majority of people want it and actively participate in creating the new world. Naturally, it would stand a much better chance if the people had first organised, prepared and thought about the issues and problems. This means that one of our top priorities is to spread our ideas as far as possible.

Preaching, however, is best avoided. We do not want mere followers. An even worse danger is that we may begin to hand out our ideas as a dogma. Finally, we do not want to talk at people, but with them.

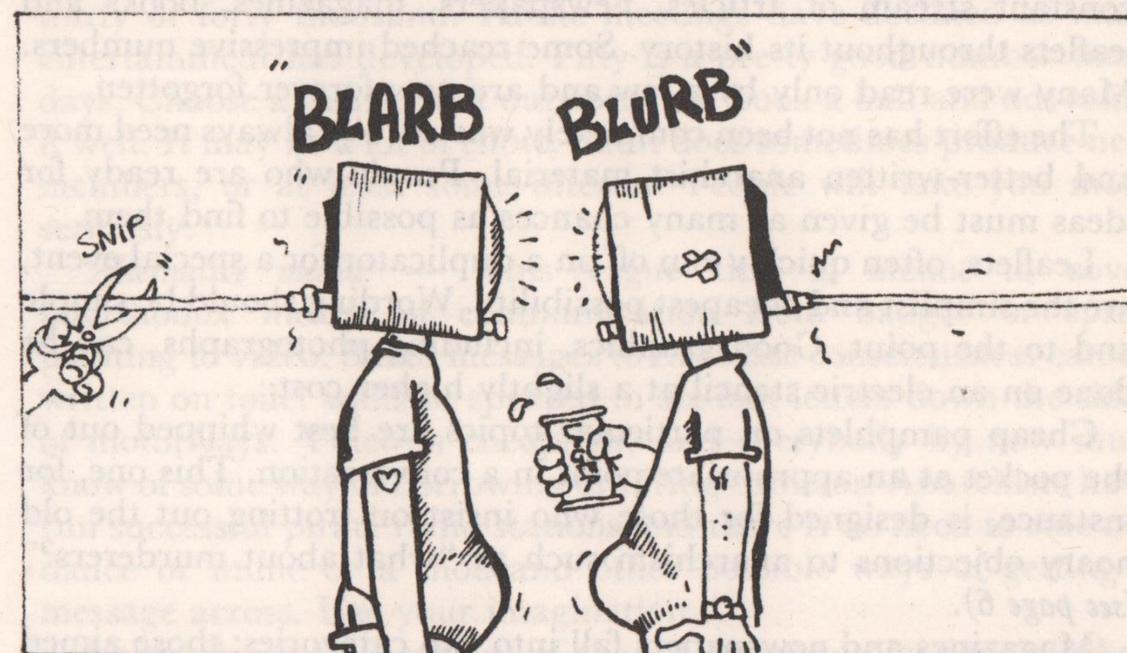
This last point is important. It is probably the surest sign of the degenerate state of modern society that communications are becoming increasingly impersonal, standardised and one way. Millions of people watch the same TV programmes and read the same newspapers. As a result their own conversations are standardised. Communications have become a commodity to be consumed, 'sounds' to be bought on plastic tapes. All modern communications media have two things in common: you have to pay for them, and there is no way of participating, you listen or watch, nothing else is required of you.

Our belief in freedom leads us to demand freedom of speech and freedom of the press. This may seem odd, as these were old nineteenth century liberal rallying cries. The liberals now seem fairly satisfied that we have these precious freedoms already.

What they mean, of course, is that *they* have these freedoms. Ordinary mortals, to say nothing of 'dangerous extremists' like

ourselves, do not. We can say what we like (almost), but not on prime viewing time; we can write anything we like, but won't be able to distribute it through W H Smith's. Unless everyone has a reasonably good chance of actually being heard, then freedom of speech means nothing and they are quite happy to give it to us.

A recent Spanish coup attempt is said to have failed because the fascist officers had an old fashioned view of political power and seized the parliament building. Next time they will know better. They will seize the radio stations.



Journalists, print workers, writers, technicians and actors may have to play a vital part in the struggle for a new society. They have it in their power to tell the truth. The cruddy 'product' that they obediently continue to churn out ought to have shamed them all into resigning by now. Agitation within the communications industry, for workers' control of content, is a matter of urgency.

Because communications are so tightly controlled by a very small clique who know very well the importance of their power, we are hardly likely to stand much chance of getting our views known through the existing set up. We need to find some other way of spreading our ideas until such time as the people get around to seizing control.

