

Anarchist revolutionary organization & press

a case against an ORA paper.

Comrades

This is very much a minority document - probably a minority of one, & not even a factional one. There have always been ORA members unconvinced that a paper is either necessary or advisable, but only a very few have ever been convinced that it was positively counter-productive.

Of those who have held this position, Mike Malet has abandoned it, - indeed did before the first ORA conference, - & of the four of us whose position was expressed there, Andrew ffell Gordon, Iain Neary, Pete Roberts & I, I have not heard from the first two since, & while I know that Pete still opposes a paper & that some of our reasons are the same, I would doubt if all of them are & possibly not even most.

The documents that Mike, Andrew & produced at the beginning almost all dealt with practicalities; I still think these are valid though I no longer consider them of major importance except in so far as they reflect a deeper theoretical argument about the sort of organization we want.

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In brief the practical reasons were:-

- 1. A premature battle with Freedom is undesirable,
- 2. There is more than one form of propoganda,
- 3. expense,
- 4. centralisation,

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1 In worrying about a premature battle with Freedom we were far from failing to appreciate that such a battle would one day be necessary; Freedom has never accepted that other anarchist groups might as sincerely desire anarchism as it, has always regarded anyone who believes in organization as threatening its power, so that while it insists on its right to be independent of the movement, it does not accept the movement's right to be independent of it.

However it should be borne in mind that VR besides owning the press, large stocks of back publications, books etc., (& besides the fact that bourgeois liberal papers mentioning anarchism naturally mention the old established firm first,) has large sources of potential further funds so that he can greatly enlarge the paper at any time he wishes.

In 1963 - when the bulk of the new influx of anarchists had turned to the SWF - by enlarging the editorial board, by paying lip service to the establishment of an AFB & by some advertising he was able to ensure that further recruits turned to the

old firm, was able to foist the sectarian label on the SWP & cut it off from any hope of further growth.

Experience shows that he will always move decisively to prevent the growth of a viable anarchist movement in this country & that he will always find adequate funds to aid him in this.

But Freedom is not only its owner. Of its editors Pete Turner & John Lawrence at least differ from us in no vital respect except that they have now adopted the Freedom dogma that all organizational control of a paper is bad. We might find points at which we would criticise their theoretical grasp, we might think them insufficiently critical of some careerists, we might say that when they do see people as crooks they are apt to lapse into abstentionism and avoid entering the same arena for the sake of making the anarchist argument stick; but by & large those two at least share our vision of a future society, & have more or less the same perspective of mass self-liberation, the same perspective of revolution.

So vis a vis them (& to a lesser extent others associated with them) we differ in stressing the need for organisation now, but otherwise only in trivialities. We can therefore operate in those circles much as entrists in the Labour Party with the difference that the L.P. has an organization & no ideology & its entrists try to supply the latter; while P.T. & J.L. have ideology but no organization & we.....

2. However badly Freedom - & others - attempt to provide one form of propaganda - a paper - they do attempt to provide it. A paper is however only one form. Quite apart from propaganda by deed - direct action - there are leaflets, pamphlets, broadsheets, ... as well that by and large no one does much to provide.

There are various levels to be done: agitation - saying a little to the many - that is getting people without attempting to convert them to anarchism to behave in a more militant manner so that they adopt some forms of struggle taken from the anarchist armoury; propagation proper - trying to talk to people already in struggle or already at least questioning present society and instill into them the germs of an anarchist case; communication - getting people who have already come to consider the anarchist case, & maintaining with them a dialogue which will show them how that case unfolds in practice, how it copes with new issues & how successfully it can be applied in a variety of circumstances; education - getting people who are already anarchists, who have been anarchists or in contact with anarchists, or who are in rival revolutionary movements and discussing theory with them sufficiently to convince them of the necessity of a more fully rounded argument for anarchism & a fuller involvement.

A paper is certainly unbeatable for the third; it is not very good for the first two, & its use for the fourth is only good as a means of involving group activists in greater work.

But here face to face democracy, practically as well as theoretically, must be the key in an anarchist group & local magazines are preferable.

