

X O Y U S

Christian
Anarchist
Bulletin

35 Natal road
Thornton Heath

CR4. 8QH
July the 13th

653.7546

Minutes of Monthly Meetings
Accounts of arguments and actions
News and Notes.

The Christian Anarchist group meets monthly; - other things being equal on the second Saturday in each month. All alterations to this are notified here, and it is repeated specifically each time. Meetings are advertized in Peace News and the Roadrunner.

Meetings are held in the Vicarage of St Paul's Church, Bow Common, and before them there is a short service in the Church. The Church is in Burdett road, the Vicarage is adjacent behind and is in Leopold St., nearest tube station, Mile End Road (on the Central and District lines.)

The service begins at 7.30, the meetings at 8.00; the service has a period of quiet for meditation (whether viewed as monastic or as a silent Quaker-type meeting for worship) preceded by a short form of Vespers.

By tradition we retire after the meeting to a pub' - usually the Gun in Millwall.

Because of holidays the July meeting will be held on the 19th; the date of the August meeting will appear later.

NO meeting August; Next meeting September 13th.

As the Ilford squat is probably the most important single issue at the moment, and as Kathy has been there more than any other member of the group I asked her to do a personal article.

On 21st June, the East London Squatters occupied 6 Woodlands road, Ilford, as the latest step in the campaign. It had been wrecked by the Redbridge Council - the floorboards and the stairs had been ripped out - and the intention was to repair it for use by an homeless family. The council was to be asked if they would use it for a family on their own waiting-list, and if they refused, as was likely in view of their housing policy, we would install an homeless family ourselves.

By Saturday evening most of the floorboards upstairs were replaced, and by Sunday they were all back, and there was running water. The stairs were not mended, or the down stairs mended, as we decided to wait until we knew if the council would employ private bailiffs to remove us.

On Monday morning, there was the usual visit from Mr Walsh the council's legal adviser, but no action was taken at that point.

At another squatter-occupied house, 23, Audrey road, there are two families the Flemmings and the ~~McNeils~~ McNeils. When the Flemmings began squatting, in April, at 43 Cleveland road, they were forcibly evicted by Barry Quartermain's organization after a week. Then they lived at 67 Oakfield road, for a short time, but this house was not in very good condition, and they left to live at 23 Audrey road. The McNeils have lived there since being evicted - on the same day the Flemmings were - from 26 Britannia road.

At about 3.45 PM on Monday, 23rd June, Quartermain arrived at 23, saying he was the owner; Chris Flemming did not recognize him, and so asked for proof of identity. Quartermain said he did not need proof, and tried to force his way in, May Flemming came into the hall, and recognized him from the previous eviction, (he has since denied ever having seen her before,) she screamed for help, and ran into the back garden, to find Quartermain's men lined up behind the back fence, in the alleyway.

There were 2 or 3 supporters in the house, one of whom ran to Woodlands road, to fetch help. Quite a few people arrived from there and other places. There were a lot of press photographers in the house, and some police, and several of the bailiffs were in the front room, refusing to leave, and tried to push them out. The police threatened action for assault but no action was taken when we did throw them out, (the police on the whole seemed more sympathetic than at the evictions in April - one officer told us that if there was no legal court order, Quartermain

would not be allowed to evict us.)

After a few minutes, Quartermain, himself, arrived again, he claimed his actions were legal, and denied our accusations that he was a thug; however when Ron Bailey snatched a file he carried, labelled "Eviction", "23 Audrey road", Quartermain attacked him, breaking his glasses. Ron blacked his eye and a bowl of washing-up water was thrown over him, after which he retired to his car and left. He and his men were seen shortly after at Woodlands road, but they left without attempting an eviction.

The situation took quite some working out; we had believed that Audrey road was privately owned, and so had not expected attempts at eviction, at least not without a court order. Various people, including the council, and Quartermain himself, gave conflicting accounts. The council said they did not own the house and denied employing Quartermain. Quartermain said the council had bought the house over the weekend. It appears that the owner of the house is in process of selling the house to the council, but the deal cannot be finalized until there is vacant possession.

How they can deny using Quartermain is that they employ their own bailliff, Mr Green, and he is free to employ anyone he wished to assist him; but the council can hardly deny knowing who is employed. They appear to have had a large hand in it. The Flemmings had been considering going into welfare accomodation, because of Chris's ill-health. They had applied, and on the morning of the 23rd June, a reporter who had seen the council officials that morning came to Audreyroad to say that the council had offered the Flemmings an house, for up to a year. Chris went to his appointment with the welfare officials in the afternoon and was given the keys to a place, which turned out to be two rooms and a shared kitchen in Ilford.