We have been forced out on to the fringes of society. We are obliged to create our own media in order to express ourselves.

Naturally, it is all on a small scale and we reach only a few people with each leaflet, magazine or whatever. We can only hope that all the little things we do will add up. After all, a thousand leaflets are not wasted if they convince one new anarchist.

Spreading the word is important, and an impressive range of different approaches have been tried at one time or another. Here we list some of the things anarchists do or can do to get their ideas across.

*The printed word* — The anarchist movement has produced a constant stream of articles, newspapers, magazines, books and leaflets throughout its history. Some reached impressive numbers. Many were read only by a few and are now forever forgotten.

The effort has not been completely wasted. We always need more and better-written anarchist material. People who are ready for ideas must be given as many chances as possible to find them.

Leaflets, often quickly run off on a duplicator for a special event, are the simplest and cheapest possibility. Wording should be simple and to the point. Good graphics, including photographs, can be done on an electric stencil at a slightly higher cost.

Cheap pamphlets on particular topics are best whipped out of the pocket at an appropriate point in a conversation. This one, for instance, is designed for those who insist on trotting out the old hoary objections to anarchism such as "what about murderers?" (see page 6).

Magazines and newspapers fall into two categories: those aimed at, or of interest only to, other anarchists, and those aimed at reaching the uncommitted multitude. We seem to have plenty of magazines for anarchists but a shortage of agitational ones. There are a few, good, local anarchist papers: in addition many anarchists work on 'community' papers dealing with local issues.

Book publishing and distribution is also an important part of the movement. Order anarchist books at your local library. There are also plenty of anarchist books yet to be written. We need more works of anarchist theory, more analyses of present society and strategy for change. There is also scope in fiction or poetry. Writing a book is not as daunting as it might first seem. Many of the people who do write books are complete idiots.

*Street theatre* — This method of communicating is perhaps not used enough by anarchists. Writing and rehearsing plays can be a

useful practice in getting a group working together. The proper legal approach is to apply for planning permission (be sure to have a harmless sounding name). On the other hand, the 'Santa Claus Army' who invaded the toy departments of Amsterdam stores and gave away toys to the kids were also indulging in street theatre, though of a less legal kind. Some kind of semi-theatrical event to make people think is a good alternative to the usual boring old demo.

*Public meetings* — At one time anarchist meetings drew crowds of thirty or forty thousand. Public meetings have declined as mass entertainment has developed. Fifty is a pretty good number these days. Choose a theme, sort out speakers, book a hall and advertise it well. It may be a lot of effort, but it does sometimes produce new members, or at least some interest. People will take you more seriously.

*'Alternative media'* — This vague title is meant to cover unorthodox means of communication from badges or spray painting to video. Small messages to the mass consciousness can be written on toilet walls or sprayed in six-foot letters down the sides of motorways. Video is cheap(ish) and everybody by now must know of some way of borrowing or hiring cameras. Anarchists have run successful pirate radio stations and there is no need to rule out dance or mime or a thousand other possible ways of getting a message across. Use your imagination.

Although we are kept out of the mass communications market, we can still find ways of reaching out with our ideas. The struggle to make means of expression available to the people at large is one of the most vital parts of the struggle for freedom. By imaginatively pioneering new means of communication that are easily available, we are not only spreading our views but helping others to express themselves. Finally, the way in which an idea is communicated may be at least as important as the idea itself. If it allows or encourages participation so that people can stop being merely an 'audience' and start expressing themselves, it is a direct challenge to the system of power which needs us docile.

*Music* — Rebellious or revolutionary music has a much longer history than the fashion-conscious youth of today, or even the ageing hippies of yesterday, may realise. Believe it or not many operas turn around essentially revolutionary themes! In the

eighteen-thirties, possession of a musical instrument was illegal for the lower orders. This was because wandering musicians were becoming alarmingly successful at stirring up discontent.

Many anarchists choose to get involved in music as a way of communicating with people. It is a useful sort of activity for anarchists to do, and of course it can be fun. Sadly, much current 'anarchist music' is neither anarchist nor music, but some of it is good and some very good. It's all a matter of personal taste anyway.

Music has the power to appeal to emotions directly. It is possible to communicate in a more basic way. It is also possible to use it to hypnotise and manipulate people, something which we would hope to avoid doing.

Again, what we need to do is make music available to people, encourage them to have a go and bring out their creativity. Some anarchists feel that for this reason, high technology expensive electric music should be avoided. On the other hand, the possibilities of home taping and easily produced cassettes are quite exciting.