3. More important than the cost in cash is the cost in manpower. An healthy revolutionary propagandist group is one whose members each - individually - are noted in one or other field of the mass movement as a good militant, sincerely working to advance the cause of the larger movement, who is then saying that that cause can only be fully implemented by revolution, & that the way to revolution most consistent with it is.....

In other words a paper is an useful additional vehicle of argument for militants to use to supplement their individual work, but it is not a good substitute for that work.

But all over the place one sees groups that have subordinated their activity to the interests of their paper. The first civil disobedience action in this country, after the war, (non-violent resistance commission of the PPU, later the Operation Ghandi, then the NVRSp, (finally the DAC,) was ruined when the squatters suddenly realised that without them Peace News would not come out the next week. Similarly I remember the SLL in 58 refraining from an action which would have brought it some considerable influence at one & the same time in CND militant, tenant & industrial circles because the paper came first.

In both cases perhaps inefficiency was partly to blame. But in both cases the paper was elevated to greater importance than propaganda by deed; & this is the normal pattern.

The effect of this is seen now in the SLL (& in the Workers' Fight pamphlet on the SLL the parallel is fairly drawn with the C.P. in the thirties); good organisers were withdrawn from posts of influence in industry & among tenants in order to supervise the distribution of the paper; the League became a body that is always to be found outside the factory selling, but never the journal distributed by militants inside.

Having said this I think the costing of the paper has been optimistic. Agreed Direct Action stuck like a besotted limpet to letter press, but owning the press, printing everything ourselves - handfed - we produced an ill-looking thing for about £50 an issue; the London group devoting all its time to it, more or less giving up producing pamphlets as well as intervening in wider struggles.

Certainly an offset litho plate (or matt) can be typed on an ordinary typewriter (as long as it has a sufficiently carbonised ribbon) & this is little cost. (Ink costs are higher than one might suppose and wastage is fairly high.) But once one starts one would want to be able to produce photographic plates as being more versatile, alright one can you a simple contact process and adapt machinery so that it can make both negs and plates & still produce something, (Socialist Current made its own photographic equipment but the photos were indistinct in the paper,) & finally citing one's machine where it is near enough to those who are going to print & their sources of paper supply not to be too expensive that way, without paying an enormous rent is tricky. (Terry Chendler used to pay £112 a quarter & that's one main reason why he went broke.)

Let us not delude ourselves that we can bear the cost of a paper & still carry on with other work, & so maintain our creditability, we have already allowed our production of pamphlets to slide; when ORA was first mooted two pamphlets were immediately published and the promise was made that one a month would follow, in the next two months a further three were published, & we were announcing that we had drafts in hand for another half dozen (most of which are still unpublished), since when we have only published another three (and an ORA Newsletter supplement since reproduced as a pamphlet.)

I do not know what effect a paper will have on work in tenants' associations, women's lib., etc.; (& I would include with these as the wider movement, the formation of local anarchist groups on a wider basis than ORA;) but I am certain this is a factor that ought to be reckoned in the cost, & unless it can be shown that the ORA paper will help more than hinder in such circles this should be added to the costs. (If it would help then of course it would be added to the benefits but activists in these fields must think in terms of whether they - themselves - selling a paper will allow them sufficient time to devote as much work as they now do to the wider causes & so whether it will help their work. One cannot assess the balance in terms of whether someone else might come along and sell the paper to one's contacts, for that someone else ought to be doing other work, it's whether your work in the local tenants' group/whatever will be facilitated by your having to devote X hours to selling Y papers.

4. With the best will in the world, & the most self-effacing, dedicated & self-sacrificing 'leading activists', 'editorial committee/working group', -(& let it be clearly understood that I think the best will in the world & these qualities are to be found in the present case, but then I also thought and think that they were present in the SWF in the mid & late-mid sixties;) - the editors of a small paper functioning on a shoe string:-

cannot consult all the rank & file of their supporters at every stage of the production of a paper;

attempts to do this will merely mean that the paper will lose topicality, to omit something from a paper is as much a comment as to include it, so that to bring out a paper without an article on the most important current issue because there was no time to consult the membership, would - as far as readers are concerned - be to say that it less important than preserving democratic norms.

