

THE RAVEN 12

ANARCHIST QUARTERLY



On Communication

GEORGE BARRETT · MICHAEL DOUANE · MARTYN EVERETT

ANDREW HEDGECOCK · JOE KELLY · S E PARKER

DONALD ROOUM · DIRK SPIG · COLIN WARD · JOHNNY YEN

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cover illustration: Philip Sansom at Speakers' Corner in the 1950s, drawn by Donald Rooum.

Four issues of The Raven

Inland: Regular £11, Institutions £13, Claimants £10.

Abroad: Regular surface £12, air (Europe) £14, air (rest of world) £16.
Institutions surface £15, airmail £20.

Joint subscriptions to The Raven (4 issues) and Freedom fortnightly (24 issues).

Inland: Regular £23, Claimants £18.

Abroad: surface £28, airmail (Europe) £37, airmail (rest of the world) £40.

Editorial

When we started planning this issue of *The Raven* the findings of a questionnaire to be circulated among all readers of our two journals, as well as a survey of the anarchist Press, were to be important contributions. Neither has materialised. We were also hoping to include a report in depth of the French anarchists' *Radio Libertaire* which has now been on the air for a number of years.

Both Colin Ward and Joe Kelly write about people, but unlike the gutter press journalists, they write about 'good people doing valuable things' and we only wish that readers of *Freedom* and *The Raven* would provide us with similar accounts of propaganda by *Example*, surely as important an aspect of anarchist propaganda in a hostile world as the more politically spectacular propaganda by the *Deed*. In this respect both Colin Ward and Joe Kelly who write about 'good people' are making a valuable contribution.

We were also hoping that someone would contribute a piece on the effectiveness of what has come to be known as the 'Findhorn handshake', so interestingly described by Liz Hodgkinson in the *Guardian* (July 10, 1990) which is in fact hugging as practised at the famous Findhorn Foundation in N. East Scotland. Among other advantages she discovered on her visit there were that

hugging can quickly dissolve the deep mistrust we tend to have of other people. It can give a cohesiveness to a disparate collection of individuals and also encourage a kind of group dynamic which enables you to work together.

Nevertheless we feel that the contributions we have received will stimulate discussion for a second issue of *The Raven* on this much neglected subject. Optimistically, (as ever) we are therefore calling this number *On Communicating - 1* Our intention is that some time next year with the collaboration of interested readers we shall produce Number 2.

Apart from the editors, all the contributors are/were professional communicators but in common with the editors they are unpaid when they write for *Freedom* or *The Raven*. We mention this to explain why anarchist journals cannot be expected to compete with the commercial

news and political journals, assuming that we want to compete on their terms. But it also means that though the editors may have all kinds of ideas about the articles they need for an issue of *Freedom* or *The Raven*, if one does not pay one can only *propose*. The would-be contributors *dispose*.

In theory we would not be opposed to paying contributors for special assignments. But unless one has a fund for the purpose it means either increasing the price of the journals or inviting paid advertising.

Our two journalist contributors, Colin Ward and Joe Kelly, both write for the capitalist press because they pay and they have to earn a living. All anarchists have to compromise in a capitalist world in order to have the wherewithal required — money — to live. But our two journalists add something more. Colin Ward, describing himself as ‘an anarchist columnist in the non-anarchist press’ ends his piece with a question ‘What does it mean from the standpoint of anarchist propaganda?’. And answers: ‘Well, it has always been my view that one of our tasks is to move anarchism from its particular ghetto into the range of ideas that other people take seriously’. The *New Statesman and Society* is bogged down in its ghetto, with *Charter 88*, a Constitution for the United Kingdom which its authors assume will *perhaps* prevent future Guildford 4 and Birmingham 6 judicial scandals, and *perhaps* halt the anti-Trade Unions legislation which infringes basic rights etc . . . but has nothing to do with the capitalist system which presumably our comrade journalists are as ever opposed to.

Joe Kelly goes further than Colin Ward — perhaps because as ‘a tabloid journalist’ he has no reservations:

I’m not a purist. I’m a firm believer in getting my hands dirty. Our society is in a pretty awful mess and we’ve got to start reversing the rot somewhere. And I think we have to begin by taking the very great risk of actually mixing with those whom we so much deride.

Earlier he had his equivalent reference to the anarchist ‘ghetto’:

. . . the various shades of anarchist opinion have huddled themselves together in small groups, publishing lengthy monologues for their colleagues on everything from ‘The dynamics of post-syndicalist utopian communities’ to ‘What really happened in the Spanish Civil War’.

Ironical reference to the anarchists’ interest in the Spanish Civil War is a typical jibe by our self-styled ‘forward-looking’ anarchists. We are convinced that Joe Kelly has not even seen the covers of the five *Freedom Press* volumes on the Spanish Revolution for had he read them he would have learned the price that was paid by the anarchists in Spain for getting *their* hands dirty. And as a journalist he would have also

learned a lot about anarchist journalism in the Spanish Revolution and the way the so-called anarchist ministers sought to control it!

Freedom Press in their 'ghetto' have nevertheless some experience in publishing journals, books and pamphlets over many years which have managed to force their way through our 'purist' corral to the outside world where apparently 'the ideas that people take seriously' are circulating. So we modestly append a postscript to this issue of *The Raven* with a brief report on what we have done, followed by projects which we have been seeking to implement over the years, with further projects if we can overcome at least some of the many obstacles, not all financial.

★ ★ ★

With this issue of *The Raven* we complete the third volume of our journal. It is still being produced at a loss of nearly £1000 per issue which is at present being covered by *Freedom Press Distributors*. We shall definitely publish four issues in 1991 and hope therefore that the many readers whose subscriptions expire with this issue will be renewing promptly. We draw your attention to the new subscription rates which take into account yet another increase in postal charges. The cover price of *The Raven* remains at £2.50.

We expect that the next issue (13) will be on the Eastern European countries following the break up of the Warsaw Pact. Number 14 will be *On Voting* ready for Elections in Britain in 1991 — but will still be useful if need be in 1992. Number 15 and 16 will be interchangeable: *On Communicating* — 2 and *On Land Use*.

★ ★ ★

We warmly invite readers who would like to contribute to these *Ravens* to contact us with their ideas as soon as possible. We also invite readers who specially value the work we are doing to help with the financial burden of keeping *The Raven* alive by sending donations to *Freedom Press* earmarked for *The Raven*.

Dirk Spig

Tips on Writing News Reports

[Extracted, by permission of the author, from *Doing Business, a mischief-maker's handbook*, a pamphlet from 1 in 12 Publications about the arts of investigative journalism. 'Easy writing's curst hard reading', as a character in a Goldsmith play puts it. It takes trouble to write clearly. But Dirk Spig does not just exhort would-be journalists to take trouble over their writing. He provides clear instructions.]

There are countless — mostly unreadable — books to tell you how to write like a journalist. You might find them useful but if you just want some tips on how to write here are a few.

- * Don't write like a student. (Essays which please examiners and academics bore human beings.)
- * Write short sentences. (Before you use a ',' try using a '.')
- * Avoid words that end in 'ing'.
- * Don't be afraid of words like 'don't', 'isn't' or 'wasn't'.
- * Be blunt.
- * Don't waffle. Odd irrelevant facts do give writing colour. But you are being judged on what you have to say not how many words it takes to say it.

* Write short paragraphs.

Don't let these hints stop you writing. Prepare your first draft the way you find easiest. Reread and rewrite it while asking yourself six questions.

- * Is it crystal clear what is being said in this sentence?
- * Is every word in this sentence needed?
- * Can any of the conjunctions — that's the 'ands' and 'buts' be swopped for full stops?
- * Can any of the commas be swopped for full stops?
- * Can any of the words ending in 'ing' be swopped for words that don't?
- * Is it boring?

Here is an example.

First draft Don't ever waffle, although by all means add the odd irrelevant fact to give the writing colour but you aren't being marked on a number of words.

Second draft Don't waffle. Odd irrelevant facts do give writing colour. But you are being judged on what you have to say not how many words it takes you to say it.