We need to create new ways of making and sharing music that by-pass the music industry. Let them howl about loss of copyright when their tapes are illegally copied. They've had things their own way too long.

*Art* — Paintings in galleries have been described as 'museum art'. What is meant by this is that they are objects to be admired and bought and sold. They separate art from life and from people at large. Art as a saleable item is the best that this system can offer. Art as an *activity* it could neither understand nor allow.

There is a crying need to release the creative abilities of 'ordinary' people. This we can at least attempt to do when talking to people. We can find ways to work for the movement and enjoy ourselves at the same time. By using our own creativity, we can hope to reach the hidden parts of people that other ideas cannot reach.

Spreading the word, or 'propaganda', has to be a major part of any anarchist strategy. Above all else an anarchist revolution requires that people know what they are doing and why. Nobody can be forced into freedom: it must be chosen and taken, or it is not really freedom. Our task is harder than that of the door-to-door

Jehovah's witnesses. It is not enough for us to tell people what to think — they must think for themselves, or they are not really anarchists.

### Schools and education

Although we distrust schools, anarchists place great faith in the power of education. One of the major sources of hope for a better world is that the next generation, given help, might grow up less neurotic than the last. Some would go so far as to say that educating children for freedom is the only real hope of eventually bringing about an anarchist society.

Schools are mainly concerned with sorting and grading children for their future roles in the social hierarchy — and ensuring that they accept the need for competition, hierarchy and respect for authority. Such a system demands that the majority of children — and adults — are made to feel inferior. Anarchists believe that academic examinations are a meaningless measure of a person's potential for playing a useful role in society. The cult of the professional expert is designed to shatter our confidence in our own abilities and judgement.

Anarchists are opposed to corporal punishment or any form of compulsion in education. Attendance at all classes should be voluntary. Compulsion destroys the natural enthusiasm for knowledge and understanding. Real education is the opposite of compulsory schooling, where the main lessons are fear and respect for authority. We need to equip our children with critical minds to understand the world, to see what changes are necessary to make it a better place for everyone, and to be able to bring about the necessary changes.

Anarchists are opposed to any religious indoctrination in schools. Fear and superstition have no place in an ethical education. Religious 'education' should be abolished and replaced by the discussion of moral and philosophical questions based on concern and respect for others.

It is crazy to think that education merely consists of spending eleven years or so of our lives in schools cut off from the real world outside. It would be much healthier for our education to be integrated with the everyday work and life of society. In this way

everyone's particular skills would be properly recognised by society and used for the education of others. We need to break down the divisions between work, play and education. Education should be available throughout our lives, rather than being arbitrarily confined to that part of our lives spent in schools. We are all potential learners and teachers, passing on and acquiring skills and understanding as we go through life.

Anarchists are generally agreed that the complete liberation of education is dependent on the creation of an anarchist society. However, this has not stopped anarchists from trying to create freer environments for children to grow and learn, here and now. Some anarchists have educated their children at home. Others with other parents and children, have worked together rather than remain in isolated family units. In the last three decades several free schools have been established based on anarchist principles, and they have performed a valuable service in demonstrating in practical ways that alternatives exist. However, they have faced constant financial problems and all the other problems which come from trying to live freely in an unfree society.

Some anarchists, and others who share their views on education, have concluded that for the foreseeable future most children will be in State schools and, therefore, have tried to change existing State schools as teachers or parents.

Although by the nineteen-sixties the educational establishment had accepted libertarian methods at A S Neill's Summerhill School for the fee-paying children of wealthy parents, they were horrified at the prospect of similar methods being adopted in State schools for working class children. The most successful attempts, those at Rivinghill School and William Tyndale School in London, were eventually stopped by the local education authority and the teachers were thrown out of their jobs.

