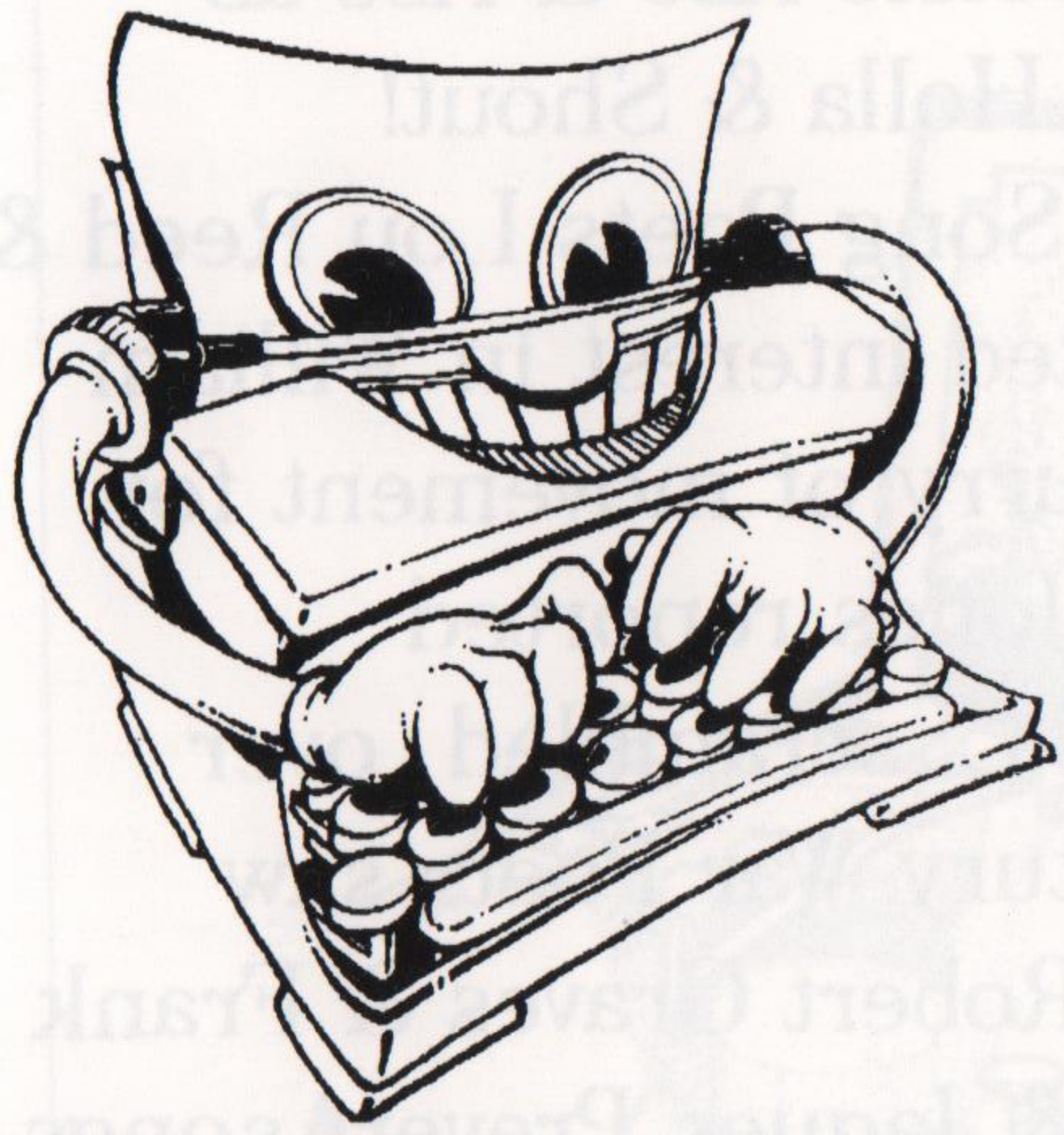


Letters



Dear Total Liberty
The article by Laurens Otter, "Can there be a non class struggle version of anarchism?" (Total Liberty No.2), in general follows a long tradition, in that most of the names mentioned are inaccurate and most of the facts alleged are imaginary, and in particular causes serious confusion, in that most of the references to the historical use of the word "anarchist" are little more than fantasy. Your readers should be warned.
Fraternally

Nicolas Walter
London

Dear Total Liberty
In *Total Liberty* Volume One, Issue No.1. I published an article "Decline and Fall: ORA and the AFB" in response to an article in the Spring 1996 edition of the Anarchist Communist Federation publication *Organise*. Laurens took exception to this submitting a rather long response (ten pages to be exact) for the next *Total Liberty* which the editor refused to publish unless Laurens reduce it to a standard length of 1500 words. Instead Laurens submitted a letter suggesting to anyone interested he was prepared to send them a copy of the article

for a small contribution. Being rather intrigued I sent for a copy to see whether it was important enough to reply to. So far no-one has written to me to comment on Laurens's assertions so I can only assume either no-one has bothered to send for a copy or if they have they have either nodded wisely and agreed with everything Laurens said or doubled up screaming with laughter. This leaves me in a quandary. Do I reply or not?
Laurens, although no doubt a good hearted comrade, seems to suffer from one problem. He remembers large numbers of facts but gets them in the wrong order, associates activities of one person with another and his sense of geography is somewhat lacking. For instance he had me living in Birmingham two years before I arrived. I was at Keele University in the North Midlands but not Birmingham in the West Midlands. In fact I'd never been to Birmingham until September 1962 when I went up to take up a temporary teaching post. He also says I was secretary of the West Midlands Committee of 100 soon after I arrived. I was the Treasurer actually and was not involved in the Committee until the mid-sixties much later. And so on and so on.
It is a great pity that someone has not written a well-researched account of the British anarchist movement from the late fifties to the present day. It is an area of research desperately needing to be done. Sadly being now retired and in not very good health I simply have not the energy to embark on the task. Peter Marshall has done an excellent job cataloguing the history of anarchism up to the time I came into the movement some forty years ago. Are there any budding researchers and authors

out there with the energy to complete the task? It really needs to be done.
Peter Neville May 1998
Middlesex.

Red Rambles

Red Rambles are monthly guided walks in and around Derbyshire and the East Midlands for Socialists, Greens, Libertarians and Anarchists. Walks are 5-8 miles in length. Walkers are reminded to bring food and drink and to wear suitable boots and clothing.