Very often this would appear doctrinaire or as if we were dodging important issues.

moreover

any editorial group - however libertarian -(especially if it has good anarchist editors, that is editors involved in the day to day wider struggles of those around them) is bound to view the importance of all issues through the light of their own experience.

This will mean that however hard the editors may try to consult the membership, however much they may report their actions at all stages, they will have pre-conceived views as to which issues are important & which are not.

They will tend to give weight to the views of those of the local groups they consult to the extent that the beliefs of the latter accord with their own & they will tend to dismiss as irrelevant the interests of any group that works in a milieu alien to its own.

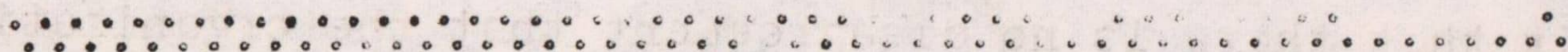
So one gets a local group sending in reports of what the central group considers irrelevancies, or wanting to comment on particular international events that have caught the imagination of their associates, & the central group dismissing these irrelevancies and complaining that the local group sends it no news, by which it means no news of the sort that the central group considers all important.

finally

since one of the arguments for a paper is that it will train our own people - what the Leninists call cadre-building - it should be noted that it does this unevenly.

It produces a small central group of paper-specialists being drawn more & more out of other struggles; it produces localised committees in which those who can spare time for the paper have a disproportionate say, & those up to their eyebrows in local campaigns too little, & it reduces a rank & file to paper-selling automatons, needing only such political theory as is necessary to justify the line on whatever issue and to attack rival paper-sellers of different groups.

It does not encourage localised groups to work out their own position, & to work out to propagate that position bearing in mind the nature of the people around them.



## Anti-vanguardist theory & the dialectical inter-penetration of differing anarchist ideas

Throughout the Left there is an excessive - if not obsessive interest in organizational journals. In its British application Leninism has largely acted as a rationalisation of this, & this may well account for its relatively greater attraction to revolutionaries.

Propaganda by the deed is largely left to those newly recruited to the movement, or those who have too recently broken away from a larger faction to have established their own factional paper.

I am not for one moment suggesting that factional ideas are not important, that we as a faction have not something that is vital to offer the anarchist movement as a whole - so vital that without it I believe anarchist revolution is unattainable - but it is something offered to the movement as a whole, not an independent message.

The difference between a revolutionary faction of anarchists and a Leninist group is not only organizational; far more important than this is the acceptance - lying at the heart of any libertarian theory - that one's own faction is not the supreme embodiment of all revolutionary wisdom, not infallible, not gifted with such magnificent & unerring wisdom as to qualify it to lead the masses & to impose its will on all others.

The root cause of many of the betrayals in Spain was that the FAI did not remember this. That it imposed its will on the CNT masses and thereby lessened the latter's self-reliance, & autonomous revolutionary consciousness.

A revolutionary anarchist faction does not set out to lead, either the anarchist movement or the masses beyond. It does set out to push. It does believe it has something of importance to offer. It offers it as forcefully as it can. But does this as a faction of the movement.

It may well oppose another anarchist tradition basically but it must make a distinction between a tradition which is anarchist but mistaken at some points and therefore must be combatted as comrades & one which is basically elitist.

It must accept that both within & without the anarchist movement there are people offering views which do not have everything we would wish but who are contributing, perhaps in a distorted way, to the raising of the workers' consciousness.

I take it that there is no disagreement that the organizations which anarchist believe the workers - if & when they attain revolutionary consciousness - will throw up will in their internal relations reflect the society they will build.

I take it we agree that not only are such organizations the new society in embryo, but that our own organization is either an earlier foetal stage, or either sperm or ovum before fertilization. I take it therefore that we are agreed that just as an

anarchist society would be pluralist - not just permitting but encouraging wide diversity of social cooperative forms - so must the future mass workers' movement be and so now should the propagandist anarchist movement.

But this is not the only reason for welcoming in our midst those whose revolutionary ardour might be thought to be somewhat less than obvious.