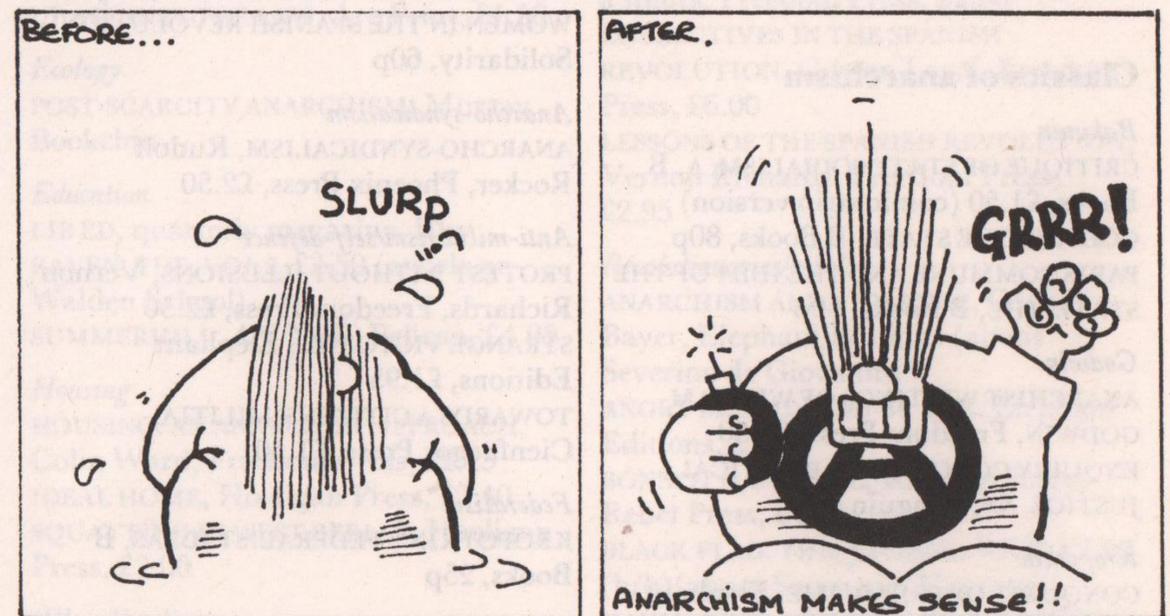
The lesson for those who try again in the future is that it is essential to break down the isolation of schools from the community, so that parents will understand and actively support what anarchists are trying to do in schools.

## Conclusion

For more detailed consideration of anarchist theory, we have provided a booklist for further reading. We have listed areas of activity and outlined the anarchist approach. We have made no attempt to indicate which types of activity are most likely to lead to a non-authoritarian future. This kind of judgement requires careful consideration of the nature of society and strategy for change. We hope that you will eventually form your own conclusions. Anarchists make up their own minds.

If you are interested, read more, talk to your local anarchists, think things through. There is a lot to be getting on with.

Can you think of a good excuse for not being an anarchist? Right, then get on with it!



## Further reading

### Introductions to anarchism

- ABC OF ANARCHISM, Alexander Berkman, Freedom Press, £2.00  
 ANARCHISM AND ANARCHIST-COMMUNISM, Peter Kropotkin, Freedom Press, £1.25  
 ANARCHIST READER, THE, George Woodcock, Fontana, £2.95  
 ANARCHY, Malatesta, Freedom Press, £1.00  
 ANARCHY IN ACTION, Colin Ward, Freedom Press, £2.50  
 FLOODGATES OF ANARCHY, Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer, Kahn & Averill, £3.25

### Classics of anarchism

#### Bakunin

- CRITIQUE OF STATE SOCIALISM, A, B Books, £1.50 (comic strip version)  
 GOD AND THE STATE, B Books, 80p  
 PARIS COMMUNE AND THE IDEA OF THE STATE, THE, B Books, 30p

#### Godwin

- ANARCHIST WRITINGS OF WILLIAM GODWIN, Freedom Press, £3.50  
 ENQUIRY CONCERNING POLITICAL JUSTICE, AN, Penguin

#### Kropotkin

- CONQUEST OF BREAD, THE, Elephant Editions, £3.60  
 FIELDS, FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS TOMORROW, Freedom Press, £3.50

- GREAT FRENCH REVOLUTION, THE, VOLS 1 & 2, Elephant Editions, each £3.95  
 MUTUAL AID, Freedom Press, £3.50  
 STATE, THE, Freedom Press, £1.75

See also books by Proudhon, Malatesta, Goldman and Berkman

### Anarchist '-isms'

#### Anarcha-feminism

- QUIET RUMOURS, various authors, Dark Star/Rebel Press, £1.80  
 UNTYING THE KNOT, Freeman and Levine, Dark Star/Rebel Press, 60p  
 WOMEN IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION, Solidarity, 60p

#### Anarcho-syndicalism

- ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM, Rudolf Rocker, Phoenix Press, £2.50

#### Anti-militarism/self-defence

- PROTEST WITHOUT ILLUSIONS, Vernon Richards, Freedom Press, £2.50  
 STRANGE VICTORIES, Elephant Editions, £1.95  
 TOWARDS A CITIZENS' MILITIA, Cienfuegos Press, £1.50