Sunday 20 September.
11.00am Scarthin Books, Cromford, Derbyshire. 5 mile walk to summit of Bole Hill.

Sunday 11 October
10.30am The Barley Mow, Bonsall, Derbyshire. 5 mile walk through meadows and lead mining remnants

Sunday 22 November
11.00am Surprise View CarPark, Hathersage (off A625) Derbyshire. 6 mile walk to Moorland edges, Millstones and a Celtic Hill Fort

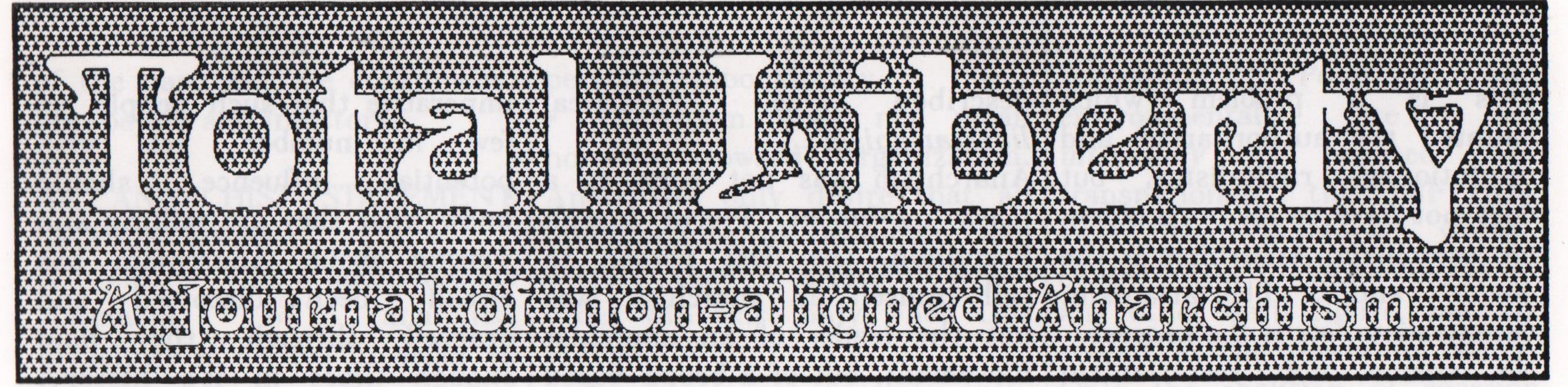
Sunday 27 December
11.00am Strutt Arms, Milford, Derbyshire. 4 mile Woodland and hilltop walk.

Details 01773-827513.

Subscription Form

Subscriptions to *Total Liberty* are now £8.00 for 4 issues. (£5.00 for low/unwaged.) Payment by Cheque or Postal Order made payable to J.Simcock should be sent to Total Liberty, Box EMAB, 88 Abbey Street, Derby DE22 3SQ.

Name.....
Address.....
.....
.....
Postcode.....



VOLUME ONE ISSUE No. 3 AUTUMN 1998 PRICE £1.00

Editorial

This third issue of *Total Liberty* is given over to a number of serious articles on differing aspects of Anarchist theory. I make no apology for this. If Anarchists are ever to make anarchism appealing to more than a tiny bunch of devotees it is vital that we update and clarify our ideas. We need to be both understandable and relevant to the modern world. If we cannot do this we might just as well give up now. Unlike other journals *Total Liberty* attempts to achieve the clear

standard of English advocated by George Orwell. He advocated text 'plain as a sheet of glass'. By clear English I do not mean 'Plain English' as practised in local government departments and which has more in common with *Newspeak* as described in Orwell's '1984'. It is a sad fact that too much Anarchist journalism is badly written; jargon riddled, ill-informed and self opinionated. It is time we made our journals readable, interesting, relevant and purposeful.
This issue's articles include Larry Gambone defining 'What

is Anarchism?'; John Griffin writing on the theme 'Pragmatic Anarchism'; The Boston Anarchist Drinking Brigade contributing 'A Defence of the Freedom to be Left Alone' and 'Anarchism and Civility'; the editor's own review of Matt Ridley's book 'Origins of Virtue' and much more besides.
Thanks are due to our subscribers and those comrades whose donations have made possible this latest copy of *Total Liberty*. The next issue will appear as soon as funds permit.

JPS

What is Anarchism?

Right now I'd like to strengthen the federal government.

Statement by the alleged anarchist, Noam Chomsky, in *The Progressive*, March 1996.

A most incredible confusion exists as to what exactly anarchism is. Some of this is due to the media images of chaos, terrorism and mad-bombers. A pseudo-anarchism also grew up out of the remains of the New Left, a subject that I have dealt with elsewhere. Of late we have Chomsky's seeming betrayal of anarchism and the bizarre spectacle of anarchists marching in defence of the Welfare State. The word "anarchist" practically screams out for clarification.

Anarchism is the ideal of a

society without coercion, a society where membership in all organisations is voluntary. Such a society may never come into existence, yet the anarchist considers it something worth working toward. Whilst we certainly don't need ideologies, we still need ideals to push us forward. When robbed of ideals we can easily descend into the vulgar consumerism or false ideals like Communism and Nationalism. Admittedly, ideals are not for everyone, and neither is anarchism, especially in its demanding the maximum of responsibility and self-reliance.

NOT QUITE ANARCHOS BUT...
What about the people who go part way - those who accept

most, but not all of the message? What are they? I suggest that people who want less coercion in society, yet who do not accept the "final goal", should be called libertarians and not anarchists. Those who accept only a portion of the anarchist message, say mutualism, federalism, or decentralism, should be called mutualists, federalists and decentralists, not anarchists. Generally such people lump themselves in, or get lumped in, with anarchists and this is a cause of a great deal of confusion.

What I am talking about is the problem of the difference between the "final goal" and the actual process or movement.

This is a problem which haunted the authoritarian and revolutionary radicalisms, but does not *have* to be a problem for anarchism. Anarchism is the *goal* and libertarianism, decentralism, etc is the *process*. No shame nor sectarianism need be implied in *not* being considered being an anarchist. There is nothing wrong with being "merely" a libertarian or decentralist. I just want to clear up a problem of definition and minimize confusion, for if "anarchism" means any old thing, then we have lost an important idea - the anarchist ideal.

One outcome of this attempt at definition is the realisation that most, if not all, supposed anarchist movements were not really anarchist, but at best, libertarian. How else to describe a movement like syndicalism, led by anarchists, but made up overwhelmingly of workers who accepted only part of the anarchist program? Does it not then make sense that members hived-off into Communism, fascism or Social Democracy when the syndicalist movement fell on hard times?