While he was out, a woman from the welfare department came to Audrey road, and asked if Chris had gone to the Town Hall. May said he had, and the woman left; a few minutes later Chris arrived back, and almost on his heels, Quartermain arrived. As it happened Chris got a lift back, and so arrived 5 or 1? minutes earlier than he would have done had he walked; it seems very much as if the council deliberately tried to get Chris out of the way, so that the eviction could be got over quickly without fuss.

After the excitement had died down a little, 'Phone calls were made to virtually everyone we knew, to come down immediately. By the evening there were about 100 people at either Audrey road, or Woodlands rd.; barricades were made, and plans made to repel attack. There was an atmosphere of tension and watchfulness all night, but the morning brought no attack.

However at about 5.30 AM on Wednesday, one of the men at Woodlands rd. saw about 6 men in helmets coming down the road; before he could warn anyone, several bricks were thrown through the windows. The bailliffs tried to put ladders up to the windows, but these were pushed down by squatters, who also retaliated with bricks. The bailliffs tried to set fire to the ground floor, but this was unsuccessful. After about half an hour of brick throwing, the police called a halt, because they "feared a breach of the peace"!! It is also worthy of note that Quartermain's men were only told to stop and there were no arrests. On the other hand when we demonstrated outside the town clerk's house in April, we were arrested for conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace, and for using insulting words.

When the bailliffs arrived at Woodlands rd. a supporter who was just arriving at the time went to Audrey rd., to warn the Flemmings and the Mc^Neils. Chris took the children to a neighbouring house only minutes before Quartermain arrived. The bailliffs gathered bricks and bottles from the neighbours' doorsteps, and threw them through the windows. The squatters retaliated with bricks, but after a few minutes the police again intervened. From that time on there was always a fair number of people at Audrey rd., and the barricades remained in place. No further attacks were made, and it was decided to go on the offensive again. On Monday, 30th June, 33 Audrey rd., was occupied, this is a council-owned house, which had been wrecked. The floorboards were replaced by that evening, and painting the outside was begun.

On Wednesday the 2nd July, a report of the council's decisions at their meeting the previous night reached us. They had said that they would give us until the 5th to get out, and if we did not, they would use all force necessary to remove us, we refused to leave.

On the 4th of July, another report reached us: the council offered to rehouse the Flemmings and the Mc^Neils in houses from the redevelopment scheme, when they had reviewed the empty houses, and decided which were fit for human habitation.

Until then, the families would have to live in an halfway house. It was said to Ron Bailey, by the council, that the families would be rehoused at the end of July or the beginning of August, but there was no date mentioned in the written statement. The Flemmings did not trust the council, after being betrayed before, and all at the meeting thought the document too vague and full of loopholes. A set of amendments was drawn up, the main points being that the Flemmings and the McNeils should stay in Audrey road, until they were rehoused. The council refused to hear our amendments, and said we must take our leave their proposals, so we left them.

On 5th, it was getting obvious that the strain was getting too much for Chris Fleming, when he collapsed. He is extremely exhausted, and on the verge of a nervous breakdown. On 7th, May decided the best thing we could do was to take the barricades down, and get all the supporters out of the house, and try to live as normal a life as possible. This was done, and the council was informed why we had taken the barricades down, in the hope that they would not risk the bad publicity they would get by sending bailliffs into an undefended house, when a member of the family was sick. So far, there has been no attack.

On Wed., 9th., another house in Albert road, was occupied, and the upper floor was repaired. The idea is to repair it completely, and to redecorate it, then invite the press to view it, ~~it~~ and judge what can be done to these houses. The council say it would be too expensive to repair the houses; we hope to show that it is not, and ask them to have the water and electricity restored. We are quite prepared to repair the houses ourselves, if the council will guarantee not to hire private bailliffs to remove the ~~g~~ families who occupy them, and if they will restore the water and electricity. On 10th, another house, in Richmond rd., (which incidentally is next door to the Conservative Headquarters) was occupied.

On the 12th (tomorrow - when ^KKathy wrote this) a demonstration is planned, which is to visit all the houses we have occupied, with special emphasis on 43, Cleveland rd., which has been flattened for use as a car park, since the Flemmings were evicted. There is a fair amount of local support and the Ford workers from ^DDagenham are attending the demonstration. They are prepared to help us repair any houses we have or any more which are taken on the demonstration. It is hoped that some of the local residents will soon occupy an house themselves.

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Private Eye published and the July issue of Solidarity South London republishes, Quartermain's criminal record and the fact that he was deprived of his licence as a bailliff. While in Eastchurch Prison in 60, direct actionists met a man

-serving a preventive Detention sentence (I forget whether of 6 or 8 years) for stealing a milk bottle (empty) from outside an house, - so had the police wished to prevent milk bottles being taken to use as ammunition, not merely was it damage to the squatted houses but it does apparently amount to larceny.

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I must apologize for not using the woodcut for this issue - I go on holiday soon and the woodcut takes about an extra week's preparation, one way and another.