Not only is it true - as I have argued in ORA 2 & 5, as in two other pamphlets published by ORA & Anarchy 68 - that if one examines the early soviets, the early syndicates or other industrial unionist movements, or anywhere else where anarchist ideas - consciously attributed to anarchism or not - were manifested in mass movements, the majority of such movements came from far more reformist tendencies (some of which had been anarchist-influenced, some marxist, some Utopian, some proto-Fabian) and they had coalesced, synthesizing their views and deepening their radicalism, partly under the impact of objective conditions, external events, & partly because a faction of revolutionary anarchists acted as a catalyst. (I will be returning to this point.)

It is also true that there are different elements necessary to all stages of struggle. In so far as before it came to power the Labour Party represented a politicisation of the trade unions and a desire to fight not just for sectional workers' ends, but the working class, employed and unemployed, wage earner and housewife, adult & child it represented something of the advance that traditional left social democrat & Stalinist theory (Straychey) read into it. Now it will be self-evident that by & large the Lib-Labs brought with them a concept of social justice that was in essence working class liberalism; but a liberalism of a social-paternalist variety rather than a cut-throat laissez-faireism.

Something of the effect of this is manifested today in the mass struggles which, fortunately, are emerging. One sees very significant industrial struggles; one sees quite courageous attempts by the most oppressed & exploited sections of the working class, squatters, claimants, PROP to find their own forms of struggle which bring them into conflict with their super-exploited positions; one sees cross-class struggles which dovetail with the working class struggle at this point, & will later release new forces into it, women's lib., Black Power/Freedom/Liberation, gypsies, Celtic freedom/language; and with all these one sees the general body of left social-democracy making sympathetic noises - not only from the sidelines - but opting out of a duty to produce a generalised political picture. Failing to argue the reasons, the special oppression of these sections, failing to argue how their struggles are compatible with the general welfare, failing even to counter right wing attacks, even on trade unionists, & failing to answer the silly but popular belief that the only place that a worker's pay rise can come from is out of the pensioner's pocket.

Political revolutionary theories that are founded solely on terms of the economically determined struggle of the underdog of course logically do refrain from putting the whole social picture in ethical/altruist terms since this would be petit-bourgeois liberalism. Though in fact few groups are as logical as this, and generally those most anxious to refrain from lapsing

into such liberal heresies are those with the least rounded - & therefore the most characteristically liberal - theories of why they should be engaged in such actions.

Only when a group can - in something like mutual aid terms - talk of the working class as an whole, & make plain that he is as anxious for justice within the class as without it can he posit an united class struggle which nevertheless embraces the sundry sectional struggles listed.

As it is the social democrat left (in which I include Stalinist TU officials) argues as if believing that all social change & social justice will come from legislation, i.e. that all should logically be subordinated to the struggles of the left within the labour party & the electoral fortunes of the party as an whole, & then quite illogically (however laudably) applauds direct action struggles that may well detract from this.

Anarchism has always combined the two distinct elements of an ethical belief in subordination of the individual to the general weal, & a determinist belief that change can only come from self-interest motivated direct intervention by the oppressed.

Godwin combined with utopian christian (or ex-christian, as both humanists & christian socialists look on him as a founder) pre-Utilitarian ultra-radical liberalism, coupling his ethical patterns with an appeal to the plebian masses. (I say plebian since the working class consequent on the industrial revolution was in its infancy.)

Anarchist Clouts & other spokesmen for the sans-culottes again represented a plebian ultra-liberalism tinged with utopian socialist aims; and in a sense Proudhon was the last manifestation of this tradition. It should be noted that by no means the only tradition of Proudhonism to have survived is that that passed by Bakunism and Guillaume or through syndicalism into anarchism. The Spanish Federalists were by no means the only Proudhonists to have become liberal, & there are echoes of Proudhon in such right wing philosophies as Poujadism; while on the other hand the extreme Mutualists kept themselves apart from any immersion in the anarchist movement.