(Another problem is people, like Chomsky, who claim to be anarchists, yet, when push-comes-to-shove, *are not even good decentralists!*)

IS AN ANARCHIST MOVEMENT AN IMPOSSIBILITY?

For the past 30 years I have been making an error one might awkwardly describe as *movementism*. I have been searching for practical ways to build an anarchist movement, not realising my search was futile - a kind of modern day quest for El Dorado. An anarchist movement is most unlikely to ever occur, and what I've always described under the heading of "practical anarchism", would be more correctly

described as "practical *libertarianism*".

Anarchism was not born as a mass movement. Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the first person to call himself an anarchist, was not the leader of an anarchist movement, but of a broad-based worker's movement called Mutualism. Neither was Bakunin in a specifically *anarchist* movement, but was a militant within the First International, and his group were known as Collectivists. Only after 1876 do we find a large group categorized "anarchist", and then only used pejoratively by Marx and his friends to attack the libertarian movement.

In the 1890s during the "classical" French Anarchist movement, contrary to what one might think, there were few anarchists. The two largest anarchist publications, *La Revolte* and *Pere Peinard combined* had only 1500 subscribers. Two decades later, at a time when the anarcho-syndicalist CGT had hundreds of thousands of members, the two largest anarchist papers had the same small number of subscribers. From 1890 to 1940, at any one time, there were probably no more than 3000 active anarchists out of a population of 40 million. (Jean Maitron, *Le Movement Anarchiste en France*) However, several million people supported at least *some* anarchist goals, ie., in mass movements such as in the syndicates, mutual aid societies and regionalist-decentralist organisations. The future of anarchism, if there is one, will at best, involve a few thousand people, as individuals or small groups, in larger libertarian-decentralist organisations. (Some will choose to work alone, spreading the anarchist message through writings and publications.) It is

imperative that such people, so few in number, yet with potential influence, should know what they are talking and writing about. Anarchism has already been distorted and dragged through the mud enough times in its history. Please let's try to get it right this time! One cannot emphasise enough, though few in number, anarchists do not form a "vanguard" or an elite of know-it-alls to lead these movements. We are people who chose anarchism as our ideal and act upon it.

ANOTHER PROBLEM - THE FETISHISM OF CLASS

Another source of confusion is *class-reductionism*. Older forms of anarchism had a populist concept of class, (the People vs. the Elite) but modern "left" anarchists borrowed marxist class analysis. Thus we have an emphasis upon the "working class" and the supposed need for "Class Struggle Anarchism". This creates a situation where rationalization of support for the State can easily occur, for example, the welfare system is considered a "victory" of 1930's class struggle. Cut-backs are supposedly the result of the "capitalists", who want to "beat back the working class". Q.E.D., anarchists must support the welfare state - a clear perversion of anarchism.

This scenario is the product of an archaic and Manichean world view which ignores the fact that the welfare system was a co-option of the workers movement by the corporate elite, and that most contemporary workers *support* the cuts, as they are sick of paying high taxes. Class reductionism does not take into account today's economic realities, at least in the developed world, where workers are no longer the poverty-stricken, beaten-down wretches

of the past, but are consumers, tax-payers and investors.

AN ANARCHIST STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

A clear and unambiguous statement of anarchist principles is needed in order to separate the muddled authoritarian sheep from the anti-statist goats. Such as the statement below.

* Anarchism is not terrorism or violence and anarchists *do not* support, aid, or sympathize with terrorists and so-called national liberation movements.

* Anarchism does not mean irresponsibility, parasitism, criminality, nihilism or immoralism, but entails the *highest level* of ethics and

personal responsibility.

* Anarchism does not mean hostility toward organization. Anarchists only desire that all organisations be *voluntary* and declare that a peaceful social order will exist only when this is true.

* Anarchists are *resolute anti-statists* and do not defend either "limited states" or Welfare States.

* Anarchists are opposed to *all* coercion. Poverty, bigotry, sexism and environmental degradation cannot be successfully overcome through the State. Anarchists are therefore opposed to taxation, censorship, so-called affirmative action and governmental regulation in general.

* Anarchists do not need

scapegoats. Poverty and environmental are not *ultimately* caused by transnationals, the IMF, the USA, the "developed world", "imperialism", technology, or any other devil figure, but are rooted in the *power to coerce*. Only the abolition of coercion will overcome these problems.

* Anarchism does not posit any *particular economic system*, but only desires a non-coercive economy composed of voluntary organisations.

* Anarchists are not utopians or sectarians, but are sympathetic to *any effort* to decrease statism and coercion and to replace authoritarian relations with voluntary ones.

Larry Gambone

Pragmatic Anarchism

We anarchists tend to have an ambivalent attitude to libertarian theory. On the one hand, associating social theory with sociologists, many of whom are Marxists, we are apt to be dismissive, favouring instead a more practice orientated "fly by the seat of your pants" approach. But then on the other hand, conscious of anarchism as the most radical of belief systems, we may feel obliged to back it up with some rigorous, ie theoretical argument. Perhaps the most sophisticated advocates of anti-theory have been some feminists who have associated reason and logic with authoritarian and male patterns of thought. The more theoretically inclined seem to me to be in some disarray, being prone to slip into narrow ideology based slanging matches,

rather than trying to move our thinking forward so as to place anarchism more firmly upon the ideas map. Worse still, in my view, the advent of post-modernism, with its disenchantment with the scientific method, has even given a philosophical basis for the neglect of social theory *generally*, as well as our own. Being a firm believer in reason and logic, I regard our own difficulties as stemming from our failure to update our ideas to suit current conditions and to integrate them properly with practice.

