

This pamphlet contains articles arguing different points of view on a wide variety of important issues, including pornography, free speech, class antagonism, Marxist economics and the question of violence. If you've an open mind, read on.

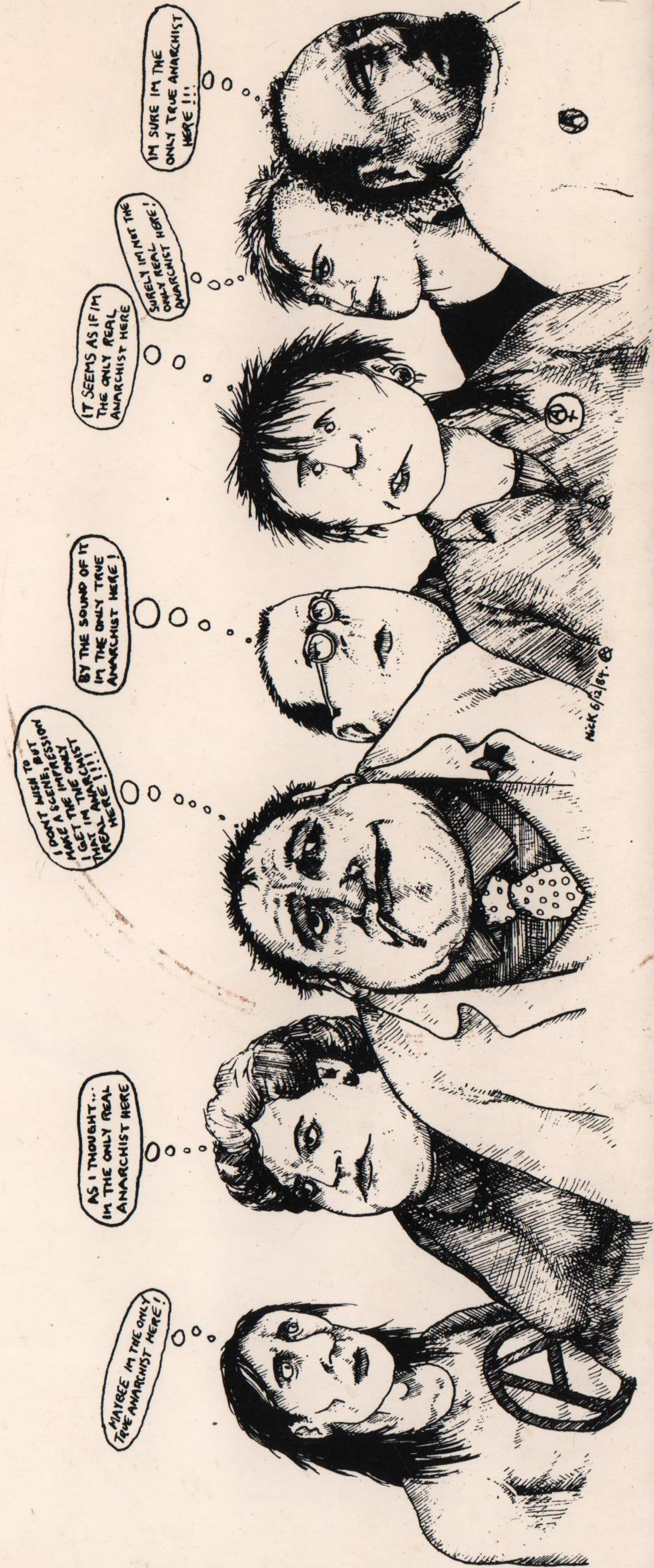


£1-00

isbn 0 948984 01 5

Phoenix Press
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MOOT POINT



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Moot Point

We are, in any case, only one of the forces acting in society, and history will advance, as always, in the direction of the resultant of all the (social) forces.

Errico Malatesta

Anarchism is distinct from non-anarchist theories but not as a monolith. Different strands of anarchism stand in varying degrees of agreement with and opposition to each other, the latter aspect a curious one for a minority creed that should surely be uniting its forces and not dividing them.

The first step in an examination of the divisions within anarchism is to present some of them. This will be done by reprinting a number of articles that appeared in the British anarchist paper Freedom in 1983, articles arguing for and against particular viewpoints on a wide variety of topics including pacifism, pornography, free speech, class antagonisms and Marxist economics. They form an introduction to many, even most, of the divisions within anarchism.

A letter or article would appear in one issue of Freedom, arguing for one viewpoint. The next issue would contain one or more replies, sometimes agreeing with the original viewpoint, more often disagreeing with it, and the following issue would contain replies to the replies. In this way a series of informal debates, not initiated by the Freedom editors, took place. A selection of these debates forms the raw material of this study. By presenting the articles together their debating character is made explicit and readers are will be able to decide which, if any, of the viewpoints expressed they agree with. Once the debates have been presented this discussion will resume.

Issue 11
4th June 1983

I fear that in writing this I'm going to bring forth sighs from readers and charges of 'We've heard it all before'. But as I'm only 19 and have only been active in the struggle for about six months I can plead ignorance.

The fact is that I simply cannot see how anarchists can justify using violence on other people as part of their campaign. My reason is that if we did manage to overthrow the state by violent methods, it follows that our power would rest on the ability to keep those who oppose us under control. This sounds uncannily like the present system of repression

Another reason is one which I have got from Ronald Sampson's pamphlet *Society without the State*. In it he rightly states that anarchists, to be true to their aims, must not strive to obtain power over others because it would be hypocrisy. So the first requirement

On Saturday last (28th) a group of women set off from 121 @ Centre to join the march through Soho which was to be the culmination of the 'Women's Week of Action against Pornography'.

By far the most 'exciting' part of the afternoon came when we visited the Paperback Centre in Brixton to

of anarchists is to renounce any desire for power over others. Likewise, does it not follow that, in order to be true to their aims of disarmament and peace, anarchists must first throw away their own guns?

With this in mind I find many of the sentiments expressed in certain 'anarchist' papers hypocritical. I quote here from an article in *Workers Playtime* (February 1983): Our aims are not pacific, but revolutionary and warlike: We do not call for disarmament but seek the arming of the proletariat....The Ruling Class will only be disarmed through the organised violence of an insurrectionary working class. Personally this sounds too much like SWP rhetoric for my liking. Is this the voice of an anarchist?

I'd be pleased to hear what other readers think.

John

make a fairly mild protest against their stocking 'soft porn' magazines. The response to one copy of *Playboy* being mutilated was violent and hysterical. We had to struggle quite hard to release the three women who had gone into the shop. One woman was punched in the face, and we were also called 'fuck-

ing cunts' — by the woman who worked in the shop.

When we arrived in Soho, we spent some time wandering round looking for other women — found a few — and by standing on the pavement outside a sex shop managed to close it for a few minutes. We were told (by a man) that what we needed was a good fuck, and by a group of prostitutes hanging out of an upstairs window that it's a lovely live, but we were ruining business and would we please go away.

Eventually, the main body of women, who had marched from County Hall, arrived, and we paraded through a few streets singing and dancing and uttering piercing war whoops outside shops and cinemas. And then, incredibly, someone said it's all over now, time to go home (or words to that effect) and most people *did*. Some women carried on

Issue 12
18th June 1983

Your young correspondent thinks I sound like a member of the SWP - a serious charge to make. Apparently I have no right to call myself an anarchist.

The article he refers to, in *Workers' Playtime* no. 1 (Greenham Common Mistake) was supposed to be an attack against the currently fashionable pacifist/no nukes 'peace' movement. How then can it be likened to the line of the SWP, which is in full (if 'critical') support of CND and the whole pacifist carnival?

This is nothing new - the SWP has

singing and dancing and startling the Saturday evening tourists, but after about ten minutes we were back, more or less, to our original group. The hundreds of women, and the dozens of police, had simply melted away.