#### Federalism

- KROPOTKIN'S FEDERALIST IDEAS, B Books, 25p

#### Individualism

- EGO AND ITS OWN, THE, Max Stirner, Rebel Press, £4.50

#### Mutualism

See the writings of P-J Proudhon

#### Situationism

- AND YET IT MOVES, Boy Igor, Zamisdad, £3.00 (critique of science)  
 BOOK OF PLEASURES, Raoul Vaneigem, Pending Press, £4.95  
 ON THE POVERTY OF STUDENT LIFE, Rebel Press, 75p  
 PARIS: MAY '68, Dark Star/Rebel Press, £1.50  
 REVOLUTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE, Raoul Vaneigem, to be reprinted in 1988  
 SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE, THE, Guy Debord, £3.50

See also the Spectacular Times pocketbooks (six titles in print priced 50p to £1.00)

### Anarchist issues

#### Animal liberation

- AGAINST ALL ODDS, Arc Print, £1.95  
 KILL OR CURE?, Arc Print, £2.25  
 UP AGAINST THE LAW, Arc Print, £1.50

#### Ecology

- POST-SCARCITY ANARCHISM, Murray Bookchin

#### Education

- LIB ED, quarterly magazine, 50p  
 RAVEN, THE, VOL 2, £2.50 (article on Walden School)  
 SUMMERHILL, A S Neill, Pelican, £4.95

#### Housing

- HOUSING: AN ANARCHIST APPROACH, Colin Ward, Freedom Press, £2.25  
 IDEAL HOME, Hooligan Press, £2.40  
 SQUATTING IN WEST BERLIN, Hooligan Press, £2.00

#### 'Illegal' actions

- RADIO IS MY BOMB, Hooligan Press, £2.40 (DIY guide to pirate radio)

WITHOUT A TRACE, £2.00 (about 'getting away with it')

#### Riots/insurrection

- FROM RIOTS TO INSURRECTION, Alfredo M Bonnano, Elephant Editions, £1.00  
 LIKE A SUMMER WITH A THOUSAND JULYS, BM Blob, £1.50

### Anarchist history

#### Britain

SLOW BURNING FUSE, THE, John Quail

#### Russian Revolution

- GUILLOTINE AT WORK, Maximoff, Cienfuegos Press, £6.00  
 INTRO TO MY DISILLUSIONMENT IN RUSSIA, Emma Goldman, Phoenix Press, 20p  
 RUSSIAN TRAGEDY, THE, Alexander Berkman, Phoenix Press, £2.50

#### Spanish Revolution

- BARCELONA MAY DAYS 1937, various authors, Freedom Press, £2.50  
 COLLECTIVES IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION, Gaston Leval, Freedom Press, £6.00  
 LESSONS OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION, Vernon Richards, Freedom Press, £2.95

#### Revolutionaries/rebels

- ANARCHISM AND VIOLENCE, Osvaldo Bayer, Elephant Editions (about Severino de Giovanni)  
 ANGRY BRIGADE 1967-84, THE, Elephant Editions, £1.20  
 BONNOT GANG, THE, Richard Parry, Rebel Press, £4.95  
 BLACK FLAG, THE, Jackson, RKP, £3.00 (h/b)(about Sacco and Vanzetti)  
 HAYMARKET SPEECHES, THE, Voltairine de Cleyre, Cienfuegos Press, £2.40 (as above)

MALATESTA: HIS LIFE AND IDEAS,  
Vernon Richards, Freedom Press,  
£3.00

RED VIRGIN, THE, University of  
Alabama Press, £6.00 (memoirs of  
Louise Michel)

SABATE: GUERRILLA EXTRAORDINARY,  
Tellez, Elephant Editions, £2.95

### Anarchist fiction

FREE, THE, M Gilliland, Hooligan  
Press, £1.80

FROM BENEATH THE KEYBOARD,  
Hooligan Press, £2.00 (short  
stories/poetry)

See also writings of the mysterious B

Traven (author of THE TREASURE OF  
THE SIERRA MADRE)

### SF

DISPOSSESSED, THE, Ursula K le Guin,  
Granada

ILLUMINATUS TRILOGY, THE, Robert  
Shea and Robert Anton Wilson,  
Sphere, £2.95 each

See also other libertarian influenced SF  
writers, e.g. Michael Moorcock, Doris  
Lessing, Marge Piercy, Kate Wilhelm

*The books listed are available from  
alternative bookshops. Most can also be  
obtained from A Distribution, 84b  
Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or  
from Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, London  
N1 9DX.*