As a pragmatist I never think about theory or practice in isolation. To do otherwise seems to me strange since most people seem to mesh the two automatically when it comes to everyday problem solving: The matter concerned is considered ("theorised") before deciding

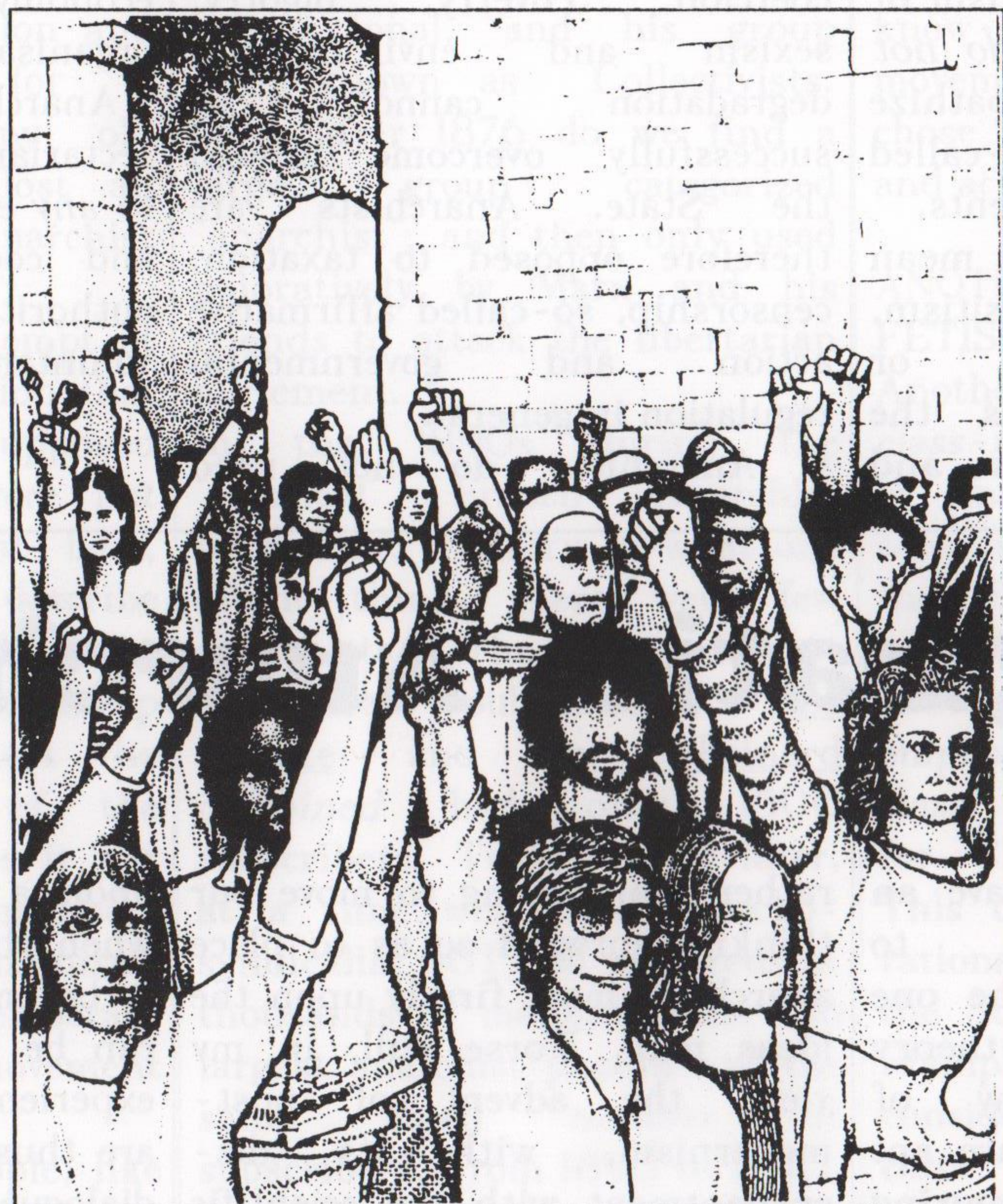
upon a course of action, but when the latter is implemented it becomes clear that the plan can be improved as a result of experience. Theory and practice are thus involved in an ongoing dialogue; there is no cliff face separating the two as is likely to happen in written social theory. In the everyday, pragmatic styles of thought seem to come quite naturally. Now those who pursue a "common-sense" ie pragmatic type of anarchism, and who on various occasions may have felt themselves in the "anti-theory" camp, may be surprised to learn that there is a branch of philosophy called Pragmatism. It seems to have been first formulated by the American writers Charles Pierce (1839 - 1914) and William James (1842-1910). Further developments were provided by John Dewey

(1859-1952), the same person who wrote prolifically on the subject of education. Very briefly, pragmatists assess rival viewpoints not as being theoretically valid or invalid, but on grounds of their *effectiveness*. There you have it: structured thought backed up with equal measures of "suck it and see".

In my estimation just about all theoretical works available are deficient in the suck it and see department, and few since the classical anarchists are concerned with developing core ideas. Fewer still are written within the context of an academic discipline; *Authority and Delinquency* by Alex Comfort 1950 (Social Psychology) and *People Without Government* by Harold Barclay 1987 (Anthropology) buck the trend. There is no work that might properly be called sociology apart from *'Community, Anarchy and Liberty'* by Taylor. There is no thorough going economics, just smatterings from Gio-

vanni Baldelli and Cornelius Castoriadis (Paul Cardan). From the other more practical end of the spectrum there is of course the work of Colin Ward and others, but these have very little correlation with theoretical matters. Of the *names* in anarchism, Murray Bookchin has probably made the greater theoretical effort with *'Post Scarcity Anarchism'* 1971 and *'The Ecology of Freedom'* 1982. These however are written from a specifically communist-anarchist point of view, and again the practical considerations are conspicuous

by their absence. Strangely for one so enamoured with the many-sided and holistic, Bookchin finds no room for individualist or collectivist approaches: read page 320 of *Ecology of Freedom* if you doubt me! There is some useful material on ecology, work and technology, but there is no economics to link these concerns together. Indeed a good slice of Post Scarcity



Anarchism is taken up with transcending economics via some Marxian sounding dialectics. It is our shameful neglect of economics which severely inhibits our understanding of the hoped for libertarian future, and does not allow the proper integration of practical initiatives in the here and now. For various bizarre and seemingly unmentionable reasons there is no in-depth work on the subject of the market, either from a pro or anti point of view. It amazes me how some of the communists nod approvingly at

contemporary workers co-ops or LETS -somehow- their fundamental objection to contractual exchange evaporates in that context. The more doctrinaire communists of course are more consistent and reject co-ops and LETS out of hand; for them nothing short of Full Monty Anarchist Communism, enacted across the entire globe, and preferably by next Thursday will do! We have to return to Proudhon and perhaps Warren to find libertarians who do properly link theory and practice, but this is all so balls-achingly ancient!