The whole thing was something of a damp squib. Instead of women taking over the streets of Soho and showing the power of sisterhood, they (most of them) walked meekly on the pavements most of the time, and went home like good little girls when they were told to.

If 'we are women, we are strong' as the song says, we need to do much more as women to show our strength than following a few leaders through Soho on a cold and damp Saturday afternoon.

S.O.B.

tried to capitalise on every single voguish one-issue distraction I can remember (Anti-Nazi League, Right to Work etc.)

The SWP may sometimes make noises about class violence, although it is not violence alone that separates revolutionaries from liberals. But it is what the SWP does in practice (telling people to vote labour, spreading illusions about the trade unions being able to win lasting gains for workers, defending democratic 'rights' etc.) that places it firmly on the side of capitalism.

(Or, more precisely, on the liberal wing of the capitalist hierarchy of interests).

Unfortunately, because most anarchists (though certainly not all) have no effective critique of capitalism, they fall back on the nebulous, timeless concept of 'authority'. This has caused all sorts of confusion and demoralisation. The worst of it is that all power/'authority' is equated with statism. So after advocating violence against the class enemy, aimed at the dismantlement of its central organ of repression (the state), I am accused of being no better than a statist myself!

The social revolution will necessarily be violent. It is not merely a question of resisting capitalism, as enthusiasts of non-violent protest advocate. If the revolution does not *destroy* capitalism, then capitalism will certainly destroy the revolution. In this sense, like all other revolutions, communist revolution must

May has seen an upsurge of various libertarian activities in Brighton.

Several demonstrations met the International Arms Fair at the Metropole Hotel. A group of women in evening dress offered glasses of 'babies blood' to those arriving for the civic reception on the first night. The next day a morning 'die-in' was followed by an attempted blockade of the main entrance at lunchtime; this was violently broken by police, who arrested one woman. Three more people were arrested as police tried to clear the area in front of the police station of those who had

be 'authoritarian' - it will be a process whereby one section of society will impose its will on the other.

But the communist revolution will have no need of state. The communisation of life - the emergence, out of the struggle of the dispossessed, of a society in which it is *people* who themselves shape their lives as opposed to market relations - will destroy the material bases of the state, its roles as mediator, teacher and nanny. All that remains is the repressive rump. This too must be destroyed, but it can only be destroyed militarily.

If such 'heresies' mean that I must be excommunicated, prohibited from calling myself an anarchist, then so be it. But I would suggest that appeals to orthodoxy do nothing to advance our critical theory, as years of sterile debate in **FREE-DOM** show all too clearly.

'Playmate'

gone there to support her. All four were charged with obstruction, as were two women arrested the next day during an attempted women's blockade.

Several porn and video shops have been bricked by a group called 'Angry Women'. Women attempted to blockade the Navy careers office on Womens Day of Action for Peace.

The squat of an empty council-owned shop was ended when police forced entry, arrested all the occupants, and charged two of them with

criminal damage to a road (painting a zebra crossing!) The shop was boarded up whilst they were in the police cells.

Outlines of bodies and an anti-militarist message were painted on

the ground in the shopping centre. A lot of spray-painted graffiti - feminist, anarchist, anti-militarist and anti-apartheid - has appeared throughout the town.

Brighton Anarchists.

Issue 13

2nd July 1983

The election of a Tory Government with a very large majority has reawakened the debate on the restoration of the death penalty. The battle-lines are clearly drawn with the forces of good and light - progressive liberals, reformist socialists, high-minded intellectuals - ranged against the forces of evil and darkness - right-wing Tory patriots law-and-order authoritarians and the low-brow masses. It has even been suggested that, should a referendum on capital punishment ever be staged, anarchists should perform their function as an appendage of the general 'left' by laying down their arms and taking part in the vote. For surely we must do all we can to stop this great evil being committed.

And yet the reintroduction of this measure would be no more than the logical consequence of any judicial system based on punishment and revenge against those who dare transgress the law (just as police brutality is an intrinsic part of any police force) - a system which is based, with most people's wholehearted approval, on locking people away in inhumane conditions for long periods of time in order to

'rehabilitate' them and teach them not to do it again. It is in fact arguable whether being jailed for life is preferable to being put to death. Some inmates in American prisons think not, and have gone so far as to demand their own executions.

Not having a death penalty has not stopped murders in police custody, suicides in jail, the death of Irish Republican hunger-strikers, dead demonstrators, and having it again will not save murder victims or those killed in Northern Ireland.

No, the argument will come to rest on moral grounds and finally be defended by the 'sanctity' of life argument. To hear our politicians who support a warfare state (such as Michael Heseltine, the Minister of Defence) decry judicial execution merely highlights their hypocrisy. Much like a nation of Pontius Pilates, they seem to wish to wash their hands of the barbarities that their social system has created and portray themselves as civilised and oh, so very moral.

And yet, at first glance paradoxically, I and many other anarchists would not deny ourselves the right to 'kill'. We do not need the pre-

tence of a judicial system mandated by the people or by command from Parliament to put into action our revolutionary justice. In the end we must trust ourselves, in the arrogance of our own beliefs, to see us through those times of upheaval, when we are forced to fight for our lives and to end other lives. For we believe in the death penalty. It is our final sanction against those who would oppress us. It is the state we do not believe in, and *its* death penalty that we see as grotesque and as abhorrent as the edifice of laws/police/judges/executioners

I was disappointed to read the report on the anti-porn demo in your June 4 issue. It appears that, since this march started from 121 @ centre, that at least some anarchists either supported or participated in this action. However, I find it rather contradictory for anarchists to participate in such an authoritarian enterprise. Mutilating *Playboy* and harassing porn dealers seems to be a clear interference with free speech and expression, and should be opposed and condemned by anarchists.

The Welsh Anarchist conference was held in Cardiff, with attendance from several places in South Wales and South-West England. It was held on 4/5 June, the Saturday involving about 40 people and the Sunday about 25 (not all the same people).

that it will sit on.

All the people who voted, for whichever party, elected this government, for they agreed to the rules of the game and played for keeps. It is not for us to tell them who to vote for but to show them there is no need to play the game. It will not be our job to ask them to vote against the death penalty. It is up to us to show them we can live without any laws, 'good' or 'bad' ones, for while they exist there can be no justice.

Stefano

This infatuation with censorship has also shown up in the US and Canadian anarchist press, especially in *Open Road*. Many anarchists seem to be reluctant to criticize the anti-porn movement, probably because they fear being accused of sexism. But it is important for anarchists of all shades to stand up for principle and reject the censors despite the risks. After all, anarchists are usually not afraid to take unpopular or controversial positions, are we?
Joe Peacott

On Saturday a number of workshops were held on the following topics.

Elections A free and frank exchange of views was held expressing a wide range of ideas. It was felt that it was important to carry out post-election work to counter

post-election depression. It was also felt that posters and leaflets should be more positive than just 'Don't Vote!'

Class War A heated exchange of views took place around the relevance of class war to anarchism.

Direct Action There seemed to be certain misconceptions about direct action as meaning violence against public figures, rather than people taking control of their own lives.

Feminism and Anarchism Initially there were separate women's and men's meetings. The women's meeting discussed the ideas that the struggle against hierarchy and power has got to go hand in hand with the struggle against patriarchy. The men's meeting discussed their own feelings in coming to terms with feminism. Some of the men felt that too often only lip service was paid to feminism. There was then a joint discussion about a feeling that feminism had also become a commodity and a career for a lot of women. It was also felt that anarchism comes close to feminism whereas other political groupings remain hierarchical and power-based. It was felt, however, that many anarchists fail to talk about personal politics.

Communications A practical discussion took place on the usefulness and potential of various proposed schemes regarding newspapers, pamphlets, leaflets, etc.