Michael Duane

Communication

From 'to communicate', 'to have something in common with another', 'to share or impart'. Without communication there can be no human life. After an earthquake in North Africa had orphaned many newborn infants among others Dr Renée Spitz found that despite hygienic care and good food the newborn babies went on dying. Cleaning women at the hospital were hired to cuddle and talk to the babies as they were fed and they stopped dying.¹

Speech/communication at its simplest level serves to bring about united action so as to increase the effect of what an individual acting alone can do. But it has many, many more functions than that. The very first experience of speech — the form of communication with which most of us are familiar in daily life — is what the unborn infant hears for at least the last two months inside the womb, and although he will not be able to use it actively for many months in conventionally recognisable form, the sounds he utters convey meaning, as any mother knows. His experience of speech while he is still unborn can truly be called the genesis of society.

It is conceivable that a horde of individuals might be induced, driven (even these words imply communication) to act in unison for a time or to effect a result, but, unless there were means of keeping them together they would disperse and revert to their isolated pattern of life. All creatures that live in groups have evolved various ways of establishing bonds with one another. For human beings bonding starts with the sound of the mother's voice in the womb. After the child has been born that sound is its main link with the only world it has so far known. William James was aware of the problem for the infant, thrust into 'this buzzing, blooming confusion', of how to distinguish, from the mass of stimuli assailing all his senses at once, those which were important for his survival. Now we know how it is done. The mother's voice, already familiar within the womb and associated with the comfort and security of that state, is now, in effect saying, 'It's OK. I'm still here. Try this.'

In time not only the mother's but the father's voice and the voices of older brothers and sisters (if it is not the first-born) become associated with the feeding and care that is extended to it — it is usually protected

from hunger and other unpleasant experiences. Steadily the bonds extend to neighbours, friends, the village, the tribe or clan so that the emotions first associated with the family become associated with the larger and larger group who speak the same language. And as our own voice, with its infinitely different variations of tone, volume, stress and vocabulary becomes associated with us as a distinct individual, so we come to be able to recognise those we know even in the dark or on the phone.²

It is no accident that we speak of our native language as our 'mother tongue'. As you utter that phrase you will be aware of all the associations of familiarity, security, love, comfort that belong to the period when you were acquiring it.

Non-verbal communication

Although the term 'body language' has come into use relatively recently the recognition of its importance is as old as acting — the funeral oration over Caesar's body would be meaningless without the contrary indications, through stress and rising tone of, 'Brutus is an *honourable* man'. The whole of Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares* is an exploration of how meaning is conveyed not only with words, but most fully when the whole body is itself responding to the words.

Pitt-Rivers in the South Pacific found himself puzzled by the fact that a tribal group who at one moment had been discussing the mysterious loss of a goat was, the next moment, discussing something quite different without, so far as he could judge, any decision being taken. He asked the head man what had been decided and was told. 'But you did not take a vote!' The head man explained as well as he could that he saw what the group wanted and so moved on to the next matter. Pitt-Rivers decided to watch more closely in future. He then began to realise that, for example, every time he called for the longboat to go ashore to visit an island, six men, and never the same six, detached themselves from the schooner's crew and manned the longboat. However carefully he watched them he was never able to detect any sign or hear any word of command or suggestion about who should take the linesman's place at the bow, who should take the rudder or who should take the port or the starboard oars. Yet there was not the slightest hesitation as they moved from the work they were doing on the schooner to their places in the longboat.

It is a commonplace that, unless we have been brought up in an extremely 'stiff upper lip' culture, we hug or kiss our friends when we greet them, especially if we have not seen them for some time, as we put

our arms round someone who is distressed to comfort them, when we cannot, and especially when we cannot, find words to meet their need. But if we have reason for inhibiting the spontaneous expression of our feelings we 'bite our lip', 'swallow our anger', 'lower our head' or 'brace ourselves' — with many harmful consequences to our physical and psychic health if we have to do it often. The whole of Wilhelm Reich's thesis about 'armouring' of muscle systems and the harmful individual and social effects that follow from suppressing our true feelings is, in effect, about the restrictions on free communication in capitalist society.³

Social barriers to communication

The basis of free communication is common experience; but common experience itself generates a community of values, feelings and objectives with an increase in the element of 'our' and an abatement, without the extinction of the importance, of 'mine'.⁴ This is true of the family and of voluntary associations — *gemeinschaft* — but work relationships — *gesellschaft* — are dominated by role and rank. Yet even within the large organisations such as national and international corporations humanity keeps breaking through in the form of unions, mutual benefit clubs of one kind or another, football pool groups, sports groups, with magazines run to publicise their activities and attract new members.

Within our society as a whole, there are barriers to communication caused by the stratification of work in the interests of profit for production, barriers reflected in our language and in our tone of voice — 'bosses', 'gentry', 'the nobs', 'the ruling classes'; 'hands' or 'operatives', 'the work force'. In the interests of production and of profit which, rather than utility, has come to be the index of success, work has been divided into sharply demarcated skills so that the various processes required by mass-production could be done more quickly and with less effort and waste of raw materials. But whereas the craftsman used to be the person who was completely responsible from beginning to end, for all the processes required, and had to use judgement and a variety of skills to complete the work, mass-production depersonalises the worker and removes the need for him to think about his work — remember *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*?

The design of the modern factory obviates not only the need to think but the need for communication between different workers and between management and workers except when things go wrong. So, where both Marx and Dewey saw work as the growing point of culture, modern industry, especially with the introduction of the computer-

directed assembly line, would be its death bed but that people obstinately refuse to become the total appendage to the machine that behaviourists would like. But a lot of harm has already been done: language has been made to be a divider; to separate people when their physical and psychological natures were designed for cooperation and fellowship.

Work the divider

The splitting up of work is, in effect, the limitation of experience to very small areas or narrow bands, with a corresponding limitation of relationships and, therefore, of language. To put it in practical terms: the man in the machine shop or on the assembly line has no experience of what the salesman or the accountant is doing. The clerk or the word processor operator may not know one end of a crankshaft from another even when she is writing about it. The director who spends time in the boardroom makes decisions about layoffs but has no experience of what that means to the man now queueing in the job centre. His child in the Public school will be so trained that he will regard 'the work force' as a kind of 'sub-human species designed for running factories' — those words were actually used by a boy in the Remove at Westminster School when I was comparing the education and life-styles of boys at Westminster with those of pupils at Rivinghill. The boy in question arrived every day by chauffeur-driven Rolls.

The segregation of children in boarding schools away from the distractions of towns, with the few exceptions of Westminster, St Pauls and others, is designed not only to help them concentrate on their studies but to further the training of an elite, another concept that derives from different work functions. They must not mix with the *hoi polloi* lest they get to know them as friends. That would impede their thinking of the facts of business and industry with the 'objectivity' necessary for efficiency.⁵

At the other end of the social scale manual workers spend eleven years in education in classes of thirty or more as against the twenty years of education in classes of ten or so for the barrister, the don or the high-grade civil servant. Their work role in society as the analysts, recorders, communicators, teachers and decision-makers compels the professional classes to develop high linguistic skills that, in the opinion of our educational policy makers, are unnecessary for manual workers. Such is the breakdown in communication caused by the stratification of work roles that even in the field of psychotherapy, which with the exception of Reichian and Primal therapy, relies exclusively on verbal

exchange, the manual worker who finds himself on the psychiatrist's couch is likely to end up in baffled silence — a defeat of the very purpose of therapy.⁶

But even if the therapy had 'succeeded', what would have been its effect for the manual worker? To get him to rationalise the exploitation that is daily practised on him, by helping him to be objective about his role and by helping him to see his employer's point of view and the view of the shareholders who rely on his work to make their share of the profits? To get him to reject the whole system and so put himself in the dole queue? Or to free himself of the conditioning he has been subjected to from infancy and so make himself more effective to help change the system? So effective education — education for thought and action — equally with genuine psychotherapy, is not to be encouraged for manual workers. They can simply be given the pills and be told to pull themselves together. Or, and this is the insane logic of capitalist medicine, they can be given the electric shock therapy to clear their circuits of obsessional delusions such as their feeling that they are slaves, and just a few hundred amps less than that used in the electric chair.

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Frans Seiwart about 1919. Artist unknown.

Martyn Everett

Art as a Weapon

1 Frans Seiwert and the Cologne Progressives

Art has a long history of use as a propaganda weapon by the powerful, who have patronised particular forms of art and particular artists as a means of enhancing or glorifying their own position. The icon-like portraits of Queen Elizabeth I provide an obvious example, as artists were forbidden to paint other than an officially approved likeness. More recently, the harnessing of art to commodity production — to sell products and create a particular, favourable image of the multi-national corporation is a phenomenon we are all familiar with. Occasionally, however, attempts have been made to transform art into a political weapon; to use it as a means of overthrowing a cruel and unjust social system.