Aside from the question of content is the issue of language. Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and Economics all have specific terminologies which are not always readily penetrated by the uninitiated. I sometimes get the feeling that so many books are written with a view to boosting the writer's esteem only in the academic world. Of course there are times when the use of the appropriate technical term is unavoidable, but really, some writers seem intent on putting potential readers down - in a way I suppose it an inevitable counterpart to self-elevation. There's nothing like an *'oligarchy'* here or an *'epistemology'* there to help one sound learned / put people in their place, but this has nothing whatever to do with anarchism, and can only serve to boost the *'theory is all bollocks'* school of thought. If we have something to say, can we not say it clearly and concisely and in readily accessible language?

Here in London Steve Ash has

made some determined efforts to set up the Anarchist Study Project, with a view to updating libertarian theory within the context of the academic disciplines, and without any

ideological restrictions. My own area of interest, as you may have gathered is in economics (where angels fear to tread?) together with the related subjects of ecology, and technology. If there

is anyone out there who would like to make contact, please do so via Total Liberty, Box EMAB, 88 Abbey Street, Derby DE22 3SQ.

John Griffin

A Defence of the Freedom to be left alone.

We live in an invasive society. Our freedom to peacefully lead our lives as we please is severely restricted by laws, rules and regulations instituted by governments of all sorts and their supporters among the populace. We are subject to a huge number of laws, among which are laws that: outlaw certain forms of consensual sex; ban public nudity; restrict the sale or production of sexually explicit books and films; criminalize the sale of sexual favours; prohibit ownership of handguns; require us to get notes from a physician to buy certain types of medicines; prevent us from seeking the assistance of another in ending our own lives; fine us for not wearing seatbelts; and attempt to prevent us from using the recreational drugs of our choice. Why do people tolerate such a level of government interference in their personal lives? Because they have been convinced that individuals and society have to be protected from the consequences of "bad" choices people might make if they were left alone.

Governments presume they know better what is good for others than do those people themselves. These rulers seem to think that when other people make choices they consider unwise, unhealthy, or immoral, those people are misbehaving because they are either

uninformed, stupid, or physically, psychologically or morally diseased. The state then feel justified in stepping in to prevent the "unenlightened" from harming themselves. These busybodies fail to see that other people can freely choose to engage in activities of which they disapprove.

People like different things and have different ideas about how to lead their lives. Some prefer hetrosex, some homosex, some both, some neither. Some like coffee and cigarettes, others vodka and cocaine. Some prefer to have physicians tell them how to stay or get healthy and what medicines to take, others would prefer non-medical healers or wish to make their own choice about what drugs they wish to use. Some choose to engage in sex for free, while others are willing to pay for or sell sexual favours. These activities are the result of freely made choices and no one is affected by any of them except the individuals who voluntarily engage in them. Therefore, they should not be the business of anyone but the participants and should not be interfered with by others.

People sometimes engage in activities that are potentially harmful to them because the pleasure or benefit they derive or hope to derive from the activity is more important to them than the actual or potential harm the activity may

cause them. People smoke tobacco despite the increase in lung cancer and emphysema risk associated with it because of the pleasure they get from smoking. Some people engage in sexual activity like cocksucking without condoms, which carries some risk of causing HIV infection, because the sexual pleasure they obtain is worth the small risk of being infected and perhaps developing AIDS. Such choices should be left entirely up to the individual, since no one else is harmed. We should be free to live our lives as we please, even if we make some decisions which turn out to have been unwise.

Some voluntary activities are prohibited or regulated because they have the potential to involve others involuntarily. Since guns can be used to kill others, the argument is made that gun ownership should be regulated to prevent possible harm to others. Some harmed by guns deserve to be harmed, as when gun owners are defending themselves or their property, but sometimes innocent others are harmed by gun owners. The fact that non-invasive people are sometimes injured or killed when guns are freely available, however, does not justify restricting their availability. Non-coercive people are also sometimes hurt or die in car accidents, but few, if any, advocate banning cars for this

reason. Just because a gun or a car can be misused to hurt someone who has not injured the owner does not justify banning it.

Supporters of interventionist governments would argue that little or no risk is acceptable in society. However, the problem with this outlook is that lowering risk means restricting freedom. A society that values freedom will necessarily will be a society which allows people the freedom to engage in risky behaviour. We must make a choice: either a free, somewhat risky world, or a safe and secure, but stifling and unfree one.

Politicians of all political tendencies, rightists and leftists alike, support government intervention in other people's lives. Conservatives and conventional liberals may be more crass and open about their interventionism, but they hold no monopoly on it. The socialist left is perfectly willing to interfere in the affairs of others, and the socialist states have an even worse record than the united states when it comes to restrictions on individual freedom. Few leftists criticize the prescription system or laws against recreational drug use, for instance, and the socialist states are notorious for persecuting people who engage in homosexual sex.

No government of any sort, no matter what its size or political orientation, will leave people alone. The nature and mission of government is to interfere with free individuals and tell them how they should live their lives. We will only be truly and completely free when people finally decide that they can live better and more freely without any government and begin the process of building a stateless society

B.A.D.B.

Anarchist Economics

One fairly well known economic fact of the '90s is the growth of inequality in wealth. The top 1% is doing better than ever, while the rest of us have stagnated. Of this fact, *there is little doubt*, but the data about the general historical level (pertaining to the last 40 years) of wealth and income inequality is suspect. How so? For the purposes of ascertaining inequality the earning population is divided into quintals or 5 groups of 20% of the population, ranging from the lowest quintal (the poorest) to the highest (the richest). Since about 1955 in Canada the lowest quintal has about 4% of the wealth and the highest 38-40%. For several reasons, this methodology *exaggerates inequality*. It does so because it is not *age adjusted*. The category "income earners" starts at age 15, and it is quite obvious that people in the age 15-30 age category have not developed the wage-earning power, nor saved or invested as much as older people. Most of the young would be in the bottom quintals and the old in the higher income sections. How much of a difference age adjustment would make can be seen by comparing house ownership statistics. Some 50% of Canadians 15 and over have bought accommodations, however, when you examine home ownership in the 45-60 year old age grouping, this figure soars to 76%. The *real level* of inequality of home ownership is off by 50%! There is no reason not to suppose income and wealth inequality statistics suffer from the same problem.

Another factor is that pension funds are not included in the category of wealth, even though this is a very important source

of future income for working class retirees. (Pensions funds are the largest single block of capital, running into hundreds of billions of dollars.)

A third factor is social wealth is not included either as wealth or as income. Ordinary people, not the rich use the recreation centres, public libraries, schools, transit systems, subsidized housing etc. These things have to be added as an income plus for the four lower quintals.