Entertainment A discussion took place on the usefulness of alternative means of propaganda, and putting fun into politics — eg theatre,

street theatre, pirate radio, pirate tv, hot air balloons, public meetings, tapes and cassettes, music and bands, putting LSD into reservoirs.

In conclusion, it became clear during the course of the day that there was a tendency for certain individuals to dominate discussions. There was a group of people who called themselves Class War Anarchists, whose style of debate some people found intimidating in the larger workshops. They also seemed unable or unwilling to explain coherently what they actually meant by class war.

On Sunday there was a discussion on whether a Welsh Anarchist Federation would still be possible and, if so, what it could achieve, and then on deciding its structure and organisation. There was much discussion whether the WAF needed a statement of principles. In the end they were felt to be either unnecessary or undesirable. It was resolved to establish a communications network, and resource network. The idea of a central collating point for mailing was eventually rejected. It was resolved to have a general conference every six months and a social event approximately every two months. It was left open to individual groups to call meetings on specific topics or projects through the network. Projects that had a strong measure of support were: the production of posters, a post-election leaflet, and a series of pamphlets giving the anarchist perspective on nationalism, work, education, class, de-

fence, etc. It was resolved to make contact with other groups and federations in the Islands and overseas.

Issue 14 16th July 1983

As someone rapidly approaching 40 may I reassure John (only 19) (FREEDOM letters 12) that, having read an anarchist pamphlet and actually thought about it, he is already more aware than 90% of the so-called movement. Unfortunately we are as buried in mindless clichés as authoritarian marxists. "You don't learn anarchy at school" as the Spanish say, but these days it seems that many English anarchists learn 'theory' from the 'put-downs' in the *Daily Telegraph* - chaotic rule!

Since FREEDOM itself devotes more space to 'Militant Liberalism and Marxist analysis' than libertarian understanding, it's not surprising you should confuse pacifism with anarchist opposition to hierarchical power. I'm well aware that FREEDOM feels that people are already aware of basic anarchist ideas, so don't 'bore their readers' by discussing them. I can only say that, having been to many anarchist meetings, I find no evidence for that view in the real movement. Besides, just what is the point of an anarchist paper that doesn't devote itself to spreading anarchist ideas?

As for the articles in *Workers Play-Time* sounding like SWP rhetoric, most of the people in London

Workers Group are 'pure' marxists who think that by tacking the word autonomy (never clearly defined) on to the holy writ of Das Capital, they can call themselves 'Libertarian'. Far from being anarchists, they even 'side' with Marx against Bakunin over the 'First' International!

The first thing that any young anarchist must learn is that marxism is a metaphysical authoritarian religion; from the labour theory of value to the 'inevitable crisis of capitalism'. It can only lead you into serious confusion and contradiction if you want real revolutionary change in the real world. For instance, this issue of *Workers Play-Time* contains a mind-bogglingly stupid 'analysis' of the workers co-op movement as a GLC plot to maintain capitalism! When reality fails to conform with their Theory, marxists 'bend' their perception of reality rather than change their ideas. Now they claim you can have capitalism without capitalists!

The second thing to learn about pacifism is not anarchist either. The lesson of our history is that *those who cannot defend themselves must serve or suffer*. Pacifism amounts to an appeal to the better nature of the ruling class, and any-

way pacifists are often rather aggressive and intolerant people.

The third thing is that the anti-theory 'activists' are in fact stuffed full of theory ... they just can't stand criticism (like all authoritarians).

In reply to 'Playmate'.

I agree with John, the article in *Workers Playtime* does sound like SWP rhetoric.

An anarchist should not advocate violent revolution. As an anarchist you should be against all oppression, no-matter who is the oppressor.

Like the hammer is the tool of the Blacksmith, violence is the tool of the oppressor. By using that tool you are forcing someone to accept something they don't want and as an anarchist you should feel that that is wrong.

We've got to use other means. We

The arrogance of Stefano (2 July) defies belief. He does not deny himself the right to kill, he does not feel the need to indulge in the formality of a trial - which he rightly sees as a hypocrisy and a pretence; but rather than do away with the whole concept of crime and punishment he would keep both and merely do away with the theatre that comes between them.

Rather than do away with the phony roles of judges and judged, he would just reverse them. Where is the Freedom in that?

'We must trust ourselves' -yes-

The last, and most important thing, is that any fool can call themselves anarchist (including playmates) so *never* read just *one* pamphlet on any subject.

Arthur Askey

have to take control and manipulate the media to get our views across. We've got to use rallying, leaflets etc. Of course it's difficult, but it's a struggle we have to persevere with. Anarchy is the human way, it should be allowed to develop naturally. That is why there is a resurgence going on now, and this time we won't be beaten, we are here to stay.

If we use force people will not accept us and will destroy us. So, 'playmate'. stop reading Stirner, it's bad for you.

Paul Hope

but 'in the arrogance of our own beliefs' - surely not - unless Stefano cannot admit the possibility that he might be wrong. Even anarchists make mistakes - they have done so before and will do so again - surely an element of humility rather than arrogance is called for - the world has had enough of arrogance and where it leads.

One must fight slavery with freedom, violence with non-violence, alienation and fear with compassion and understanding; otherwise, if we 'win' we will only do so in order to discover that we have won our

enemy's victory and not our own.

Apparently the death penalty of the state is bad and that of the 'revolutionary' good — surely the one behind the gun *is* the State to the one in front of it, whoever they each may be. Stefano will merely succeed in replacing one tyranny by another — possibly worse one.

JH

Issue 15

30th July 1983

I must reply to Paul Hope's letter in FREEDOM.

Violence, like love exists as part of the human make-up. Like love, it can be given a physical expression, although even without that expression, it still exists. We cannot conduct a debate which restricts itself to whether violence is 'good' or 'bad' in the abstract.

Even in its physical expression, violence cannot be reduced to a 'tool'. It certainly is not simply an instrument solely under the control of oppressors (although the state does try to impose certain monopolistic rights over the use of violence). How violence will exist in any future communist society is impossible to foresee. But it is undeniable that in past and present society, violence has existed at all levels.

Because the proletariat exists in a state of defeat, under the domination of capital, most of its violence is inwardly directed, and is self-destructive. Bullying, racism, mugging, rape, wife-battering, child-

molesting etc is part of the misery of a wretched life, an aspect of our defeat as a class and our inadequacy as individuals. It is our apparent impotence in the face of the system as a whole that leads us to direct our frustrations against each other, and in particular against the weaker sections of our class. In many respects, civilisation gives this its institutional blessing; for example, men have traditionally held a monopoly of violence over children and women within the family.

However at certain moments this destructive violence can erupt into a generalised rage against the system which produces it. It is at such moments that the 'military question' is posed. How is the proletariat, which lives in division and defeat, to unite against its common oppression (without any separation between leaders and led, that is, without spawning military specialists, a new ruling elite)?

In the riots of two years ago, a significant number of people took to violent action against the state.

Although there were many negative aspects, there was no formal 'leadership' — just a general response in which people defined themselves as part of a collectivity violently opposed to a wretched existence. The new found sense of *community* immediately raises the possibility of *communization*. If such a situation was to develop, and a social transformation got underway, it would not be a question of first destroying the repressive organs of the state, and *then* communising society — the state is in any case too strong to admit of such a possibility. These two tasks merge and become aspects of the same military problem. This has nothing in common with the usual *political* conception of violence.

Politics consists in changing the system of managing society (eg through democratisation) for some alleged future benefit. Whether or not violence is envisaged, there is no intention of destroying the very basis of society, and the 'best' that could be achieved would be a more democratically controlled capitalism. We can and must destroy the state. But we will only achieve this if we abolish the principles on which the state is founded. By destroying the social relations of capitalism, in particular commodity production and wage labour, and replacing them with communism, the role of the state as arbiter and provider is removed, its economic life-support is cut off at source, and it will thus become utterly vulnerable.