In order to achieve this, artists have had to periodically rethink the whole nature and language of art so that they could challenge the state and the dominant cultural values that underpin both state and economy. This is why new cultural avant-gardes have frequently been linked to anarchism or socialism, their radical politics informing their radical artistic stance. The post-Impressionists and the Surrealists provide ready examples. Attempts to construct a politically engaged art have usually been most successful during times of political ferment, when the culture of the ruling class is already under siege, as during the post First World War Weimar Republic (1918-1933) when Germany was deeply divided and torn by armed conflict.

Art historians have tended to focus mainly on the Expressionist movement and Dada during this period, overlooking the work of the political constructivists, the 'Cologne Progressives', a movement which grew out of Expressionism and Dada, and was a contemporary of both. As with Expressionism and Dada the Cologne Progressives were heavily influenced by anarchism, and many of the political constructivists contributed to a range of anarchist and socialist publications.

The Cologne Progressives were a loose grouping of artists initially centred on Cologne and Dusseldorf, which for the last years of its existence produced the radical art magazine *A bis Z* (1929-1933). Its aims and ideals were, however, shared by artists from elsewhere, and the group eventually included members in Prague, Moscow, Vienna,

Amsterdam and Paris. The members of the Progressives all saw their primary purpose as developing visual weapons for the political and social struggle of an oppressed working class against the rich and powerful. They sought to express complex political ideas in simple visual terms, exposing not the nature of the capitalist system, but its causes, and suggesting revolutionary solutions.

Frans Seiwert, Heinrich Hoerle and Gerd Arntz, the principle members of this group were barely in their twenties when the war came to an end, and although they had already taken part in the anti-war movement, their period of major creativity only began with the Weimar years. They were among the most radical of the politically active artists of the time, identifying principally with the council communist organisation the Allgemeine Arbeiter Union, although they also had connections with the anarcho-syndicalist FAUD, the KAPD (Communist Workers Party) and the KPD (Communist Party). They were also active contributors to the journal *Die Aktion*, edited by the anarchist Franz Pfemfert, for which they provided title-page illustrations, and articles. Their artistic influence lay in Expressionism and in the early religious art of their area. As Gerd Arntz subsequently wrote about Seiwert:

He was very strong in his primitivism as the early Christians (ie Rhenish Primitives). We all came from the old paintings and the early woodcuts.

In fact Seiwert was originally a Catholic, who broke with the Church for its failure to condemn the horrors of World War I.

Although they displayed artistic links with the Dutch *De Stijl*, and with Russian Constructivism and Suprematism, the work of the Progressives differed from these movements in two ways; it was overtly political in its content, and it was almost exclusively representational and so retained an easy intelligibility — important because their art was not produced for the gallery, the art critic or other artists, but for ordinary people. The subject matter of their art, and the form in which it was executed was largely determined by their political beliefs. They also sought to break down the cultural exclusivity of art, by using an artistic language that could be easily understood, and which was widely disseminated in a form suited to the mass society created by capitalism. So they frequently utilised the woodcut or the linocut, which could be readily reproduced in the papers like *Die Aktion* and *Der Ziegelbrenner*. The political constructivists were anxious to de-individualise art, and tended to concentrate in their work on groups and classes, and not on individual characters. Individuals are represented only to emphasise their powerlessness, or their subject position, concepts such as solidarity by grouping people together. (see figs 1 and 2) Figures were

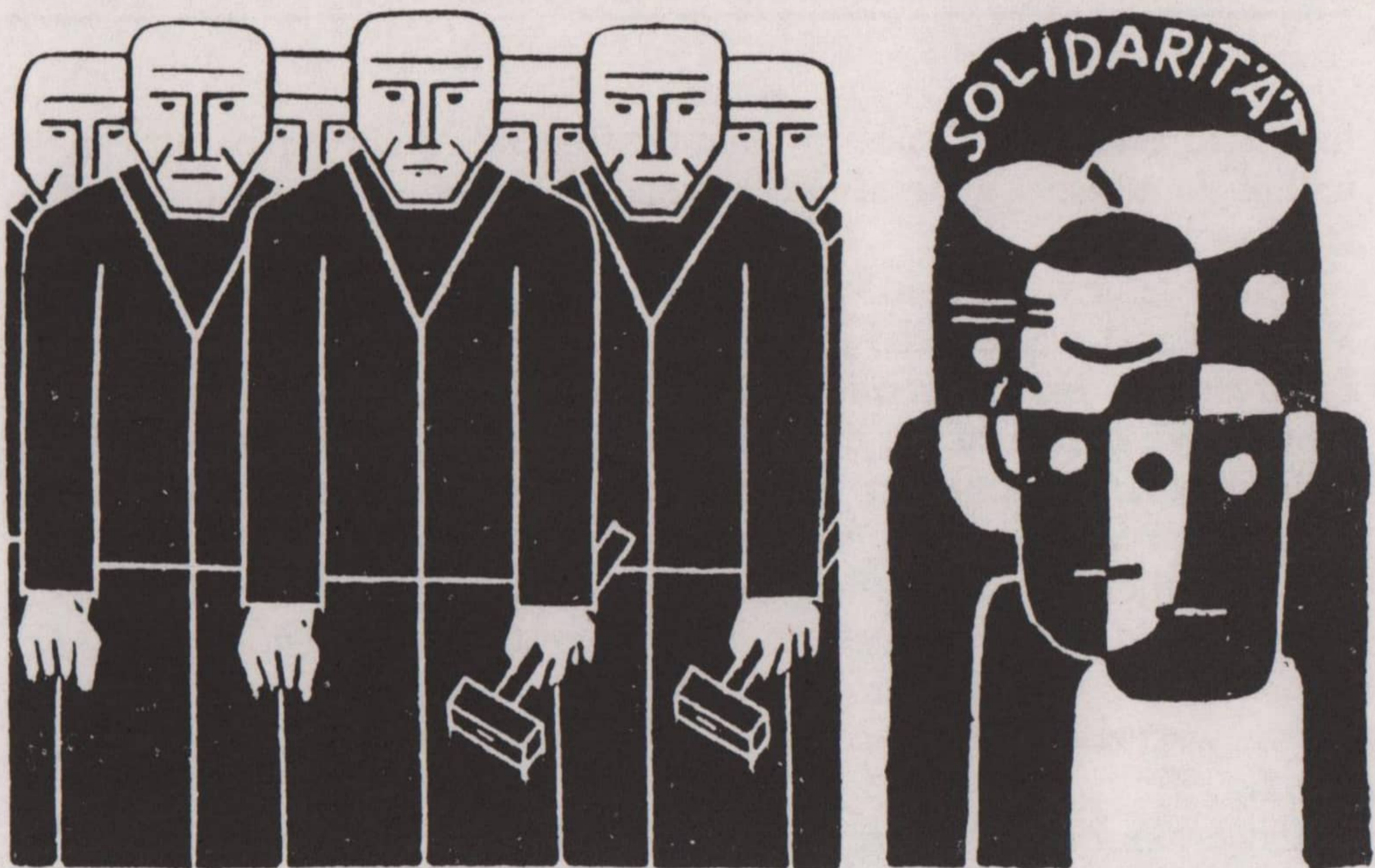


Fig 1 (left) Hans Schmitz *Mass*. Fig 2 (right) Frans Seiwert *Solidarity*.

schematised to the point where they became completely anonymous — as anonymous and de-individualised as capitalism made them. This transformation of form was just as important as the transformation of content. Seiwert, who was the main theoretician of the Progressives, wanted to create a new art of the working class which would not just come from putting a proletarian prefix to bourgeois styles. Consequently the Progressives were determined to develop a new style which involved a rejection of gallery art:

If one correctly conceives labour as the maintenance of life of the individual and of the whole, then art is nothing other than the visualisation of the organisation of labour and of life. Panel painting, which was created not accidentally, but from an inner necessity coinciding with the rise of modern Capitalism, becomes inconceivable. Anyway, an individual work of art as confirmation of an egocentric type of person on the one hand, and, on the other, in the hands of its owner, as confirmation of his title as possessor, will no longer be possible. (Seiwert *A bis Z* 1932)

Rejection of panel, or easel painting, was also clearly seen in Seiwert's response to Kokoschka. During street-fighting in Dresden during the right-wing Kapp Putsch, a shot fired by defending workers damaged Rubens' painting *Bathsheba*. Ignoring the casualties (35 were killed and 151 wounded in the fighting) Kokoschka distributed a leaflet to defend the Rubens, beseeching the workers to fight elsewhere, because 'the saving of such elevating works of art was in the end much greater than any political action'. Seiwert's response was immediate. Rubens' art had long been dead, he wrote, 'For a few hundred years we

have had enormous holes in gigantic frames'. Such art paralysed the will of the present generation: 'it weighs heavily on us and prevents us from acting'.