So, inequality is not as great as we might think at first glance. Some might dismiss the age factor - ie those who desire some form of pure communist utopia might well say so what? the young should be as rich as the old. But that's not how normal people look at it. Most look at the situation in terms of income or wealth *potential*. Those who are blocked from increasing their wealth over time - say you were as poor at 50 as you were at 20 - are the ones who are angry. (This situation was particularly true in pre-modern and semi-fuedal societies) However, the vast majority of us do not find ourselves limited in this manner. That inequalities are not as great as people on the left think would explain why dwelling on this problem and promoting immiserization propaganda has not succeeded with the working population. *This is not to say that the present growth of inequality should not be challenged*, but to point out that radicalisation is more likely to occur around some other issue, rather than this old leftist chestnut.

Some Economic Statistics

1.) The size of government in the Economy. In spite of 15 years of Thatcherism.

Reaganism, neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, cut-backs and whatever, the State and government sector rings in at 35-50% of the GNP in all developed economies. This makes it the largest economic sector in most countries and the largest single employer many times over in all economies.

2.) The Mutual, Co-operative and Non-profit sector. About 5-10% of the economy. Co-ops have one billion members (one fifth of humanity) Credit

Unions have global assets totalling \$3.5 trillion, or about three-quarters of the worth of the multi-national corporations. 3.) USA ECONOMIC FACTS - size of economy - \$6.5 trillion. Portion of the economy based on consumer goods - 66%. Portion of GNP going to wages - 70% Portion of GNP going to corporate profits - 14% Portion of GNP spent on health care 14% Size of US Federal Government \$1.2 trillion. Amount spent by US Fed. Govt.

on social welfare, education, social security etc. - 50% of total budget. Largest single block of investment capital - CALPERS (the California public employees pension fund) Percent of all corporate stocks held by pension funds - 25% valued at more than \$2 trillion (in 1992) Portion of workforce employed by small enterprises 66%

Source 'Any Time Now'.

ANARCHISM AND CIVILITY

A generally accepted anarchist tenet is that the State can only be effectively dismantled by a voluntary, co-operative and spontaneous insurrection by the people. Authoritarian revolutions gotten up by manipulative vanguardists are rejected as inconsistent with the anarchist belief that the means must be consistent with the ends. History has plenty of examples to show that seizure of power through elitist revolt, rather than furthering the goals of the revolution, actually becomes a process for the strengthening of the State in a new and more vicious form. From an evanescent moment of exultant freedom one inevitably wakes up to the hangover of a Napoleon or a Lenin or a Mao.

Nevertheless, contemporary anarchists are often still mesmerized by the call to arms, even when the chance of such a romantic succeeding is nil. The only real revolutions occur when popular discontent causes the State to collapse under the weight of its own folly, not when some bloody vanguard, following whatever destructive fantasy its leaders concoct, meets the modern State head-

on. This inevitably results in meaningless hardship for the people involved, with the greatest misery reserved for innocents who get in the way of either side's fallacious ideology. Being a "rebel" and antagonizing the flatulent powers-that-be in a modern State can be an exciting game, but it is only bluster and puerile self-gratification when genuine revolt is implausible. In the end the most radical "revolutionaries" either end up as bitter, dead-end martyrs or become the next generation's "born-again" capitalists. Having had their fling, they come to believe in their new "realism" as soplipsisitically as they embraced rebellion. None of this can bring us any closer to a solution of the problem of the State.

The fallacy of revolutionary adventurism is mirrored on a personal level by the intolerant and abusive discourse of identity politics. Everyone is pre-judged by their race, gender or religious affiliation, and socially compartmentalized in some politically correct egg basket. The goal of the anarchist movement is to establish a free, tolerant and co-operative

society which will embrace diversity and celebrate difference. If the means are to be consistent with the ends, then how can such an abrasive and exclusionary practice as identity politics possibly achieve that end? Identifying the "enemy" by birth or predilection, regardless of an individual's actual beliefs or actions, is simple bigotry. Awarding moral on the same grounds is simple stupidity. Similarly, essaying is act as an unwarranted spokesperson for a diverse grouping of individuals who by chance share a single basic characteristic is the most arrogant sort of elitism. Real people, stripped of their individual identities, are thus subsumed in some hypothetical one-dimensional construct that effectively denies them any complexity of character. This isn't an answer to institutionalized racism and bigotry, but rather its mirror image.

This sort of prejudicial activity has appeal for the simple minded. It's easy to either attack or adulate a stranger on the grounds of appearance. A similar anxiety powered the old

Sumptuary Laws which punished anyone who dressed above their social class - it was too unnerving for the elite to think that they might make a mistake and treat an inferior as an equal, thanks to illicit appearances. Political prejudice makes it simple to get through the difficulty of rootless modern life where there are no clear cut exterior indications of what a person might really be like. All white males (unless, perhaps, gay) are dangerous, power-driven and bigoted. All women (unless, perhaps, Republican) are intuitive, nurturing and empathetic with Nature. Members of minorities (take your pick) are morally superior to members of majorities. Classifications and labels which assist us in making such decisions are more real (and more important) than the people they describe. Et cetera. Balderdash. The goal of a tolerant and cooperative society of free individuals can only be achieved by those very means - by being tolerant, cooperative and free. We must be better companions to our fellow mortals, whatever their outward characteristics. Civility, which facilitates cooperation, is imperative if anarchy is to really work. Pigheaded and self-important aggressiveness, hypercriticism and easy intolerance is a recipe for the status quo. We don't mean to suggest some all-

accepting, "turn-the-other-check" bourgeois crap, either. Once you get beyond the labels, there are still unfortunately plenty of folks that it makes sense to despise. Arrogant, violent, intolerant, fanatical, bigoted, manipulative, rapacious



individuals with these characteristics must be guarded against, but they are not found in one easily recognised group. These adjectives equally describe individual men, women, blacks, whites, handicapped people - the whole gamut of the human race. Nor is anyone as morally pure as some of our new puritan idealists would insist they be. A person is the sum of their character traits, not a distillation of the most pronounced ones. Radicals are just as prone to frailties of character as industrialists. It is by their actual effect on their community and environment

that we should evaluate our fellow human beings, not by some dominant virtue or fault which particularly excites us. It would be far more preferable to tolerate an insensitive verbal bigot who in practice actually helps people than a pious hypocrite who mouths politically correct platitudes and then goes home and beats his lover.