The question of whether, by

taking up arms (even at a rudimentary level), the Brixton rioters were becoming 'oppressors' of the police — who, it is true, did not 'want' to surrender their control of the streets — is pure semantics. There will always be people who do not 'want' the overthrow of capitalist order, so a revolution would 'oppress' them, whether violent or not.

It is true that in many cases a new form of oppression has emerged from within our own ranks (Russia in 1917, Germany 1919 etc). Our history is littered with betrayals. But these are only the *manifestations* of defeat, due to old weaknesses and disunity reasserting themselves long before any steps towards communization had begun in earnest. Even in its most advanced forms (workers councils/soviets) the conceptions of the old workers' movement remained essentially political both in theory and practice. And when the revolution stops going forward, it goes backward, in one form or another. It is precisely when people feel impotent and intimidated that they look for a centralist solution. This is why peddling pacifist moral imperatives only disarms the oppressed, leaving us open to domination via the conspiracies of our oppressors and would-be oppressors.

Incidentally, Paul Hope's letter shows just how narrowly political — vanguardist even — pacifists and libertarians can be, even when ostensibly slagging off the likes of the SWP. 'We have to control and manipulate the media', he declares,

so people will 'accept us'. The party may have been jettisoned in the *formal* sense, but the party mentality persists. It is apparently still the task of an ideological elite to introduce a (non-violent?) revolutionary consciousness to the masses, and

Stefano's item on the death penalty was clearly meant to shock and it seemed to make a relevant point honestly. Anyone who is not a pacifist agrees with the death penalty and I suppose this might be described as arrogant, but humility can hardly be considered simply as failing to defend effectively one's own being and those who are cherished should the only meaningful form of resistance require death for an assailant.

Following the article on the Welsh Anarchist conference (July 2) I feel it necessary to provide the alternative account, particularly as I am one of the people identified as a 'class war anarchist'.

A heated exchange of ideas certainly took place on the subject of class war, but nothing to do with class war and its relevance to anarchism. As far as we're concerned our fight against the State is intrinsic to anarchism, not some outside force that may be considered relevant or not by the middle class wally's at that meeting.

As far as the printed word on direct action goes, I (nor my comrades), do not think that violence

thereby create a 'movement'. This is a purely social-democratic conception, and amounts in fact to a rejection of social revolution. Lenin would be proud of you, Paul.

Playmate

Arguably a pacifist cannot be an anarchist since it is unrealistic to expect opponents of a free society to refrain from trying to destroy such a society. Killing in defence of a libertarian society would be a requirement if that society were to survive. Certainly this process can lead to elitism and a callous disregard for life but it need not. In Spain it was not the fighters who betrayed anarchist ideals but the politicians.

JW

against public figures is a misconception by any means. It's plainly and simply logical progression. Blowing up Mountbatten and killing Airey Neave in the same efficient manner is the ultimate direct action, hitting them right where it hurts, no messing around. Apply the same no-nonsense spirit to other things of interest to anarchists and we'd be a lot further down the road to commonly held anarchist aims today than we are now.

As regards us intimidating them, they are the only people in the position to say whether or not they felt intimidated so I can't really challenge that. What I will say is

that the class war faction didn't piss about. My comrades expressed their ideas in a commonsense manner, directly and simply, and perhaps it was that which may have upset those people. It must be difficult to understand someone arguing the toss in simple everyday language without endless references to Bakunin and that lot. In the

Just read with great amusement the article about the formation of a Welsh Anarchist Federation (FREE-DOM July 2).

Being one of these 'Class war anarchists' I noticed with boring regularity the very patronising wording about our attempts to put across the notion of class war to our 'comrades'.

The wording "unable or unwilling to explain coherently what they actually meant by 'class war'" Just shows we are on one side and they — typical of the middle-class, liberal anarchist movement I'm supposed to be a part of — on the other side, of class confrontation.

Kids on the streets, workers, housewives will always recognise 'rich bastards, snobs, Joneses', so why the fuck can't you?

The contributors to the report on the formation of the Welsh Anarchist Federation (July 2) tell us that a group of people calling themselves Class War Anarchists although unable or unwilling to coherently explain their terms of reference had no difficulty in dominating discus-

words of one class warrior "If that lot will tolerate each other, they'll tolerate any fucking thing".

In conclusion, if you'd have been Joe Public and wandered into that conference you wouldn't have stayed 5 minutes. Only the very deaf or the very dedicated could stick it.

Doc

Most anarchists spend their time in intellectual working debates on Kronstadt, Spain '36, Anarcho-syndicalism, THE RIOTS !! — Jerking off on the past.

When will most anarchists realise it is not only during election charades that they must go out on the street, and the rest of the year fester in smoke-filled rooms plotting revolution with yer old friends from university days (fuck you all).

I'd like to end this with a big fuck-off to all liberal, middle-class anarchists who don't know there's a war on in the streets here and in Northern Ireland.

Until ordinary people understand what anarchism is all about, it will continually be the irrelevant dogma it is now.

Sean M. & Stella C. for 'Class War'

sions to the extent that some people found them intimidating. After reading two editions of the crudely nihilist broad sheet — *Class War*, it is becoming increasingly clear what these people stand for and it is not difficult to understand why participants at the WAF felt so

threatened,

To read *Class War* with satisfaction requires an incredibly low level of intellect and moral development. First readers should be aware of the linguistic meaning of at least a half dozen key words and phrases in the *Class War* extensive vocabulary. The word Wanker is synonymous with the term intellectual, Scumbag or Arsehole is used for politician, Fuck off means we violently disagree with you but are not prepared to discuss the issue any further, Fuck right off denotes a certain impatience that you have not already gone. Rich Bastard — a member of the plutocracy, Bollocks — party political manifesto or a substitute word for shit, Shit — any perceived manifestation of the class enemy, including anarchist thinkers and papers they disapprove of.

According to *Class War*, because most anarchists will tolerate each other it is proof that they will tolerate anything and that there is no point in co-operating with such people. In the May issue they declared that such anarchists are just fucking liberals and that those who believe in class war shouldn't hesitate to give them the boot.

The notion of class war anarchism is summed up most succinctly on the front page of the current edition which states that now is the time for every dirty, lousy tramp to arm himself with a revolver or a knife and lie in wait outside the palaces of the rich and shoot or stab them to death as they come out. Tramps of the world unite no doubt. Sadly this is not a polemic. The class war

anarchists don't just want to kick the Tories out, they 'just want to kick them' in a literal sense.

In the crudest terms possible they express their murderous desire for an explosion of class anger and violence so that they can 'bash the rich bastards once and for all!' If we were to change the word rich for black we would know we were reading the National Front comic *Bulldog*.

The conceptional framework of class war anarchism denies the self-discipline and concern for the well being of humanity so characteristic of libertarianism. It places so little sanctity on human life that it calls for the murder of various categories of people. This is not really very different from the demands of the fascists. According to *Class War* the stuck up bunch of bastards known as the ruling class are the prime candidates for our anger and should be eliminated. Echoes of the French Revolution, Stalins Russia or perhaps the Third Reich? Pisarev, the theoretician of Russian nihilism, declares that the greatest fanatics are children and adolescents. The bullshit anarchist variety of *class war* falls easily into both these categories. Those amongst us still acquainted with the regular reading of lavatory walls in middle and secondary schools will be well aware of the social developmental age of class war thinking. In advocacy of senseless terrorism as a way to effect social change they expose their immaturity which prevents them from thinking through the possible relationships

between ends and means in the pursuit of justice.

Their superficial understanding of the State leads class war anarchists to identify the privileged as obstacles to be eliminated rather than the system they represent. This accounts for their indifference towards human life and desire for destruction.