Seiwert's involvement with a number of anti-war groups during World War 1 was crucial in determining the later development of the Progressives. Franz Pfemfert, the editor of *Die Aktion* had achieved a remarkable fusion of art and politics in his determination to create a mass-circulation anti-war paper, and this combination was carried across into the work of the Progressives, who saw little difference between their art and their political activity. Indeed, the political trajectory of the Progressives paralleled that of Pfemfert and *Die Aktion*, as he moved from anarchism to council communism. Hoerle and Seiwert continued to contribute to *Die Aktion* up until their deaths. (see fig. 3)

Seiwert and Hoerle were close friends of Ret Marut, the editor of *Der Ziegelbrenner*, the fiery, clandestine anarchist magazine and some of Seiwert's first published graphics appeared in *Der Ziegelbrenner*. Marut had been an active participant in the Munich 'soviet' of 1919, and had narrowly escaped the firing squad after the soviet's collapse. While he was in hiding from the counter-revolutionary death squads, Seiwert and several of the other 'Progressives' notably Hoerle, Freundlich and Hans Schmitz, helped with the production and distribution of the paper. Marut fled Germany for Mexico, where he became famous as the writer B. Traven. In order to protect his real identity he severed nearly all his contacts, the sole exception being Seiwert. Apart from the illustrations for *Der Ziegelbrenner*, Seiwert also drew a sketch of Marut, and painted his portrait. (fig. 4)

Seiwert's contribution to the socialist and anarchist press also included many articles about the social role of art, commentary on the events of the time, and on anarchist themes, notably on the differences between authoritarian and anti-authoritarian communism, identifying himself with the latter. He also wrote an article on the anarchist writer Erich Mühsam, and with the French author Tristan Remy co-authored Erich Mühsam: *Choix de Poesie* (Lyon, 1924) which included an essay by him entitled *Erich Mühsam: the militant*.

Seiwert's most significant achievement was to co-edit, with fellow-artist Hoerle and Walter Stern thirty issues of the paper *A bis Z*, between October 1929 and January 1933. The first issue featured the work of fellow Progressives on the cover: a painting by Hoerle, another by the Polish artist Jankel Adler, who later fled to Britain, and became involved with the group around *War Commentary / Freedom*, a connection for which the British government refused his application for citizenship. A sculpture by Otto Freundlich was also illustrated.

Die Aktion

XXII. J. HR. HERAUSGEBER: FRANZ PFEMFERT HEFT 1/4

INHALT: Heinrich Hoerle (Köln): Die Internationalen gehen auf den national-sozialistischen Strich (Tafelbild) — Lenin: Über den Staat — Leo Trotzki: Über den Antikriegspropaganda — Karl Korsch: Konsumkollaps — Konsumkollaps gegen Peter Haupt — Heinrich Griebelstein — Für den Propaganda der AKTION — Antiquarischverlag.



VERLAG / DIE AKTION / BERLIN-WILMERSDORF
HEFT 00 PFG.



Fig 3 (left) Heinrich Hoerle *Cover for Die Aktion*.

Fig 4

Freundlich had been connected with Seiwert since 1918 when they were both involved in working with the circle around *Die Aktion*. They had subsequently participated in the Congress of the Union of Progressive International Artists held in Dusseldorf in May 1922. Members of the Berlin 'Kommune' group, which included Freundlich, Raoul Hausmann, Adler, Stanislaw Kubicki and Malgorzata Kubicka, launched a fierce attack in the plenary session against art dealers, and against some artists who had supported the War. Seiwert and Gert Wollheim (another artist with anarchist sympathies) supported the attack by the 'Kommune' group. Freundlich's sculpture was singled out for criticism by the Nazis after they gained power and the catalogue for the Nazi exhibition of so-called 'degenerate art' *Entarte Kunst*, featured one of Freundlich's sculptures on the catalogue cover. Freundlich himself died in a Nazi concentration camp during the war.

Each issue of *A bis Z* reproduced the artistic work of the Progressives, or introduced readers to the various traditions that had influenced them: religious art, cave paintings and so on. The example of Pfemfert's *Die Aktion* was not lost, and writings on the social role of art appeared alongside extracts from Bakunin's writings, short reviews

of books written by Mühsam and Alexander Berkman and articles on the theory of council communism. Raoul Hausmann, a pioneer of Berlin Dada in the magazine *Die Freie Strasse*, and an early exponent of photomontage, contributed articles on film and photomontage (Hausmann had previously contributed articles to the anarchist *Die Erde* and the Stirnerite *Der Einzige*) and the Hungarian Moholy-Nagy wrote about art and photography.

Artists who became identified with the 'Progressives' through *A bis Z* included Auguste Herbin (Paris), Wladimir Krinski (Moscow), Peter Alma (Amsterdam), August Tschinkel (Prague) and the photographer August Sander (Cologne) whose work was regularly featured in the magazine, as well as Schmitz, Hoerle, Arntz and Freundlich. During its first year of existence *A bis Z* was distributed to contacts in Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Holland, Belgium, France, USA, Mexico, India and Palestine.

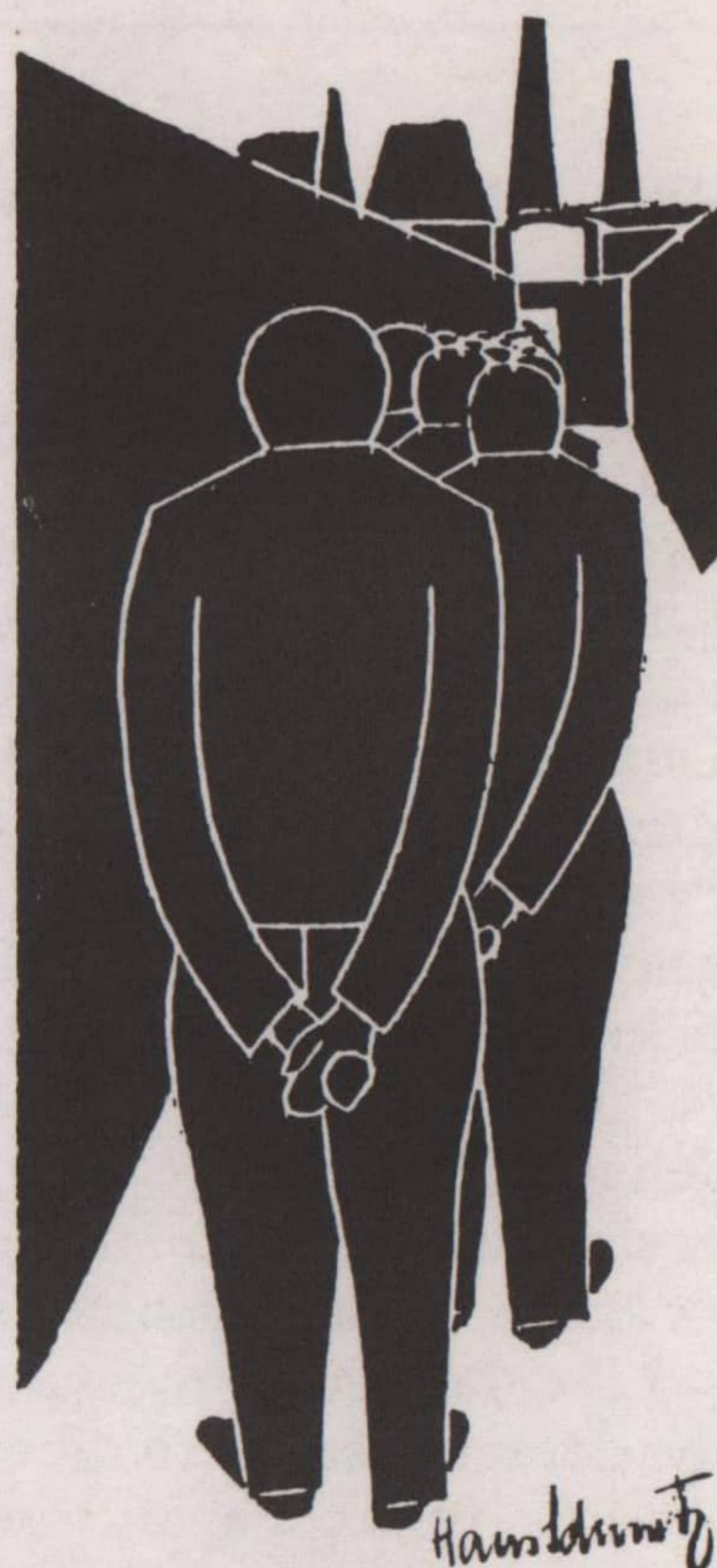
The common factor uniting these artists was the way in which their art became an extension of their political activities. They were populist in their aims seeking to break down art's exclusiveness and develop new forms for art in order to facilitate communication of their ideas. They tried to develop a simple pictorial language which, they hoped, would be understood by the workers to whom their art was directed. This led some of the Progressives, like Gerd Arntz, an art teacher who became head of the Graphics Department of the Vienna *Wirtschafts und Gesellschaftsmuseum* to develop the Vienna method of pictorial statistics (isotypes) originally formulated by Otto Neurath. Arntz's art became almost diagrammatic and his work on isotypes involved him in the production of a pictorial atlas in collaboration with Tschinkel and Alma.