Anarchism involves conscientious and responsible judgment, and the effort to see through the shucks, facades, and hype of our unregenerate society. One of the most virulent traps for the contemporary Left is the aping of the knee-jerk bigotry of the Right, which involves a mean-spirited "us and them" prejudice through group identity. There are plenty of actual villains out there, some easily identifiable, others hidden in hypocrisy. There are equally many good people obscured by the accidents of their birth, upbringing or situation. Let us therefore focus on the individual rather than the group, and recognise that the only way we will ever achieve the goals of Anarchy is through living those difficult precepts in the here and now, and treat each other civilly. There can be no other effective preparation for Anarchy's ultimate realisation in the future.

B.A.D.B.

Boltcutter Blues by Dennis Gould

instead of cutting clothes patterns
the woman cuts military fences
the helicopter-pilot observes her:
inside the base soldiers stand idly by

trapped within roll after roll of barbed wire
whilst inside the silo area
minders of missiles stand armed
the fence comes down early
thousands of women act together
boltcutters used in unison successfully.

Book Review: The Origins of Virtue

Matt Ridley studied Zoology at Oxford before becoming a journalist and author. He currently lives in North-umberland and is chair of The International Centre for Life. His recently published book *'The Origins of Virtue' (1)* is a well written and erudite examination of the origins of both co-operative and competitive behaviour within human societies. His work is very much a continuation and development of the debate prompted by the works of Darwin, Huxley and Kropotkin in the late 19th century.

Ridley's prologue gives an account of Kropotkin's escape from the St. Petersburg military hospital jail, and how the help he received in so escaping was in part one of the inspirations behind his writing of *'Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution' (2)*. Ridley describes Kropotkin's book as a prophetic work. Kropotkin's Mutual Aid owed its genesis to his decision to counter the arguments of Thomas Henry Huxley, who argued that nature was an arena for pitiless struggle between self interested creatures. This intellectual tradition goes back to the likes of Malthus, Hobbes, Machiavelli and St. Augustine and viewed human nature as basically selfish unless controlled by culture. Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid', on the other hand, viewed co-operation as an ancient animal legacy and one with which humanity was also gifted.

Ridley's own book draws not only on biology and sociobiology, but also on game theory, evolutionary psychology, anthropology, history, economics and political philosophy. He develops an argument, which while not in agreement with

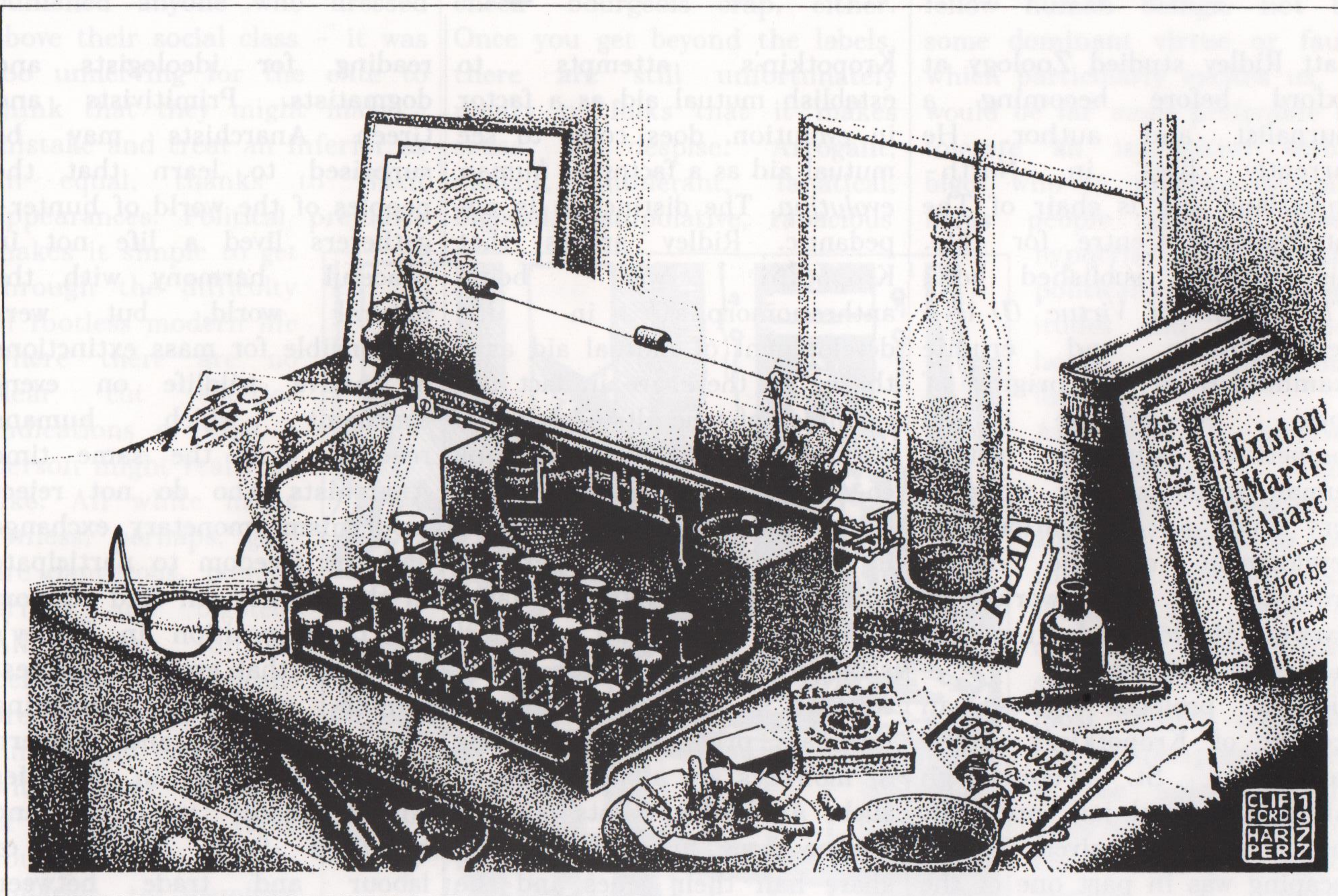
Kropotkin's attempts to establish mutual aid as a factor in evolution, does come to see mutual aid as a factor in *human evolution*. The distinction is not pedantic. Ridley argues that Kropotkin was being anthropomorphic in his development of mutual aid as a theory as there are in fact few examples of true altruism in the natural world. Many examples of co-operative behaviour within insect and animal societies are in fact effectively co-operation within large families, related individuals and *not unrelated strangers*. Bee hives, ant colonies, termites, nests, meerkats, prides of lions, troops of monkeys are all examples of such. As Ridley points out, all worker bees are sisters, they share half their genes and the motivation for their behaviour is most likely genetic, the same applies to most other examples of co-operation in the natural world. According to Ridley there are some genuine examples of *Mutual Aid* in nature, but they are few in number and not anywhere near as widespread as argued in Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid'. Ridley argues that Kropotkin got it the wrong way around. Co-operation is not something we share with a largely co-operative natural world. Humans who co-operate are very frequently not genetically related. Ridley argues that it is the capacity for strangers to co-operate as well as to compete that makes us truly human, and that this capacity for strangers to co-operate marks the difference between humans and much of the rest of the living world.