I cannot recommend this broad sheet, nor do I recognise it as

Issue 16 13th August 1983

As a long time reader of FREE—DOM I was dismayed that you would print the article *Anti-Porn March* by SCB (FREEDOM, 4 June 1983). Are we to infer from the fact that you printed such a piece that the FREEDOM collective approves of both the activities described therein and the supportive sentiments expressed by the author? Since no editorial comment was appended, such an inference would appear to be justified. If such is the case, then I am puzzled as to the nature of the 'anarchism' you endorse. The ideology of anarchism surely requires the condemnation of all attempts at censorship, whether carried out by governments or by private individuals or groups, for at the heart of this ideology is respect for the autonomy of individuals. Sadly, the article in question revealed not the slightest acquaintance with this fact. Instead, the article described with

having anything to do with anarchism. The notions of *Class War* and jackboot nihilism have more in common with Marxist dictatorship than with anarchy. In my opinion the notion of class war is counter-revolutionary and should be treated with the contempt it deserves like any other form of down market, left wing authoritarianism.

David Isiorho

approval a series of vigilante actions designed to harrass the frequenters of bookstores that sell sexually explicit materials. One of the actions was the ritualistic mutilation of a copy of *Playboy*. (If *Playboy* is to be mutilated, can the mutilation of the works of Rabelais, de Sade, Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Alex Comfort be far behind?)

I think it is clear that if the same actions had been carried out by the police or by some right-wing vigilante group (led by, say, Mary Whitehouse or Lord Longford), FREEDOM's condemnation would have been immediate and unequivocal. Apparently the FREEDOM collective is of the opinion that censorship is not really censorship if it is imposed by a group that knows how to use trendy radical rhetoric. Nor is coercion really an assault on individual autonomy if it is practised by those who profess

to speak in the name of that monstrous abstraction, 'the people'. This 1984ish corruption of language, so clearly implicit in your publication of the article, will hardly attract newcomers to anarchism, nor will it encourage the continued support of FREEDOM by those whose anarchism has not been corrupted by the incoherent fantasies of Marcuse and the impenetrable jargon of other continental radical gurus.

I feel I must write a few words in reply to Joe Peacott's letter (2nd July). So Joe you think that women — and men — taking action against pornography 'seems to be a clear interference with free speech and expression, and should be opposed and condemned by anarchists'. Such a statement reveals a very naive understanding of the *nature* of pornography and is unfortunately typical of modern day Alex Comforts — a sexual reactionary if ever there was one — and self-styled 'free-thinkers'.

Porn degrades and exploits women. If it doesn't then how do you explain the actual *content* of pornographic magazines, films, etc? Women are clearly shown as objects to be used and abused as *men* see fit. Sex is seen as competition between men for women *they* consider 'attractive' — ie physically — and for those men who 'lose out', pornography serves to satisfy their 'fantasies'. As a man who during my teenage years consumed such shit I talk from some experience.

Porn reinforces a society based

If anarchism cannot be sharply distinguished from populist authoritarianism, it does not deserve to continue. For if such were to be the case, then anarchism would have to be classified as just another 19th Century 'dream of reason' which, like all such dreams, has produced an ample supply of monsters.

MG Anderson

on sexual competition and the sexual exploitation of women by men. Taking action against porn does not constitute censorship because porn — unlike most literature — is not just about ideas, but it is ideas *put into practice*. It is the difference between a porn mag and a book written by a fascist — the latter *talks* about exploitation, the former *does* it.

If mutilating porn mags interferes with freedom I'm damned if I can see why. Unless by 'free speech' you mean freedom to verbally abuse people, or by 'free expression' you mean paedophilia and child abuse. Because pornographic magazines and films come into very much the same category — just because some of the women who are being abused and degraded in this way consent to it does not mean such exploitation is right. After all, many of the slaves in the southern USA round about the time of the civil war were opposed to slavery being abolished — as they are today in African countries such as Mauritania — but that does not justify slavery.

Of course it is true that many people opposed to pornography are also opposed to *any* free expression of sexuality and should rightly be condemned for being so. But just because you share

Arthur Askey (FREEDOM July 16) offers us theoretical youngsters the benefits of nearly 40 years of libertarian contemplation. Obviously wisdom such as his is eternal where facts are mere shadows, but it's still a pity that in his claims about the London Workers' Group, Askey once again doesn't have a leg to stand on. The LWG is not 'most(ly) . . . pure marxists', or indeed mostly anything. As an open discussion group without a formal membership, a variety of opinions are expressed at meetings, ranging from the odd marxist right through to the (occasionally very) odd libertarian like Arthur himself. What is true is that a majority of those attending meetings, while not agreeing about much else, do disagree with him.

Arthur's brand of libertarianism rests on two basic contentions. First, that various features of capitalist society such as the production of commodities, and their exchange through a market, are eternal economic categories and part of any future society. Anyone who disagrees with Arthur about this is a 'marxist'. Secondly, that the only thing wrong with society is authority relations, and the only thing to be done away with is the principle of hierarchy.

From this it follows that for Arthur work isn't alienating, only

one opinion with people whose every other opinion you disagree with need not mean your holding of that opinion is wrong. It is a question of *why*.
Gjon

the discipline imposed by bosses. Class struggle is irrelevant. Class violence is anti-social. Revolution is a matter of spreading correct libertarian ideas. And once they are accepted by everyone, and commodity production and exchange are conducted by co-operatives — organised on the correct libertarian principles — then capitalism will have ceased to exist. Anyone who disagrees with Arthur about this is not only a 'marxist' but an 'authoritarian'.

For libertarians like Arthur the most important thing is the formal structure of libertarian organisation. In practice this means having a strong written constitution so that each libertarian can see that his freedom to act as he likes is protected at all times, and that the rule book can be appealed to when his freedom conflicts with somebody else's. Since the limits of necessary co-existence are defined in the constitution, there's no need to build new mutual social relations, or indeed for any display of tolerance towards other people or their ideas. Arthur not unjustly castigates pacifists who are 'often rather aggressive and intolerant people' and 'anti-theory activists' who 'are in fact stuffed full of theory'. He might have added libertarians, who are often remarkably unconcerned

about the liberty of others.

In contrast to this sort of libertarianism the London Workers' Group was started in the belief that the different ideas people had, and the different labels they applied to themselves, were relatively unimportant beside the common problems they faced. As isolated militants in work or unemployed, wanting class struggle today, and also a revolution overthrowing capitalism and state. The breaking of that isolation through discussion and practical solidarity was more important than peddling one of the 57 varieties of correct line. The open, often unstructured, nature of meetings, and our refusal to write a political platform or call ourselves a communist/anar-

chist/libertarian goup, has meant that we have been rubbished from the start by organisation fetishists and purveyors of the one true ideology. Sadly it means they are still free to try their luck at converting us to their views at often tedious length — which is more than we would be if they held their own meetings. But that's the price you pay for trying to maintain an open forum for people to learn from one another's ideas and experiences. Happily we seldom have to wait long before they get bored with us and move on, like Arthur Askey, in search of another Bandwagon.

Tommy Handley

Issue 17

27th August 1983

I know it's the 'silly season' for the rest of the country, but hasn't our one gone on a bit long? Is it my natural arrogance that makes me think something is missing in a lot of heads? This barney between the pacifists and the others (what do you call non-pacifists, anyway?— activists, violencists — answers on postcards only to the usual address) has been going on for ever, and there seems no end in sight.

What is the point, anyway? There seems to be very little armed insurrection at the moment, and bombing teams appear to have gone off for their hols. So the pacifists have no one to form defence committees for, and the

non-pacifists have nothing to do but write 'blood and thunder' articles, instead of shooting, bombing, and generally having a good time.