Much of Bakunin's critique of Marx is in terms of an unstated ethical code, that refused for instance to accept that the mere fact that peasant life inculcated individualist & competitive ideas, (& lumpen life subservient ones) & that since solidarity was not instinctive and equal cooperation unusual in peasant circles, meant that Marx was right and that the peasantry could only behave in a revolutionary manner if led from outside their ranks and so should be written off as a revolutionary force. As Bakunin accepted most of Marx's philosophical system, & his economically determinist theories there was an apparent contradiction reminiscent of that in Godwin.

In both cases the contradiction worked, while the logical system could only work because Marxists ignored one or other part of it. The tradition of anarchism so created was basically a determinist variant of socialism, reintegrating some of the elements of Utopian socialism which Marx had thrown out, while continuing to denounce the Utopians, in which the anarchism was an



adjunct (a qualification) of the socialism.

Kropotkin's greatest contribution may have been the fact that Mutual Aid systematises an ethical basis for that part of the anarchist repudiation of Marx. It is in accordance with this that Kropotkin integrated into the general body of anarchist ideas the thinking of anti-governmentalist Utopians like Thoreau, Tucker & Tolstoi; he equally of course tried to integrate Stirner, but though Stirner had been as insistent as Thoreau et alia that he was no anarchist the Stirnerites promptly claimed to be the only true anarchists launching "The Anarchist" in opposition to Freedom.

In a sense this changed anarchism; in a sense that was the result of the emergence first of reformist Marxist & then of Bolshevist governments. Anarchism instead of being a particular tradition of socialism became synonymous with those socialists who still wanted workers' control, a moneyless economy, . . . , & when a period of radical retreat came which left the anarchist communists weaker than the individualists; the communism of the anarchist communists became a mere adjunct of their individualism not vice versa. So that it is now assumed - even by many anarchist communists - that anarchist communism puts the individual before the collective, whereas Bakunin would have endorsed Marx (cf the Grundrisse) in seeing the whole cult of the individual as a recently created myth. The idea of the self-sufficient individual only arises in mass societies, partly because tribal cooperation is lost, partly in reaction to the mass nature, partly because only when one has reached a mass society level of economic 'affluence' do the things that make for the sturdy individualist materialise.

This change made possible the integration of a philosophy of sectional & ethical criticism of class socialism into one coherent class struggle based philosophy - syndicalism.

We are left by historical developments with an anarchist movement which has in large part forgotten its socialist heritage and a number of libertarian socialist, council communist, . . . groupings which having originated from Marxist-Leninism, & having been alienated by the individualist currents of anarchism do not use the term.

There are other currents derived from sections of social democracy who have reacted against state planning to see that that does not bring socialism, and also have been alienated by the term anarchist or the existing anarchist movement, & finally there are those who starting from an ethical approach - not always, but often, a pacifist one - have reached a position more or less equivalent to the Tolstoi-Thoreau tradition of anarchism, & have adopted from us further ideas to bring them into line with syndicalist or Kropotkinist involvement in a wider movement, but who still see no particular reason to call themselves anarchists.

We can only hope to get anywhere if those who are non-communist anarchists, & those who are non-anarchist communists; those who call themselves anarchist & those who do not become ready to accept the need for them to allow their ideas to interpenetrate. This does not mean that they must renounce their own views to submerge them in the synthesis, the worker who has been

awoken to the dangers of authoritarian education or militarism by a revisionist anarchist, is still going to be the more ready to combat the power of the state & see that the state is not an impartial arbiter, but the agency of the boss, & that it induces subservience and nationalism as a weapon primarily against the worker; while the pacifist can bear in mind that anarchist communist propaganda is always anti-militarist, & always against an authoritarian regimentation in the name of 'revolutionary discipline'.

In the mass movements of the past the revolutionary anarchists acted as a synthesis facilitating the synthesis of ethical & determinist traditions of socialism in one new quasi-anarchist whole. We have not now got an anarchist revolutionary movement capable of performing this catalytic task. We have to create that, but here too we have to act as a catalyst bringing together groups that are already libertarian to get them together to create a movement that while retaining its internal diversity nevertheless has a common sense of purpose, & a common desire to change society.