Rather than caricature the class enemy, Arntz and the Progressives attempted to visualize the social relationships which gave the ruling class their power. Arntz explained his work like this:

Grosz . . . draws the capitalist as an ugly and fat criminal. I did things differently. He can be good-looking, a decent family man with beautiful daughters . . . I sought to show the position of the capitalist in the system of production — for that they need not be as ugly as Grosz made them.

and while Grosz showed the worker as a creature of misery, Arntz rejects this view:

We too show him as miserable because he was a product of miserable circumstances. But with us he was also a revolutionary who tackled things. Our art was to make a contribution to tearing the old society apart. It was propaganda, it attempted to reveal social contrasts and show social opportunities, not just moralising criticism.



(right) Gerd Arntz *War*. Fig 6 (right) Hans Schmitz *Workers' Walk*.

Arntz frequently split his pictures into various levels in order to contrast the superficial appearance of the social order with the way things really worked. So above ground the boss canoodles with a whore in a car while below the miners work and die. In *Barracks* (1927) while the soldiers parade in dress uniform, in the basement beneath them, a man is shot by a firing squad, his head depicted as a rifle-range target. Although Arntz divides some pictures in an obvious way, utilising a natural division between different floors in a building, the picture is sometimes broken in a more sophisticated way, by the beam of a searchlight, or the contrast between light and shadow. (fig. 5)

The use of contrasting areas of solid blacks and whites was a feature of the work of many of the artists grouped around *A bis Z*, partly because the technique lent itself easily to printed reproduction, and the widespread dissemination of images, partly because the use of solid geometrical areas of black emphasised the feeling of oppression by the industrial system. They saw society as deeply divided, polarised into right and left wing camps, and the use of black and white gave visual expression to that social polarisation.

Hans Schmitz also utilised this contrast between black and white: the prison-like qualities of the factory are clearly expressed in *Workers'*

Walk (1922) (fig. 6) its echoes of Van Gogh's *La Ronde des Prisonniers* reinforced by the heavy, oppressive dominance of the black walls. Schmitz's studies were interrupted by his conscription into the army. With the revolution at the end of the War, he became a member of the Soldiers' Council in Cologne, and joined the Spartacus League, the left-wing break-away from the Social Democrats, led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht which subsequently formed the nucleus of the Communist Party. After resuming his studies in Dusseldorf, he met Seiwert, and helped with the distribution of *Der Ziegelbrenner*, beginning a period of close co-operation with the Progressives which continued until 1933. In 1922 he was a delegate at an anarchist Congress in Berlin. The Nazi rise to power resulted in a break in his work, and much of his output was destroyed during the air-raids of the Second World War. His surviving linocuts depict the dehumanised nature of the industrial system, with a physical environment that dominates the individual, rendering the worker an extension of the machine (see fig. 7)

Like the other Progressives Schmitz undertook solidarity work with the Communist International Workers Aid Committee, but as a rule the Progressives kept apart from the Communist Party, and the ASSO, the communist dominated Association of Revolutionary Artists. Seiwert explained the differences between them:

Just because its contents have a tendency to be 'proletarian', making statements about the struggle, solidarity, and class consciousness of the proletariat, bourgeois art has not by any means as yet become proletarian art. Form must be made subservient to content: content must recast form to become content. The work where this happens is created out of the collective consciousness where the self which creates a work is no longer bourgeois individualistic isolation, but a tool of the collective consciousness . . . To maintain that when the content of a bourgeois art form makes a statement about proletarian problems this was proletarian art, seems to me a wholly Social-Democratic attitude, and in this context 'Social Democrats' includes those who are members of the Communist Party.

Seiwert then extends this critique into a more general attack on Communist methods:

It is exactly the same attitude which believes that the means of production, in the Capitalist sense, can be redirected from the control of those above to those below in a more far-reaching way than by the regulation of the means of production in a Communist society; the same attitude which believes in taking bourgeois technology from bourgeois industry and using it, in the hope that science developed in the service of the bourgeoisie can contain pure, independent, objective truth and, taken out of the hands of the bourgeoisie, can become science for the proletariat. Yes — science for the proletariat, so that it

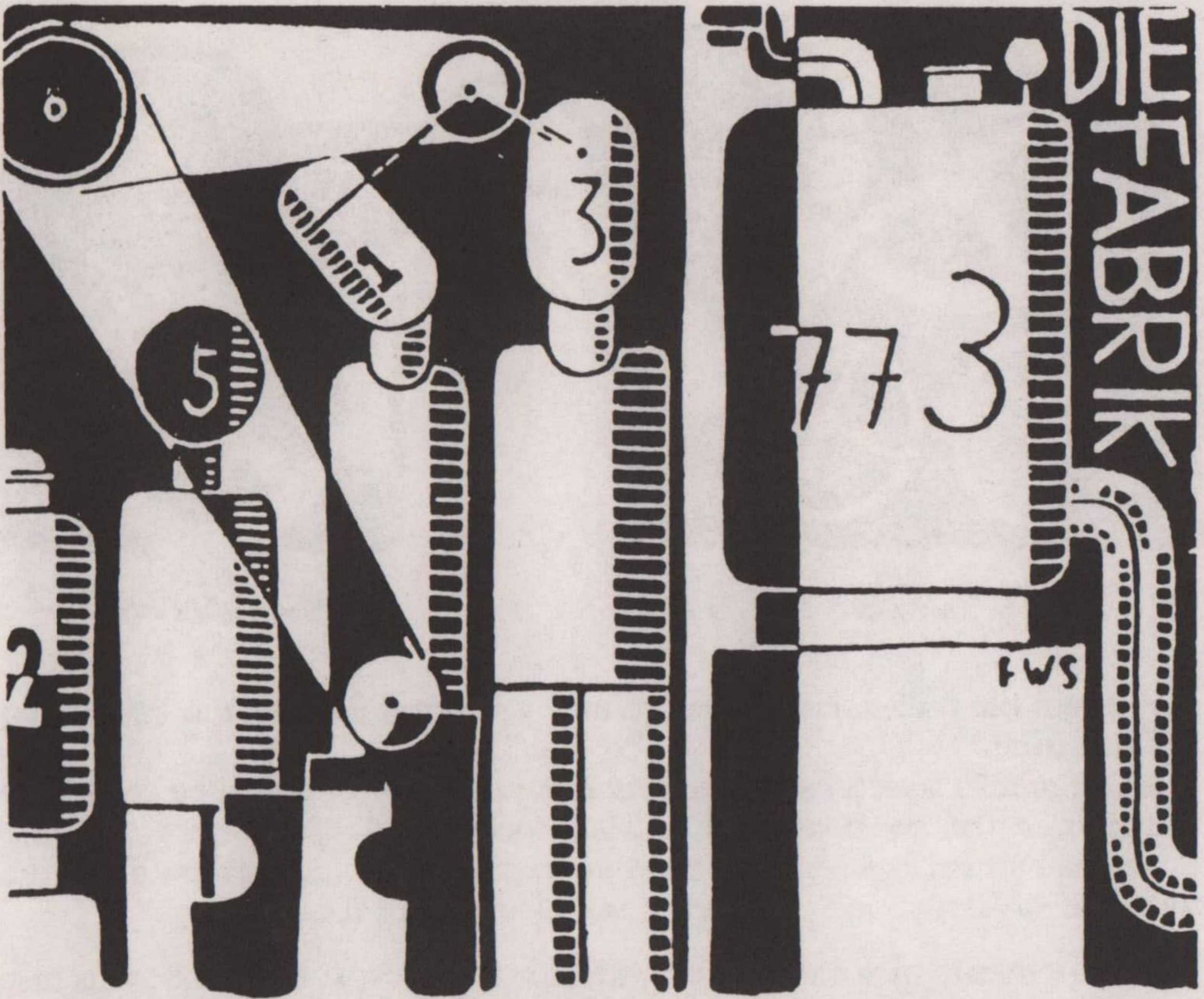


Fig 8 (above)
Frans Seiwert *Factory*.