It may be opening myself to a charge of liberalism and the tearing off of my badges (you know, black flag, circle A, etc), but isn't there a big soggy grey area in which a lot of us dwell? I suppose I can be as good a pacifist as the next person, until it comes to a situation where violence presents itself. Since I assume we are talking about state violence, and not the Saturday night chucking-out time punch-up, not many of us on a day-to-day basis experience it in this country, so we

can afford the luxury of pacifism. Secondly, I'm as good an insurrectionary as the next, but at the moment I can't see much point in digging up my cleverly concealed Sherman tank and motoring off down to the dole office to start the end of civilisation as we know it. For one thing, have you seen the price of ammunition at the moment?

What does it leave us? Well, as I see it, an irresolvable argument, which will carry on until we are all dead, either peacefully

or violently. The only way the whole thing will be ended is by one or the other side being proved 'right', and how is that going to happen? It's all empty rhetoric, whichever of the two positions you take at their extremes, and only shows that there isn't much else to do but slag each other off. Still, no doubt it keeps them happy, and I suppose it's a fairly harmless occupation, but a bit boring for the rest of us who don't play.

Clem

Issue 18

10th September 1983

I'd like to make a few comments on Gjon's response to my previous letter on porn and censorship. Clearly he dislikes porn and that is fine, but he has no place telling *me* what *I* can and cannot read, which is exactly what people who destroy literature with which they disagree, eg, *Playboy*, are doing. If porn offends, one should not read it, but should not interfere with those who wish to. I doubt that Gjon would support the actions of people who went about burning copies of *FREEDOM* because they felt it corrupted traditional moral values, and I think he should apply the same standards to porn.

Depiction or description of sexual activity of any nature is not violence against anyone unless the participants are coerced, which appears to be the exception, not the rule in porn. And certainly the image portrayed of women (and men) in

most porn is no more degrading than that depicted in most non-porn literature, especially advertising. Certainly *Nana* is no feminist tract, but I've never heard of any women destroying copies of this book because of its view of women. Why the double standard?

How can mutilating mags *not* be censorship? Talking or writing about sex, or distributing pictures of people having sex violates no-one's rights. It is absurd to say that porn is different than all other lit in that it constitutes actual violence. Frankly I can't see how anyone could say that *Playboy* is worthy of destruction, while *Mein Kampf* is not (Gjon opposes censorship of fascist stuff) and pretend to be consistent.

It's unfortunate that so many anti-freedom types have tagged onto the anarchist movement. Freedom of speech and press must be absolute

or it is not worth a damn. Calling Alex Comfort a reactionary because he is a sexual libertarian is an example of the strange way in which these censors view the world. If anarchy is ever going to change

I am writing on the issue of pornography and a disturbing aspect of the latest feminist campaign against it which I am still unsure of but would like other sisters and brothers to investigate...

On three occasions now I have been involved in anti-pornography debates and campaigns, all with three different women's centres which I shall not name in case my information is incorrect in any way, and so that further investigations can be carried out. What I have uncovered on three different occasions was that some of the most prominent women involved were not in the least bit left-wing. Although they appeared to be at meetings, in more intimate conversations it became increasingly clear that they were not only opposed to

After having been active in the anarchist movement for over 10 years I do not find it easy to write down why anarchism does not give me any more a satisfactory strategy for anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle.

I had to revise my old conceptions of revolutionary strategy while studying the revolutionary struggles and achievements in Central Amer-

this world, we've got to cut loose these puritanical busybodies in anarchists' clothing, and stop giving them positive coverage in our press.

Joe Peacott

pornography, but also to homosexuality, free love and abortion etc. Of course, it is possible that they just haven't thought things through, however it would be highly unlikely for such experienced campaigners.

So, out of curiosity at first, I decided to find out a little more about those women, and in two cases so far it appears almost certain that they are also involved with right-wing Christian organisations. I have mentioned this to other feminists who alas do not take me seriously saying that they are still women and therefore 'sisters'. I do not think so and feel that some positive investigation should be done to prevent our being used by women who only seek to serve patriarchy.

AL

ica and the Carribean: Cuba, Nicaragua, Granada, El Salvador, Guatemala. Neither in Cuba nor Nicaragua nor Granada is an anarchist society feasible in today's politic-historic situation, even if it were desired by the majority of the population. But this condition — anarchist mass-consciousness — was missing in these countries. And yet authoritarian revolutionary move-

ments have succeeded to conquer the power of the state and are in the process of constructing socialist societies under extremely difficult conditions. The kind of socialism which we find does not reflect our anarchist ideals, but it is a hundred times better than the corrupt and cynical dictatorships that ruled before. A Cuba and a Nicaragua without the power of a state and without the support of other socialist states would long ago have had to surrender to the economic blackmail and military intervention of the United States.

Anarchy in one country is not possible in the age of imperialism. We have to face the facts: A modern army with air force and specially trained units can defeat a country militarily, whose defence is based on workers' militia and/or autonomous fighting units. This was already the case in Spain in 1936. Franco's war was to a large part financed by the USA and militarily supported by German and Italian special troops. Only a stronger intervention by the USSR could have prevented Franco's victory. An anarchist revolution of course does not get such support.

The anarchist concept of an armed General Strike (armed workers' militia supported by autonomous military groups) may be capable of defeating the power of the state temporarily. But without a revolutionary army with a unified strategy and leadership a people in arms will in the long run have to submit to a modern mobile army. Workers' militia are immobile by

definition. Tied to the place where they work and live the armed workers can defend the revolution against local counter-revolutionaries but they can be disarmed and defeated one after the other by mobile military shock-troops. Autonomous revolutionary military groups can only be effective if they possess a common information network and a unified plan of action, ie, if they abandon their autonomy and submit to military hierarchy and command. The troops under Machno and Durruti had such a structure and were therefore a) relatively successful and b) strictly speaking not anarchist anymore.

But what about the argument, that a people can defy and even eventually defeat an internal or external occupying force by permanent civil disobedience and economic actions (Go-slow etc.) ?

Well, if the people does not have the political power to distribute the fruits of their labour, ie, if it lives under the conditions of exploitation, of wage slavery, then the people rely on their wages in order to survive. The working class without political power is economically subject to the exploiter. Non-cooperation, long-term strikes etc. lead in the long run to poverty and misery of the people, while the occupying force can still live well on the surplus of external means. See Poland today.

In Western Europe today a revolution seems so unrealistic, that it is easy to follow unrealistic revolutionary concepts. But if we look at

the situation in Central America, where the social revolution is on the agenda, then it is the duty of a revolutionary to develop realistic revolutionary perspectives. A realistic perspective cannot be derived from an ideology of the 19th century, but must be based on the social and historic conditions of each individual country, taking into account the global political conditions of US-Imperialism and Soviet-Imperialism. Cuba is not equal to Vietnam, Poland is not equal to

Afghanistan, Nicaragua is not equal to El Salvador and England is not equal to Spain.

What I am propagating today is something like a revolutionary pragmatism. We have to fight for that which is possible. We must not give up our libertarian aims where they can be realised, but our anarchist philosophy must not stand in our way when a social revolution of authoritarian character is possible in one country.

Klaus

Issue 21

22nd October 1983

(The next article refers in part to an article which has not been reprinted here.)

I am sure that many readers would like to hear the rationale of the Freedom Editorial Collective for their decision to include the 'Free the Five' article in the September 10th issue. The five alleged terrorists in question do not appear to be anarchists in any sense of the term, save the popular one. (In the popular sense an anarchist is a bomb thrower, a terrorist.) Unlike authentic anarchist prisoners in the past, who were (or at least claimed to be) innocent of the charges made against them (eg, the Haymarket anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, etc.), the five in question make no such claim, but instead plead the 'political' nature of the offences with which they are charged. The charges include armed robbery of a grocery

store, theft, arson, fire bombing, possession of restricted weapons, dynamiting, sabotage and conspiracy to rob a Brinks armoured car. To lend credibility to the 'political crime' plea, it is pointed out in the article that some of the fire bombing was directed at stores selling pornographic materials while some of the other bombings were directed at power plants. Thus both feminism and ecology are invoked as justifications for violence. (Poor feminism! Poor ecology!) To judge from the bizarre semantics of this group and its defenders, it would appear that *any* crime is political if its perpetrator calls it political. (Those feminists who are so infatuated with violence, the eradication of sexist 'thought crimes', and illogical arguments

should therefore be prepared to view at least some rapes as political, and therefore excusable. Perhaps even the selling of pornography could be so construed in those jurisdictions where such transactions are outlawed. Sellers of porn, please take note: you might some day have the fire bombers on your side!) It is clear to me, even if it is not clear to some of the confused individuals now editing FREEDOM, that the crimes with which 'the Five' are charged are *not* deserving of endorsement by any anarchist publication, nor is any member of 'the Five' deserving support unless there is a reason to believe that he or she is innocent of the charges.