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neglected facet of past anarchist theory, the Bergson/Sorelian  
motivating myth

I am not generally an admirer of Georges Sorel. Syndicalism has I think suffered from the fact that most people think of him as its founder & sole theorist. But his adaptation of Bergson's theory of the motivating myth in history - particularly but not exclusively with reference to the Social General Strike is I think too much ignored.

Bergson had shown that in science, art, industry & elsewhere many notable advances were made by people inspired by a preconceived belief in something. They set out to prove it (sometimes disprove it) what they found might well be very different from what they sought. But the wholehearted aim had been a motivation that had kept them going through the necessary work of the search. He applied this naturally as a commentary on much religious thinking and endeavour.

Sorel - starting from the fact that the effort made to achieve a desirable end, while not achieving it, may well be more likely to achieve - as a side effect - another desirable end than an unmotivated search applied this to the general strike. Many had said - arguing against Allemane - that if the workers had the consciousness necessary for mounting and waging a general strike they would be capable of achieving socialism by other easier means. Sorel conceded this, but said the SGS has a stark simplicity that makes it a suitable slogan to attract people to revolutionary socialism. Once attracted they have to explore the means & in so

doing attained that consciousness; realizing also that building the revolutionary industrial union capable of taking & holding the means of production while subverting the loyalties of the armed forces would itself be the revolutionary act.

A social myth therefore is defined as a social demand, easily grasped as an idea, capable of inspiring activity, which is of itself intrinsically desirable, the pursuance of which may not satisfy the demand itself but brings one closer to the reason that one advances that demand.

It would be fair to say - though they probably would not like the terms - that when Priestly & others advanced the slogan of Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament and suggested launching CND as a movement embodying it (though not committed to it) hoping thereby to "harness the radicalism of youth" to the Labour Party Left, they were trying to use unilateral disarmament as a Sorelian myth; in a sense; but in that ND could not have been achieved within the context of a bourgeois state, and in that dedicated struggles to attain it advanced the anarchist reawakening, & in that Priestley certainly did not want a basic questioning of the bourgeois state it was the more 'doctrinaire' unilateralists who were in the Sorelian tradition.

In a sense the whole concept of industrial unionism has in this country always been treated by syndicalists as a myth. English syndicalists - faced with the closed shops normal to reformist unions - have for the most part (Aldred in the 1920s was a notable exception) rejected dual unionism and believed that rank and file organization within the framework of traditional unionism was the only hope. The Shop Stewards' movement in large measure was a joint syndicalist-De Leonist achievement, & the effect of industrial unionist agitation is reflected by the fact that many unions pay lip service to industrial unionism & have written into their constitutions the rule that the aim of the union is to win for the workers - by hand & by brain - the full control of their society. Consequently British syndicalism has posed the industrial unionist organizational, theoretical & other forms as an aim, knowing that work to achieve it will attain lesser improvements within the framework of the main current of the unions. & be more effective in doing this than any statist efforts to make the unions revolutionary.

In much the same way the concept of a viable AFB can be a motivating myth. It is very possible that one would not achieve it, it is very possible there are other more easily attainable means to a viable propagandist group which will itself work for a mass united libertarian communist movement. But work towards a real AFB is I hold the most likely way to achieve this propagandist movement even if what we achieve differs in some notable respects from what we set out to achieve.

I say a propagandist anarchist movement, though this is to oversimplify the role that such a federation should fill. It would be the militant minority attempting to lay the foundations of the wider movement, not just a body engaged in nothing more than

paper-selling - propaganda from outside the movement. But equally it would never forget the need to propagate its ideas as the reason for its actions. It would refrain from the Leninist caricature of syndicalism, (in fact more often found among Leninist industrial militants), discussing only industrial matters at the shop floor & opposing the introduction of other radical ideas for fear that they split the unity of the workers.

Keith Pater - in an excellent article in Anarchy - & I - in ORA 2 & 'Anarchism & Organization' - sketched out a theory of anarchist organization relating this to the free society; & I will not repeat that here. Though I would refer readers to those articles for fuller appreciation of what I envisage as a decentralised & interlocking anarchist organization. In each case we pictured a full blown propagandist grouping which may not be immediately on the cards, but it is essential that the early organization embodies the same values as are desired in the full blown & complete one.