Fig 9 (left)
Frans Seiwert
Gustav Landauer.

Fig 10 (opposite)
Frans Seiwert *Chicago 1887*.



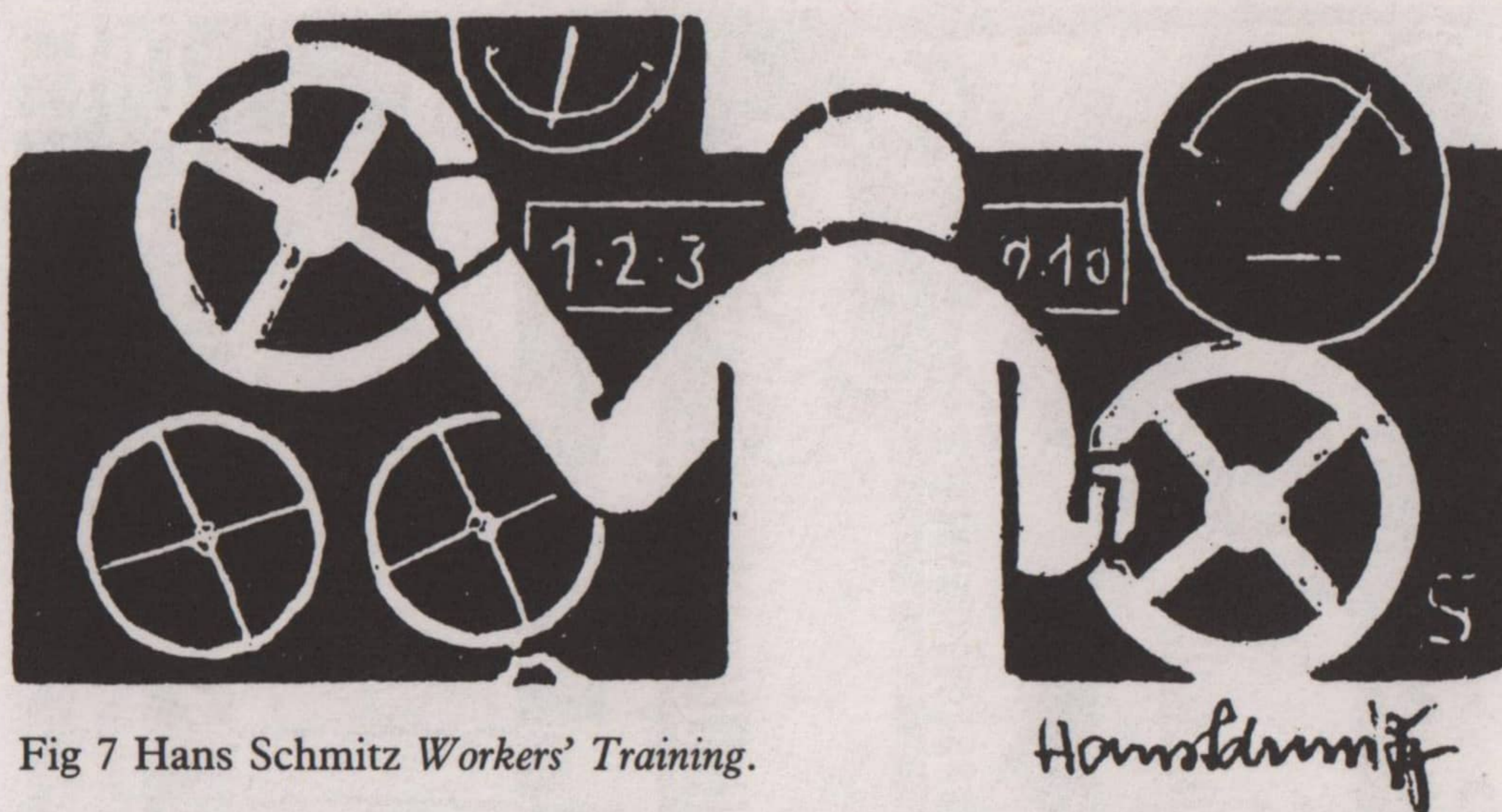


Fig 7 Hans Schmitz *Workers' Training*.

can remain the proletariat, but no means by which the proletariat can rise up and free itself.

A Communist society, and with it Communist culture, cannot be created by taking over the positions of Capitalist society and of bourgeois culture. Proletarian art exists when its form is the expression of the organisation of the feeling of solidarity, and of the class consciousness of the masses . . .

This statement, in spite of the terminology, encapsulates the anarchist rejection of authoritarian communist attempts to seize and use the state to direct a revolution, and reformulates it in terms of science, technology and culture.

In order to attack capitalist industrialism more effectively Seiwert resorted to a highly stylised representation, and the development of a simple pictorial language, which dialectically conceived, symbolised the opposing forces of capitalism and communism. A chimney, transmission belts, furnace, factory chimney and so on, stood for the inhuman aspects of industrialisation, whilst the sun, stars and trees have a positive value, pointing towards a better, socialist future. They can also have a negative significance, a crossed-out sun would strengthen the evil impression of the industrial scene. People are frequently depicted as being shaped or controlled by the system, and in many of Seiwert's linocuts a person's head is linked to the factory transmission belts to indicate that under capitalism the worker is only a part of the production process. (fig. 8)

Sometimes Seiwert's work was directly in a more political tradition, such as his icon-like portraits of Karl Leibknecht, and the anarchist-socialist Gustav Landauer. (fig. 9) Like Leibknecht, Landauer was murdered by reactionaries during the Revolution of 1918/19. Their portraits were among several of socialist martyrs produced in a small pamphlet *Lebendige*, by Peter Abelen, Anton Räderschneidt, Seiwert, and Angelika Hoerle, who died of tuberculosis



when still only 24. Seiwert also produced a remarkable linocut poster, commemorating the full horror of the execution of the Chicago anarchists in minimalist terms. (fig. 10) The rise of fascism, and the subsequent war destroyed the group, although Seiwert died early in 1933, of an X-ray burn sustained at the age of 7, and which he suffered from all his life. His death came just before the Nazis could destroy his work, and in all probability, the artist himself.

Seiwert and the Progressives tried to wrench art from its uneasy position as a commodity, and transform it into a weapon for communicating revolutionary ideas and ideals. In their attempt they have left us with an inspiring legacy of political images, a coherent, libertarian socialist theory of art, and a practical example of immense personal courage in the face of reaction.

Joe Kelly

Communication by a Tabloid Journalist

As I am writing this, the small flickering screen in the corner of my room is telling me that an American space probe has just passed behind the planet Venus. I mention that fact simply to put what I am about to say into some kind of perspective.

So often when anarchists talk about communication, it's communication in the form of leaflets, of pamphlets and small groups huddled in bar room corners.

It's not surprising we anarchists see ourselves as a desperate minority. These days we've been maligned as never before. The very word *anarchy* has passed into common usage as a pseudonym for any form of chaos and disorder.

And if we are to believe everything we hear, see and read in the media we've also been busier than ever before.

There's anarchy underpinning the Poll Tax riots, there's anarchy breaking out in the Eastern Bloc countries, in the Middle East, South America, in our Health Service, on the roads, in football grounds, at the local jumble sale.

Somewhere along the line there has been a serious breakdown in communication. Is it really possible that our more illustrious predecessors struggled over the centuries hammering out a philosophy that today is simply a journalist's byword for any kind of disorder?