Attendance on the 19th August

Fr.s Gresham Kirkby and Andrew King; Valerie Bickers and Kathy Dancy; & Laurens Otter apology David Mumford.

Minutes

We discussed first whether to continue as a group, interest appeared to be waning, - very largely as the result of the long time we have spent studying to produce the report for the Archbishop's Commission, which has taken so long that even the initial proposer of the study no longer bother to read the minutes.

Generally the feeling of the meeting was against closing down. This raised whether or not I was to continue as secretary, as I have asked for the last four months to be relieved of this, as I do not think it a good thing for anyone to remain secretary more than a year. But as yet no one has volunteered to take over. (Anne did volunteer but changed her mind.)

We then discussed whether to continue with preparations for a report to the commission. It was obvious that not enough people have worked on Maurice to give a worthwhile discussion of his views on the state, now were we then ready to draw up a final document and even if we had held a meeting on the ninth of August and if arrangements had been made to duplicate the draft in my absence, there was little reason to assume that the August meeting would be better equipped to tackle the matter.

Eventually it was agreed that a less ambitious and shorter statement should be sent and that Gresham should be given a free hand writing this, and that we would think aloud for the rest of the meeting to provide suggestions.

Various suggestions were made as to things that should be included. Gresham was to write his draft the week after next (about the second of August dateline) ((so anyone now regretting not having contributed any suggestions had better contact him East 4941, St Paul's Vicarage, E.3, comfortably before that.)) This he would send to Andrew and myself Andrew would 'phone immediately if he had any objections and otherwise I shall try and dash it off before my holiday.

A central point everyone agreed should be the fact that anarchism is always dismissed as too good to be true, but ~~for~~ any real understanding and exposition of Christianity is always met by the same complaint. Also it was stressed that William Godwin's : "You say men cannot be equal, because no man is good enough to rule himself, I say men must be equal because no man is good enough to rule others", should be adapted to answer arguments stemming from original sin. That St Basil, Meister Eckhart or some such be quoted in answer to the C of E Article, on Anabaptists and christian men's goods.

Reference was made to Ken Leach's article in Theology "on the powers of be", and it was agreed that this point, regarding to Caesar and others such should be included. Gresham raised the point that under a dictatorship the prophetic witness was less an absolute duty as any witness was an act of defiance, to live a christian life was unspoken prophecy while to prophecy from the roof tops was perhaps courting martyrdom foolishly and anyway for Western prelates to so shout from the rooftops about conditions under Stalinism was impermissibly imperilling the lives of Christians in the East.

It was agreed that the evidence should start with a section on what the Church is and is supposed to be.

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Anne Vogel and David Poolman have asked me to enclose with this copies of the Workers' Mutual Aid pamphlet. I had not so done previously as since I am a member it would be doubtfully ethical, but as neither David nor Anne are members of WMA, I am very grateful to them for requesting this. There is a difference I think in the WMA approach from the traditional syndicalist one (apart from the fact that it does not in this pamphlet consider the case for industrial unionism) in that it starts with a more individual anarchist commitment.

This difference is indicative of the nature of much of modern syndicalist thought. Whereas in a smaller scale capitalist industry before the conveyor belt it was easy enough to think in terms of getting rid of the boss and running the industry under workers' control; the possibility of that is not now so obvious.

So whereas in the past the step was a simple one of degree between being an industrial militant and being a syndicalist (even if it involved a quantitative/qualitative leap) there is now a more obvious difference in kind. Men need to look outside the factory at the world outside and there become convinced that anarchism is possible as a normal rule before they are capable of the conceptual problem of seeing anarchism (syndicalism) as a possibility within the factory.

Precisely because in a more authoritarian society the case for liberty is more obvious than the case for equality; the look outside the factory is a fairly simple matter compared with the possibility in the last century of seeing anarchism as a possibility other than in industrial terms. Then anarchists tended to be the hard core within syndicalist movements, now anarcho-syndicalists tend to be the hard core within anarchist ones.

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Kathy tells me that since the Flemmings asked the Squatters group to go - so as to lessen the tension and the embattled atmosphere - they have asked a few closer friends to go back and keep an eye on things; so she is still spending most of her time there.

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The Radical Alliance - of which Ronald Sampson was a founding and active member is calling a conference on the 23rd of August at Dick Sheppard House, booking fee (suggested 2/6). They seem to have awoken from a deep sleep. As Ronald is a moving spirit one assumes that though the successor of the independent nuclear disarmament electoral committee, it is not exclusively parliament oriented and most of its founders were indeed active in forming the original committee of 100. It could therefore be promising - ~~though~~ I cannot make it as I'll be on holiday, but it would be a good idea if someone from C/A went as well as Ronald.

best

Laurens

There was never anything by the wit of man so well devised or so sure established, which in the continuance of time has not been corrupted

(opening words of "Concerning the services of the church" - after the "The Preface" at the beginning of the B.C.P. of the C. of E.)