I shall be going into details later as to my immediate proposals, but at this stage while considering the matter as myth, I think it is necessary to portray three propagandist stages: - what we can achieve now, what we can reasonably work for as soon as we have achieved it, plans towards a daily paper. I want to show that each stage follows practically as well as theoretically from the earlier if one avoids an ORA paper.

I argue that both from a propagandist point of view and in terms of training people coming to our own movement and developing their self-confidence locally based magazines are best. I do not mean merely geographically based ones; the locality may be the industry, a particular campaign or one of half a dozen similar interest groups.

One should foster these. But quite rightly we want to put over a specifically ORA viewpoint. We can combine the two by publishing a national news-insert of news from all over the country, with our position made plain, for inclusion in local magazines. If we litho these at a convenient size the local group can staple these into its own paper.

This will mean that the local group will still have control of their mag., still have the interest & enthusiasm which goes with putting out their local case, will still be able to make sure that the mag. is sold on the basis of news which will appeal to their immediate surroundings. Groups however which have difficulty producing copy, or feel they know too little of what is going on elsewhere, will find it easier to produce their paper.

Lithoing sufficient copies to go in say half a dozen local mags, we can do it fairly cheaply, so that the local groups will not find it difficult to pay part of the cost, while it will still act to subsidize them.

If other groups started producing insets too there would be nothing to prevent a local group having two insets, arguing different anarchist cases, & thereby contributing to the inter-

action of anarchist arguments. (I think our launching an inset would in fact compel BF & ASA, Minus One & one or two others of our neighbours to consider a similar change.)

Before any one leaps up in horror. Yes, I did get the idea from church magazines, where insets - now invariably ghastly ones, there was one good one (comparatively) but Tim Beaumont bought it up & I believe it died - are quite common, but normally found only in the magazines of whiches where the priest is too lazy or too stupid to produce anything himself, rather than as an unifying factor & an aid cashwise, let alone attempts to introduce something more fundamental into the trivial discussions that characterise most parish magazines.

When one has got a number of local mags., & a few insets, (a minimum of six mags. & one inset,) then it would be possible to combine them into one good weekly paper; where the front page & one other varied according to the locality being produced by the former local mag, with the inside being the inset expanded to bring in the news from the other local groups; or if more than one inset the inside would have some different parts for each.

Let's immediately draw the distinction between the united front that this would create & Freedom. The editors of Freedom try to create a balance between the differing anarchist traditions, try to smooth over the differences and behave as if they don't really exist. We would be structuring the debate, bringing out into the open that so & so is saying this & you can join him, so & so disagrees & you can join him; but both appreciate that they are part & parcel of a wider movement.

The paper at this stage would obviously be lithoed. It is much easier to transport a plate (easier still a neg) than printed papers; so it would not be difficult for each local group - & I am not suggesting limiting them necessarily to the front page, that would depend on numbers and size of paper available, - to produce its own plate or neg (photographically, thereby allowing pictures) & send these in to the central group to be run.

As finances grew, as other local groups wanted to produce their editions, and as other libertarian groups wanted to come in as if insets we could think seriously about a daily. A main point that it is easier to transport a plate or neg than bundles of paper should be central. The Morning Star & Workers' Press have great difficulty delivering large bundles of printed papers round the country, because they print all the papers centrally. We should aim to have a dozen small offsets (R 30/90 - Miehle Grosse Dexter - or what have you) dotted round the country, with perhaps far more than that number of neg or plate-making centres. As these would be transported before printing, they would be going earlier when it would be easier to put them on a train; & the number of papers to be printed in any one place would be sufficiently small to make things possible.

One final point before we leave the subject of the Sorelian myth.



## Incidental factors & background features

1.

Where we are. I

I briefly described the bulk of the social democratic left as combining with their parliamentarian perspective an illogical - for them - support for a large number of direct action struggles, which we would see as the basis, - in a small way, - of a mass libertarian struggle.