There is undoubtedly something inherent in our beliefs that leads us to shun the media. Perhaps a century ago newspapers and books were still being printed with the noble aim of education. In today's world of sexual titillation and scandal we're wholly justified in feeling we don't wish to belong.

But this stance raises one of the great dilemmas that most political philosophies, and anarchists in particular, encounter at some point — the thorny question of *participation for change*.

Over the years there's been a consensus of opinion that anarchists will

not be fielding MPs, writing leader notes in the *Sunday Times*, or talking to *Sun* reporters.

Instead the various shades of anarchist opinion have huddled themselves together in small groups, publishing lengthy monologues for their colleagues on everything from 'The dynamics of post-syndicalist utopian communities' to 'What really happened in the Spanish Civil War'.

There may be some relevance in all of this eulogising. I wouldn't question the sincerity of its authors, but I've been watching the newsreel of the Venus satellite, and I can't help feeling that, somewhere along the line, the world has moved on.

You do have to admire the materialists, the financiers, the rational scientists, the bankers, stock brokers, factory owners and double glazing salesmen.

They share a communal belief in the moral justification of commerce, of competition, of 'wealth for all'.

It's been but a few hundred years since this new breed emerged from the swamps of human endeavour. In that short space of time they've changed the way we perceive our entire world. And the pace has become relentless, as daily we are bombarded with an ever increasing flow of highly manipulative and apparently irresistible images of wealth, happiness and material achievement.

It would be easy for me to say we anarchists are to blame for our lack of influence on this catastrophic trend. We've often been so poorly organised, poorly financed, and simply too concerned about each other's welfare to run with the flock. I wouldn't feel ashamed with that admission, but equally I'm none too happy about the outcome.

These days it seems we spend so long deciding exactly where we are going to pitch our political arguments, that the parade has already passed before we've reached any agreement on our part in it.

The sad fact at the end of the day is simply that your average citizen knows perfectly well that 'Madonna was bonking Warren Beatty' and that 'Anarchists want to blow everything up'.

We live in an age of increasing unreality, of mass produced fantasies, misinformation and delusion. After decades of getting the product just right, we're now fed on a daily diet of garbage that very cleverly keeps us just discontented enough to want to work, to earn more money, to fulfil the dreams that mean we won't have to work any more.

How can you blame us for being such fools? After watching the omnibus edition of Brookside, of Coronation St, Neighbours, Home and Away, The Young Doctors, and Eastenders, (then there's scandal and bingo in the tabloids, most of the news — which means nothing anyway 'cos it's happening somewhere else to someone else) — they've got it just about right, haven't they?

This may sound a trifle negative, but I'm hoping to make an important point. Out there on the streets is a full-scale, full-time menace, feeding fodder to the masses. It's efficient, effective, and it's going to be around for a very long time to come.

Those who influence the way of the world have really got the present stitched up. They've bought up our destiny and created a whole new lifestyle that obviously favours their philosophy, that guarantees their positions of power.

Maybe the purists are right. Maybe, if we keep struggling on with our leaflets and pamphlets, a day will come when the disillusioned masses will seek us out. But rather I suspect that we will simply remain an endangered species, a small body of eccentric men and women arguing for something nobody wants — however much they may need it.

But I'm not a purist. I'm a firm believer in getting my hands dirty. Our society is in a pretty awful mess and we've got to start reversing the rot somewhere. And I think we have to begin by taking the very great risk of actually mixing with those whom we so much deride.

It is after all a very weak philosophy that dare not test its metal on the open market for which it was created.

I'm a journalist, a tabloid journalist, on a regional paper that is all too often full of SATANIC SEX RINGS EAT FOETUSES stories.

Everyone knows I'm an anarchist, and my colleagues know what anarchism is. It's not an adjective they would use these days to describe 'chaos and disorder'.

For me it used to be very self-gratifying to write long monologues for obscure pamphlets that needed a 150,000 word dictionary and a six months headache to decipher, but I gradually came to the conclusion that if the nation ain't reading it, then nobody's reading it!

Most of us in this country may see the media as a Tory led big-business propaganda machine. Maybe it has a latent slant in that direction, but I don't think that the likes of John Profumo, Cecil Parkinson or Nick Ridley would entirely agree.

It may not be a very good press, but it's there, it can have teeth, and it still has a role to play. However biased it may be, it is the only place left where any of us have a chance of taking on the powers-that-be, and actually winning on the odd occasion.

In the main I write features about people and their achievements. A person who overcomes a disability, or group who raise enough money to buy new medical equipment. Light and readable, it is also a highly political exercise, because it's about people doing things for themselves, together — organisation without coercion.

It occurs to me that amongst ourselves there's far too much insistence on anarchy as a title, rather than as a way of life. Protestors taking on the might of a local council to save their allotments don't have to call themselves anarchists to be doing something anarchistic.

Truth is, I believe that most people are passive anarchists — we just alienate them by thrusting a dull and often dogmatic philosophy down their throats.

The best way to communicate anarchist ideas is by simple example, by participation. For god's sake, if this ideology is about *people*, then we should be mixing with them, all of them — interacting, educating.

The world actually is, at this moment in its history, more loaded with possibilities than it has ever been. The various forms of the media represent a kind of gloss, a sickly top coat over what's really happening in society. Your average *Sun* reader may like his or her 'scandal and bingo', but that's just escapism, and at heart we're all aware that we're being sold short. Our daily reality remains firmly rooted on the factory floor, behind the desk, the staff canteen or the nursery.

I'm pleased to say that there's a change in mood these days, a restlessness with the idea of a national psyche, and an ever deepening need for individual opportunity, for a sense of place, community, kinship.

We do seem to be entering an age that, if we have the vision to seize the initiative, is all but anarchistic in its aspirations.

This is the era of the community newsletter, the residents' association, community radio. New local papers are springing up everywhere in response to a newfound interest in local affairs. Television companies are falling over each other these days to improve their 'local' coverage.

Perhaps at long last society is moving inexorably towards a reinstatement of the importance of the individual.

The Greens, the Christians, even the good ole' Tories themselves are all jumping on the 'one world — one community' bandwagon. What was for so long seen as 'minority interest' is now a fervent and fashionable obsession.

Most significant of all, the advent of satellite and local cable television has the potential to offer boundless opportunities to all of us.

Here at home my simple computer is linked to a phone line, used to send material to where I work. But I have also taught myself to use this technology to dial up anarchist bulletin boards in Chicago, Amsterdam, Sydney, everywhere. With this technology you can send the entire text of this book you are now reading to a thousand different locations around the world in a matter of minutes. If that isn't spreading the word, I don't know what is!

This may of course seem like an obscure, expensive and self indulgent elitism to many anarchists — it is none of those things. And it's no more than utilising the same systems that commerce uses every day to conduct its business. A century ago some anarchists were probably frowning at the new fangled 'telephone' device. I do hope we don't take another century to recognise the potential of this 'space-age' technology.

As I have said, I dwell very much on the fringes of convention, and sometimes I do wonder if I'm falling foul of the horrors of corruption. But that's the price we must all be prepared to pay if we are to come down from our lonely cells and interact with our fellows. In that process we should learn a lot more about their reality, and ensure that our fellows learn a lot more about ours.

If we can achieve that we have succeeded in as much as we can hope to succeed, because anarchism is above all else about COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION and DEVELOPMENT.

Colin Ward

Notes of an Anarchist Columnist

How much of our enormous intake of printed matter really gets read? Readership surveys and market research in the world of newspapers and magazines indicate that there are certain features which readers turn to first and read with greatest attention: in some cases the letters page, in others the editorial, but for most readers, the columnists. (Most people get their update on actual happenings from radio and TV).

This is why most journals have 'Columns', often several. I have never read a definition of this sense of the word but in practice it means a regular feature by a named individual or sequence of people, or a pseudonym, with personal comments or prejudices to air, sometimes funny, sometimes vindictive, sometimes wise. There are some odious examples around in both the popular and the posh press, but there have been some excellent ones, like Bill Connor, who was 'Cassandra' of the *Daily Mirror* in its better days.

It seems to me, but only in retrospect, that since the 1950s I have been trying to find the right role for an anarchist columnist. I had first written in *War Commentary* at the end of 1943, and of course that journal and its successor always had features like 'Anarchist Commentary', but it took me a long time to discover the appropriate format for the things I needed to write. I reached it in the 1950s, first under the title 'Comment' and then, until the end of 1960 in the weekly *Freedom*, under the heading 'People and Ideas'.