Equally sincere Christians can argue both for and against Pacifism, and if the Gospels came down definitely on either one side or the other, the argument would have been settled long ago.

(Margaret Duggan, Church Times, May 23 "Letter to Roadrunner".)

Anglicans and Catholics generally hold the Church to have been divinely created and therefore they embody - indeed incarnate - something that is not corruptible; but nevertheless where something in the Church is an human accretion or interpretation then this something is not merely corruptible, but is indeed almost bound to be corrupted with time.

Therefore it is illogical of Margaret Duggan to suggest that in the fullness of time a Christian must arrive at the truth if that truth was not initially apparent. (Quite apart from the illogic of assuming that sincerity is an yardstick - undoubtedly Hitler was sincere, (though certainly no Christian)) and undoubtedly Ian Paisley and Johannes Vorster are sincere and are sincere professing Christians which does not make them right.)

The Church in its early days did reach agreement on at least what was not permissible. The doctrine of the Just Struggle is the only Nicæan doctrine which admitted of a minority position equally tenable for the Christian; but it threaded its way between total Non-Resistance and that support for wars which the Emperor attempted to impose on the Church.

It laid down as possible struggles for justice, and it laid down permissible methods of struggle and a literal interpretation of the doctrine today would within a little bar all actions other than civil disobedience, strikes and suchlike actions, but would endorse these (as would most pacifists.) But though the doctrine attempted to incarnate a spiritual truth it of necessity used human terminology and that terminology has permitted of interpretations totally alien to its intention and with it the condoning of monstrous war.

This should teach something to us in our attempts to say what we consider the Commission on Church and State should be looking at. For obviously before we can look at the Church's relations with anything else, we have to look at the Church's relations with itself. Ultimately as regards the state we are saying what the Catonsville nine said of the draft cards, some property - some objects - have no right to exist, and therefore there can be no respect for property. But before we get to this, what of the Church is divine?

One here immediately reaches the whole crux of a revolutionary position within the Church. Margaret Duggan like Dennison Maurice evidently believes that in the fullness of time the church grows closer to Christ and settles

any queries. The atheist on the other hand and the New Theologian thinks the Church and Christendom are inescapably corrupted and must be abolished to allow the building of something else.

The revolutionary position within the Church is that the Church was founded as the greatest revolutionary organization of all time, that it has indeed been corrupted in very large measure but it contains that within it that cannot be corrupted since it is the Body of Christ; and that this something has ensured a revolutionary and prophetic tradition - continuously replenishing itself - maintaining itself within the Church so that when it appears most corrupt there there appears a C.F. Andrews a Michael Cott at Stewart Headlam to remind the people of the Church that they are God's people and why and what it's all about.

In other words we are saying "if these men go ye cannot be saved" that unless the Church again becomes revolutionary the revolution cannot happen. God gave man an instrument and institution fashioned that with it he might free himself, he has surely corrupted it, but he cannot himself fashion a better instrument if he cannot restore the Church to its pristine revolutionary flavour he certainly cannot restore the world without the church to it.

This does not of course mean that all action should be confined to the Church, indeed to limit all left action to the Church would be the worst possible way to try to make the Church revolutionary; but it does mean that somewhere before we reach the revolution we will have first to make the revolution within the Church; and some time we are going to need to thrash out just what this means.

It is interesting that here the Christian conception of the Church as both the vehicle of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God already established fits in with both Marxian and Gandhian reasoning. The new society is born within the womb of the old, - means are ends in embryo; both fashioned movements or attempted to fashion movements which should be not only the means to overthrow the old order but should then emerge as the new and that should therefore bear within themselves the comradely relations that that new society needs.

The industrial unionist theories of De Leon or of Allemani which the Wobblies and Syndicalists took over took into anarchism though precisely this aspect of Marx; the healthy parts of the Bhodian movement and the work of Dolci and the American negro movement are doing the same service to anarchism in incorporating the Gandhian conception. But we as Christians have no excuse for not having known it before for as each element is taken into the realm of freedom we find that in our own Gospel it has always been there for us to find.

The syndicalist insistence so valid in its day on the primacy of industrial organization is being copied now by middle of the way churchmen - just at the time when developments in industry mean that however much of prime importance industrial organization is now impossible in isolation; and though expressed in far other words, everywhere it is found that one go to the syndicate by way of the Parish, but still go there.

Using parish - of course - in a loose sense (neither ecclesiastical nor strictly local, but to emphasize the finding of agreement before applying it in industry) rather than agreement stemming from industrial action. The difference in approach is apparent in the Workers' mutual aid leaflets that I saw on Level 2 here and to have as lower in this mailing.