By social democrat I do not confine myself to the Labour Party, still less to the right wing of it which is now using the term as a synonym for the pro-Common Market, state-planned, mixed-economy, managerialist-capitalist policies it proposes. I am using the term in its 19th Century sense as one who believes that socialism can come by the capture of the political machinery of the state, by a party backed by the basic organs of the working class & enforcing the power of its parliamentary representatives against any attempt by right wing elements to ignore the decisions of parliament.

This includes the Communist Party in its official statements, a lot of the old New Left & many others.

Slightly out of character in this set up one finds groups like the Institute for Workers' Control, the Bertie Russell Peace Foundation, the C.P. front Liason Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions & so forth. These argue for a socialist perspective & struggle that goes beyond social democracy, but do it so rigidly within the framework of that social democracy, & are so careful to avoid introducing too many topics of political interest for fear of splitting the workers that outwardly they appear to be merely more militant social democrats.

It is notable that of late there has been a trend among those social democrats still in the Labour Party to attempt to work out a definite perspective of political change; while there has also been a trend from amongst former revolutionaries to "eschew sectarianism" & "while still believing that the socialist has a right to lead the masses" & therefore not "attacking vanguardism", to try and manifest this modified vanguardism within the framework of Tribune.

I think this will go further; whether or not they are able to produce a theory that combines the support for struggle with a parliament-oriented philosophy. The fact that many of them are ex-bolshevists & have spent so much time denouncing Austro-Marxism & Kautskyan-Centrism makes it hard for them to develop the old centrist perspective (given a renewed revolutionary flavour in Rosa Luxemburg's writings) of parliamentarians acting as rubber stamps on gains the workers make for themselves by direct action.

In such circumstances, & especially since the Nixon-Mao talks took the heart out of much of the Left-Stalinist movement, the majority of those propagating a socialist perspective which makes sense out of supporting all the various workers' actions are in one or other Trotskyist faction. (I use the term widely, I don't think that for all his faults Trotsky would have acknowledged any of his heirs.)

The significance of the term anarchist, & the necessity to retain it is put in question by the apparent bankrupt state of the anarchist movement & the readiness of other healthy currents to call themselves libertarian but distrust of the word anarchist.

In the past the only real argument here was that we had no desire to disown our heritage. We were first given the name (starting from Bakunin not Godwin) as a term of abuse, & so assuredly there is no real reason why we shouldn't have found ourselves a better term; (Though this would have been made a term of abuse by our enemies anyway.) But to explain where we differed from 'socialism' we would have to refer back to the history of the Marxist/Anarchist split (even when as in my case one tends to favour Marx rather than Bakunin on many points) & so the word anarchist would be introduced. Once introduced it would appear cowardice that one did not adopt it.

But now there are other reasons. One has Septimus Swine (Lord Hail Sham) denouncing anarchists here, whenever trade unionists strike, or Welshmen wish to be addressed in their own language. One has trade union bureaucrats denouncing dissidents in their own unions (Jones & the dockers) as anarchists. One has Leninists denouncing overemphasis on the industrial struggle as mere petit bourgeois anarchism; & one has the papers ranting against sit-in strikes as opening the doors to anarchism.

Enough workers are being denounced - for the right reasons - by capitalists as anarchists; enough militants told that if they are not totally subservient to some self-elected set of potential dictators they are anarchists; that our propaganda is being done for us. All over the place there must be people, no doubt at the moment furiously denying they are anarchist, they just want freedom, but wanting to know "what the hell is an anarchist anyway."

They may well be misinformed when they ask. May well at first believe the misinformation. But as they are told that it is petit bourgeois anarchism for workers to come together at the shop floor and insist on controlling their organization; that it is petit bourgeois anarchism for workers to talk of running their factories themselves, rather than have an enlightened managed appointed by an all wise party; p.b.a. to talk of...; they are going to wonder just why such a petit bourgeois group as anarchists should advocate so much power for workers and in such a sensible way.

Sooner or later they'll get round to asking anarchists! We want to be there when it happens. They'll ask the largest body of anarchists & the largest publishing group. They may well when they've looked at it be alienated, & begin to believe some of the criticisms formerly made. Unless there are revolutionary anarchists around that publishing group & that body, ready to add to the answers.