There is much else in this work which will be of interest to Anarchists. However, it will not always make comfortable

reading for ideologists and dogmatists. Primitivists and Green Anarchists may be surprised to learn that the peoples of the world of hunter-gatherers lived a life not in peaceful harmony with the natural world, but were responsible for mass extinctions of native wildlife on every continent which humans reached. At the same time Anarchists who do not reject modernism, monetary exchange and the freedom to participate in the market can find support for their position in Ridley's argument that even the earliest hunter gatherers, predating both the state and modern capitalism, lived in societies which made use of and benefited from divisions of labour and trade between individuals and groups on a market basis. Peace activists may be alarmed at Ridley's claim that hostility to outsiders and even war itself is a by-product of our evolutionary tendency to co-operate.

Like many other contemporary biologists and anthropologists Ridley sees the driving force behind evolution as being developments which directly benefit the *individual* rather than the *group*.

However, Ridley does arrive at conclusions, which while not *Anarchist*, do lean in an *Anarchist direction*. In his final chapter titled 'Trust' he makes a statement about the negative effects upon both community and society of State provision of social and other services, a critique which echoes that of Colin Ward in *Anarchy in Action*... 'In Britain, the welfare state and the mixed-economy 'corpocracy' replaced thousands of effective community institutions - friendly societies,



mutuals, hospital trusts and more, all based upon reciprocity and gradually nurtured virtuous circles of trust - with giant, centralised Leviathans like the National Health Service, nationalised industries and government quangos, all based on condescension. Because more money was made available through higher taxes, something was gained at first. But soon the destruction wrought to Britain's sense of community was palpable. Because of its mandatory nature the welfare state encouraged in its donors a reluctance and a resentment, and in its clients not gratitude but apathy, anger or an entrepreneurial drive to exploit the system. Heavy government makes people more selfish not less.

Ridley's vision of an alternative is also one with which Anarchists may have some sympathy ...But I do believe there have

been glimpses of a better way, of a society built upon voluntary exchange of goods, information, fortune and power between free individuals in small enough communities for trust to be built.

In the same chapter he also gives qualified support to Kropotkin's Anarchist vision ...'If we are to recover social harmony and virtue, if we are to build back into society the virtues that made it work for us, it is vital we reduce the power and scope of the state. That does not mean a vicious war of each against all. It means devolution: devolution of power over people's lives to parishes, computer networks, clubs, teams, self-help groups, small businesses - everything small and local. It means a massive disassembling of the public bureaucracy. Let national and international governments wither into their minimal function of national defence and

redistribution of wealth (directly without an intervening and greedy bureaucracy). Let Kropotkin's vision of a world of free individuals return.'

Ridley's book is not an example of determinist socio-biologist thought. It provides a plausible theory of how individuals find it in their interest to co-operate, and an explanation of the variety of behaviours which result. It challenges some long held Anarchist dogmas. It has for too long been too easy an option for Anarchists to reply 'Mutual Aid' to people who question how and why Anarchism can work. Ridley's book re-focuses 'Mutual Aid' as a term which has meaning for human society.

Jonathan Simcock

- (1) The Origins of Virtue by Matt Ridley (Penguin £8.99.)
- (2) Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution by Peter Kropotkin (Freedom Press £8.95)

POETS STOCK EXCHANGE REPORT 11

Early Trading in London saw the Poets Footsie rise & rise as Ballads & Blues gained hard currency against the Holla & Shout!

Odes & Epics dropped dramatically when Song Poets Lou Reed & Bob Dylan released their latest albums! Unexpected interest in William Blake & Percy Bysshe Shelley created a flurry of movement for early Anarchic Romantics. In New York the Dow Jones reported

heavy gains on Wall Street as C.B.S. & N.B.C. scrambled over Raps & Rants! Late movement in early 20th Century War Poets saw Publishers reading - Publishers reading! - Robert Graves & Frank Richards. On the Paris Bourse Georges Brassens & Jaques Prevert songs reached a new high. In Tokyo the Nikkei index plummeted as Haiku dealers scabbled to buy up Elizabethian Sonnets & Nashville Country Classics. In Berlin Leiders & Volks Leiders continued to be boyant as the market responded to heavy selling of Whoops & Umpaas. On the Hang Seng Bhuddas & Prophets rose & rose. Chants & Rounds saw new highs & lows as did Zen Chorales & Bawdy Ballads. Around the world Free Verse & Talking Blues ran riot as Music Brokers & Linguistic Jobbers made a Jack-Of-All-Trades

Bid for Poets Voices! Millennium & Riffraff shares reached new highs when Penguin & Pelican Books revealed planned publicity.

Overall the Poets Footsie soared as Poem Song & Nursery Rhymes created financial insecurity in the new Gift-Economy & Mutual Aid Arts.

Dennis Gould

ANARCHISM

ANARCHISM seeks the abolition of the state and present day governments.

ANARCHISM is the philosophy that favours a free society organised along lines of voluntary co-operation, individual liberty and mutual aid.

ANARCHIST society would be a decentralised network of communities and individuals working together to satisfy their mutual needs for goods and services, while exploiting no one, and living in harmony with the natural world.

EVERY person has the right to make all decisions about his or her own life. All moralistic meddling in the private affairs of freely acting persons is unjustified.

GOVERNMENT is an unnecessary evil. All

governments survive on theft and extortion, called taxation. All governments force their decrees on the people, and command obedience under threat of punishment.

THE principle outrages of history have been, and continue to be, committed by governments. On the other hand, every advancement of thought, every betterment in the human condition, has come about through the practices of voluntary co-operation and initiative.

ANARCHISM implies co-operation, individual freedom and responsibility.

For information and a free sample of Anarchist literature send an A4 38pence stamped and addressed envelope to: The Anarchist Information Network, Box EMAB 88 Abbey Street, Derby DE22 3SQ.