The letter by Klaus, in which a quondam anarchist gives his reasons for rejecting anarchism in favour of what he calls 'revolutionary pragmatism', at least has the virtue of candour. It is a great pity that the others who continue to fill up to half the pages of FREEDOM with their ultra leftist rantings have thus far failed to draw the same conclusions as Klaus. They too will not be missed. Klaus rightly sees that any revolutionary movement today that is to have any hope of success must be rigidly authoritarian, totally unscrupulous, *and* receive support from the Soviet Union (with all that that entails). All other so-called 'revolutionary' activity, such as that with which 'the Five' are

charged, is nothing but futile ego-tripping. I completely agree. The only statement of Klaus with which I would take issue is his claim that 'the kind of socialism which we find (to result from a successful revolution) does not reflect our (sic) anarchist ideals, but it is a hundred times better than the corrupt and cynical dictatorships that ruled before'. A *hundred* times better? Are the people of (say) Cuba a hundred times freer under Castro than under Batista? Is their diet a hundred times better? Are their living standards a hundred times higher? I would be fascinated to find out how the figure 'one hundred' was arrived at. According to Huber Matos, Carlos Franqui, and other former revolutionaries who have spent years in Castro's prisons, the facts are quite different. I suspect that Klaus is simply expressing his preferences for the left-wing tyranny over right-wing tyranny, and that 'one hundred' is to be construed emotively and not mathematically. My own preference is in the other direction, if only because right-wing tyranny tends to be much less efficient than that of the left and consequently contains more potential for change in a libertarian direction. If I were to express this preference mathematically, however, I would use the language of infinitesimals.

M.G. Anderson

The charade of electoral politics has long been well understood by anarchists. Resistance is not only growing but also growing outside of the traditional areas of accepted conflict and is being taken into the streets, houses and country at large. The tactics of 'direct action' adopted by the anti-war movement are the best known, and so far best supported example, of what must become a generalised strategy to be used against the state. They must, however, learn to sever themselves completely from the empty promises of politicians and expand the struggle beyond just single issues.

The growth of movements such as, feminism, gay liberation, ecological and animal rights have shown the degree of peoples anger and frustration with a social order that seems bent on ultimate self-destruction, one way or another, while maintaining a life of oppression in the meantime. These movements have not only supplied invaluable critiques of this social order but also in many facets of their expression shown us how this order can be combatted. In fact they are, in many cases, one step ahead of those anarchists who, burdened by the inertia of their purist ideology, are still sitting around waiting for a 'mass movement', the end of the world, the second coming, an armed uprising or the global pacifist consensus. Many of those involved could not be termed anarchists, but most of their ideas and actions could be

termed anarchistic. We find ourselves repeatedly expressing support and then tacking on some minor or major reservations. In certain cases outright denunciation. This is reasonable within the confines of a debate on anarchist principles, but somewhat suspect when one finds oneself in direct conflict with the forces of the state and solidarity is refused on rather tenuous grounds.

A case in point is that of the Vancouver Five, who dared take 'direct action' one step further, currently on trial in Canada having been charged with a series of bombings and conspiracies related to anti-militarist, ecological and feminist issues. The Canadian state has gone to extremes to try and convict the five, and in the process is attempting to criminalise all other dissidents by association. Harrassing other members of protest groups and support committees after having whipped up a general hysteria through the media. If they are allowed to get away with this virtually unopposed they will no doubt feel confident in using these tactics over and over again. The Canadian state is trying to destroy dissent, the fight is a political one in which we are all involved. It is difficult to differentiate those who would deny solidarity with five against the state, with the state itself, their effect is the same. "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem". Whether due to the restrictions of their self imposed pacifist straight

jackets or the fact that the five are not FREEDOM subscribers, or even that the five might be guilty of the 'political crimes' that they stand accused of, those who indulge in vague principled posturing as a reason for inaction do nothing for

MG Anderson (FREEDOM 22nd October) is right to criticise FREEDOM for publishing the 'Free the Five' article, and to point out that no anarchists should support the kind of activities with which the five are charged.

When I first saw 'trial by media' advertised in *City Limits* I got the impression that the five were innocent victims, and although disagreeing with the support the blurb seemed to give to the fire-bombing of porno shops, went along to see the film at the 121 bookshop. The film consisted mainly of extracts from various TV reports about the arrest and trial of the five, plus short interviews with them made in prison. At no point (as far as I can remember) did they

(The next article refers to events at a CND march in London on 22nd October 1983.)

Having watched the most colourful and fantastic parts of the march enter Hyde Park (including the bewigged and powdered Eighteenth Century Fops Against the Bomb), I slowly made my way back in the direction of the platform, selling FREEDOM. By the time I got within earshot of the speakers it was time for Neil Kinnock.

the cause of anarchism and the fight against the state.

There is a minimal level of solidarity where we fight together despite our differences, for our enemy is a common one. And this is it.

declare they were innocent of specific charges. While conspiracy is a catch-all law that should be opposed, and anarchists might oppose gun control, there can be no justification for armed robbery, arson and other forms of action which endanger life. Even if such acts are supposed to be directed against property rather than people, there is always the chance that something will go wrong. This case raises wider issues, such as — can those who commit or support such acts be called anarchists? If the answer is yes, then they should be termed Non Libertarian Anarchists. Such people may be anarchists, but they are not libertarians.

EM

The cheers and cries of enthusiasm that greeted him were infuriating. Could all these people really be so naive? Could they still (not all of them so young) fail to distinguish between the resolutions of Labour's rank and file and the *Realpolitik* of successive Labour governments? If I stood on tiptoe I could just make out the black,

and black-and-red flags, the torn, untidy banners of the anarchist contingent. Never had a sight been so welcome. I had to reach them at all costs.

Kinnock ranted raucously on out of his school exercise book, as at last I squeezed through to the outermost circle of black flags. It was as if the temperature had dropped instantly to zero. A sudden barrage of sound blocked out the speaker's words — 'Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!'

From my position I couldn't see what was happening at the platform, but all at once the police were charging on us; demonstrators around me were saying to one another, 'Let's get out of here', beginning to panic. The police cordon approached and instinctively I slipped underneath. Arrests were being made. Soon I realised just to what extent the cordon was dividing the anarchists not only from their target, the platform, but from one another and from the other demonstrators.

Perhaps some of the comrades didn't realise this because they began throwing bottles and crushed up beer cans and these, inevitably, hit other demonstrators, who weren't as well protected as the police. I saw a bottle, hurled from the midst of one group of black flags, hit a protestor in the eye and fell him to his knees in pain. He happened to be black, and it wasn't clear in what spirit the police dragged him away.

An old guy pointed the police in the direction of the assailant, and I intervened, saying he couldn't have possibly seen who threw the bottle. Noticing that I had a bunch of anarchist papers under my arm he turned on me, demanding to know why we didn't have our own demonstration; obviously we had no interest in nuclear disarmament.

I began to argue with him, but to everything I said he yelled 'Bollocks!' with increasing rage, until someone pulled him away. Someone else came up and said, was this the free speech anarchists were supposed to believe in?

People were obviously bewildered by the attitude of the anarchists, which was that it was a 'fucking waste of time' to listen to the speakers. One of them was protesting in hurt tones to a puzzled CNDer: 'You could hear them whenever you wanted on Channel Four!' It didn't occur to him that it was just as much of a 'fucking waste of time' to abuse them, instead of offering other demonstrators a coherent anarchist argument. 'Why shouldn't the platform be heckled?' she said, 'Why shouldn't *he* speak?' Yes, indeed; but what was he saying? 'Shit! Shit!' and so on.

I left Hyde Park feeling depressed. It's a common enough experience. But it wasn't only because of the great question mark over the use of such rallies, but because of what my own comrades had been doing. All that energy spent in hurling verbal excrement at the platform. Perhaps, they would reply, it wasn't

the time or place for anything else. But if not then and there, when and where?

GF

Issue 23 19th November 1983

There are three things wrong with the so-called Editorial in the last issue of FREEDOM (5 November); it is very badly written; it is very badly argued; and it represents the views of only a minority of the editorial collective.

The reference to 'those anarchists who, burdened by the inertia of their purist ideology, are still sitting around waiting for a mass movement, the end of the world, the second coming, an armed uprising or the global pacifist consensus' is amusing, but irrelevant; there are no such anarchists involved in the various organisations and publications of the British movement. The reference to the case of the Vancouver Five is stirring, but also irrelevant; it ignores the fact that FREEDOM has reasonably given solidarity to them by publishing material produced by their defence organisation (as on 30 July and 10 September), and the fact that MG Anderson has reasonably argued that there is no obvious reason why anarchists should identify themselves with the sort of activity the Vancouver Five are accused of (Letters, 22 October). Incidentally, it is disturbing that both Anderson

and the Editorial seem to assume that the Five are 'guilty' of this activity before they have been tried.

It is nothing but empty rhetoric to assert either that we should give support without reservations or qualifications to anyone in conflict with the state ('My enemy's enemy is my friend') and that anyone who refuses to give such support may be identified with the state ('If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem'), or else that we should give support only to people with whom we are in total agreement. On one hand, anarchists do not support many kinds of people in conflict with the state — fascists, nationalists, gangsters, and so on — because we consider that they represent alternative forms of authority which are just as objectionable; and on the other hand, anarchists do give support to many people who are not anarchists — pacifists, socialists, feminists, and so on — because we consider that they represent forms of resistance which are essentially libertarian. But surely one of the fundamental principles of anarchism is that every person has the right and indeed the

responsibility to decide where to stand on every issue in general, and in particular whether to give support in this kind of case.

It may be true that 'those who indulge in vague principled posturing as a reason for inaction do nothing for the cause of anarchism and the fight against the state'; but this is equally true of those who indulge in vague principled posturing as a reason for action — or rather, in practice, for appeals for other people's action. And it is quite untrue to assert that 'it is difficult to differentiate those who would deny solidarity with the Five

against the state from the state itself, their effect is the same'; their effect is not the same at all, and it is just as reasonable for anarchists to refuse to support the Vancouver Five as to refuse to support the state. It is true that 'there is a minimal level of solidarity where we fight together despite our differences'; but we all have the same right to decide the line which divides our differences and our solidarity, and nothing is gained by trying to bully each other into either solidarity or silence.

NW

Is there any point using the word anarchism to describe such widely diverging views as have just been displayed? Maybe the divisions are so great that it is a mistake to do this. To take one example, perhaps the most important one, the pacifist tradition within anarchism is quite distinct from mainstream anarchism as exemplified by such historical figures as Bakunin and Kropotkin. But to call one of these two anarchism and to refuse the title to the other would be a purely verbal issue. The important thing is the differing viewpoints, not the labels attached to them. And in any case who wants to fight for the exclusive use of a label which is usually misunderstood to mean chaos?

In a perverse sense differences of opinion are desirable since their absence would mean sterility. But they are desirable only to a limited extent, beyond which they make co-operation difficult, if not impossible. The danger is that instead of combining its strengths anarchism will let its internal divisions cause it to fragment into smaller and smaller groups until each separate group is pure in thought, word and absence of deed.

The opposite error would be to act as if differences of opinion could be treated as if they didn't exist. This doesn't work. The differing perspectives governing the articles printed earlier extended to the editorial group producing Freedom and the accompanying friction between the editors contributed to a breakdown of the editorial group in early 1984. It took a while before a new group formed and production of the paper was interrupted for a while. This instance of co-operation foundering over incompatible views shows that differences of opinion must be openly discussed and not simply ignored.

I suggest that the solution lies in two parts. Firstly differences of opinion must be made explicit and co-operation between incompatibles avoided. Pacifists and non-pacifists are going to have a terrible time trying to bring out a paper together since the same arguments will come up again and again, wasting energy going nowhere. Instead we must separate into cohesive groups where such major differences do not occur. And once this has been done the second part of the solution is that people who recognised their differences agree to co-operate in areas where these differences do not apply. This is the crucial point.

Perhaps I should make some of my own views clear. We live in a class society but should and can live in a classless society, that is, a society that is egalitarian, free and without government. The attempt to get from where we are to where to we want to be is difficult enough without the intervention of pacifism which simply guarantees failure. Feminism is an essential part of anarchism and to see pornography as purely a question of free speech when we live in a society with widespread sexual abuse of women is frankly incredible. Can these people really not see any connection between the depiction of women as sexual objects and the treatment of women as sexual objects?

My views are very different from those of, for example, pacifists and I would find it very difficult to co-operate on a paper with pacifists. But when an issue crops up where this basic difference is irrelevant, support for strikers say, I should co-operate with pacifists. In fact I should actively seek out areas where I can co-operate with pacifists since the alternative is to condemn my activities to irrelevance. Anarchists are a small minority and it is unrealistic to think that in the near future they will be anything else. If we are to have any substantial effect on society we must combine with each other wherever possible.

Anarchism is not a political creed but an anti-political one. Whereas politicians aim at imposing their ideas (the democrats among them only after gaining an electoral majority) anarchists reject positive, as opposed to negative, coercion. This means that we cannot force people into doing things, only prevent them from doing things that will be harmful to others. Compulsion, in one sense, has been rejected and so the only alternative is co-operation. This has to begin at home since if anarchists cannot co-operate with each other then they certainly won't be able to co-operate with non-anarchists. In theory all this should fit easily into anarchism which has always advocated federalism as against centralism. Practice may prove somewhat different.

Refusing to co-operate in one area because of a difference in another is something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If sensible, that is to say, class struggle anarchists, boycott ecologists on the grounds that they lack an understanding of the true nature of society, then ecologists will continue to lack such an understanding. And to refuse to have anything to do with ecologists on the grounds that they are beyond redemption is simply an admission of defeat. If we cannot get people who currently disagree with us to change their minds then we are wasting our time. In other words, we must actively promote debate with those we disagree with. Thanks, therefore, to the editors of Freedom for their openness in allowing the debates reprinted here to take place.

NOTES

Several of the articles reprinted here have been cut, either because they refer to other articles not reprinted or because they give out of date addresses. These are the articles that were cut :-

The report on the meeting of the Welsh Anarchist Federation on page 6.
JW's article on page 12.

David Isiorho's articles on page 13.

MG Anderson's article on page 15.

The paper 'Workers' Playtime' is no longer published but both 'Open Road' and 'Class War' still appear. Ask at your friendly neighbourhood anarchist bookshop.

The 'Vancouver Five' were found guilty on various charges and sentenced to long terms in prison.

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The quotation at the beginning of this pamphlet is taken from 'Malatesta - Life and Ideas' which is published by Freedom Press, address the same as Freedom.

Cover illustration is by Nick d'Nib.

Printed by Aldgate Press, address the same as Freedom.