I did in fact feel that there were people and ideas which we failed to discuss, simply because the people weren't anarchists or because the ideas weren't in the headlines. So I tried to examine the anarchist content of thinkers like Herzen or Buber, and of the opposition writers in the Soviet empire as reported in the specialist press.

It is hard to imagine today, but there was a universal assumption in the 1950s (except among us, and the victims) that poverty and issues associated with it had been abolished by the postwar legislation which had been supported in effect by both major political parties. A whole school of new social analysts arose who questioned the truth of this idea, and went further, among the sociologists of deviance, to reach something close to an anarchist analysis. I thought it foolish to dismiss

them just because they thought of themselves as Fabians or Marxists, or were anyway (in the huge postwar expansion of higher education) simply 'academics'.

The heading 'People and Ideas' was the right format for bringing a range of both into the anarchist lens. Friends did not hesitate to tell me that I had become a Labour Party stool-pigeon in our midst. The dread word 'revisionist' was used about me. The advantage of being a columnist was precisely that degree of separation from any unspoken editorial line.

In the 1960s I edited the Freedom Press monthly *Anarchy* which sought to bring under an anarchist umbrella all the new evidence that seemed to me to push anarchism into the general current of social thought instead of the sectarian margins. It never fell to me to be a columnist there, just because I was busy writing the articles I had failed to get in time from outside contributors.

Soon after I gave up editing *Anarchy* I answered a press advertisement for someone to start the education service of the Town & Country Planning Association, an old pressure group founded in the 19th century by Ebenezer Howard, the garden city pioneer. I got the job, and for the first time in my life was actually *paid* for writing. I started *BEE*, the Bulletin of Environmental Education, aimed at school teachers. (It still exists, under the title *Streetwork*, now published by the National Association for Urban Studies.)

But one result of ceasing to be an anarchist journalist was that I actually had the time to write books. As Gutenberg and Caxton discovered, they have great advantages. They bring a whole range of readers we would never reach, somewhere out there, just because of that wonderful invention, the public library. They bring sometimes spurious prestige, but the snag is that my kind of book brings in very little money. I've been very lucky through my habit of answering every newspaper advertisement for a Research Fellowship or Award that isn't actually tied to the world of universities and polytechnics. They make books financially possible for writers. I never mention the ones I fail to get.

All the same I can't help noticing that publishing and paid journalism are like show business. Don't ring us: we'll ring you. Just about everything that I ever proposed to an editor or publisher has been turned down. (On the other hand if *they* propose it they want it on Tuesday.) I ceased long ago to suggest to anyone that I should review a book, because that seemed to be a guarantee that a particular book would not be reviewed in that journal. I just wait for them to turn up in our letter-box. I have even been known to return them if there was nothing to be said about them.

But I have been altogether luckier as a columnist. From its inception in 1962 I was a supporter of the weekly *New Society*, just because I thought that the exploration of social facts supported an anarchist interpretation. In the 1970s I was asked to join the team of writers who wrote the 'Stand' column in a four-week cycle. This was a delight. It was long (about 1,800 words) and was by my humble standards, well-paid.

From the point of view of a poor book-writer and anarchist it was too good to last. The rota of writers got longer and the space got smaller. It was reduced to a page, called 'Personal View'.

Then in 1988 *New Society* was absorbed into the *New Statesman*. This is a historically-sanctified journal of the political left. From a Freedom Press point of view the outstanding thing was that for decades no FP publication ever got a mention there. Endless changes in its policy, its fortunes and ownership and of editors have altered the situation since then.

But meanwhile I had slipped into a tiny niche as a columnist. When I gave up working for the TCPA I was persuaded to go on writing a column for its monthly *Town and Country Planning*. The 'target audience' for this venerable journal is not that of planners but of lay people concerned with planning. For example, the members of planning committees of county and district councils, and of community groups and local pressure groups. This fact dictates the kind of topic my column (which, predictably, is called 'People and Ideas' discusses. Within the planning world I have the reputation of being a 'planner-basher'. But then they shrug their shoulders and say 'What can you expect from an anarchist?' I have written that column for about eleven years. Then for some time in the 1980s the *Architect's Journal* had a column called 'Private View' and I was sometimes asked to write for it. Obviously the topics I wrote about, for that readership, were related to the social context of architecture.

My lucky break as a columnist came when the *New Statesman* swallowed up *New Society*. (I knew the new editor Stuart Weir for the simple reason that seventeen years earlier when I was addressing a meeting of the moguls of housing management on the necessity of tenant control and was being told this was nonsense, he had risen from the audience to support me.) He gave me the chance to write a column called 'Fringe Benefits' in the combined *New Statesman and Society*. It was half a page at the back of the paper, headed by a nice drawing by Cliff Harper of a scarecrow preaching to the birds, and the first one, in 1988, was announced with the words, 'Colin Ward introduces the country column which is radically different. It's about the city, too.' Later it moved forward to the front end, became two-thirds of a page,

while the scarecrow was replaced by a mugshot of me. I have now done over a hundred and it represents a big slice of my income.

So I have a strong vested interest in the survival of the *NS&S*. I read about its financial problems and I know that with a change in policy or editorship, I'd be out. But you have only to go to your newsagent's to see that while there are masses of journals, stuffed with ads, in specialist fields: motoring, computers, house and home, gardening, weapons or popular music, there is a meagre little space for what the trade calls 'general interest' or 'current affairs'. It isn't only marginal groups like the anarchists who are squeezed out.

Politically-minded people of every persuasion lament the fact that most people are not interested in politics. Or, to be more precise, they are more interested in a lot of other things. A magazine publisher, questioned by Andrew Rawnsley (on the Radio 4 *Newstand* programme on 20 May 1990) about the decline of 'general interest' journals, replied: 'What is really happening is that people get more concerned with specific interests and now have the cash to buy magazines that cater for these particular interests.' I think it is also true that the expansion and increase of the posh Sunday papers means that they can buy a lot more reading matter, and of course an incredible lot more advertising matter, for weekend reading for about half the price.

I haven't a prescription for success for the *NS&S*, any more than I have one for *Freedom* or *The Raven*. But I do follow certain precepts in my column there.

First I make sure it is the right length, is what we used to call 'clean copy' and arrives on time. In practice it is usually over the length and has to be cut to fit. These cuts are practical and have nothing to do with any kind of censorship, which I have never suffered. On two occasions I have sent in copy that was too short and have had the embarrassment of improvising more sentences on the phone.

Secondly I usually stick to my brief and write a 'country column', which like the one in *The Guardian* comes from the particular place where I live. Only, although I have written about badgers or pheasants, I write about people and events rather than flora and fauna. The notion is, of course, that little local tales ought to illuminate big issues. But I have that let-out phrase that my column is 'about the city too'. If I go somewhere, I tend to repay my train fares with a piece related to that place. This is possibly useful in counteracting the metropolitan bias of every nationally-read journal.

Thirdly, I write about people, quite often myself and what happens to me. There is a journalistic adage that 'people want to read about people', and I have no doubt that it is true. The worst excesses of the British press follow this precept. But I tend to write about good people,

doing valuable things. The introduction of the recollections of me, my family and friends, is simply part of the apparent appeal of 'the column' as a literary form: a one-sided conversation between writer and reader. As with any other journal I write in, big issues and magisterial statements of policy, are a matter for editors, not me.

Fourthly, I'm aware that one of the useful aspects of *New Society* was its reporting of a whole range of specialist papers in the sociological field that seldom get any publicity in the press. When they respond to the kind of topics I can discuss in my column I try to bring them in. My problem is that many of those that come my way just don't fit in this formula.

Fifthly, and this is the area where I have usually failed, I like the ambiguity of the title 'Fringe Benefits'. I wanted to write about the no-man's-land that planners and geographers describe as the urban fringe, neither town nor country. And I also wanted to write about the semi-casual way in which people gather a living from the multitude of sources outside the officially-recognised economy. Busy-ness or laziness, or lack of transport have led to my failing to live up to this ambition.

I rejoice in being an anarchist columnist in the non-anarchist press. The steady trickle of income it brings in is a great comfort, as anyone dependent on casual earnings will appreciate. It is often grist to the mill for the books I have still to write, and I'll exploit it as long as I can.

What does it mean from the standpoint of anarchist propaganda? Well, it has always been my view that one of our tasks is to move anarchism from its particular ghetto into the range of ideas that other people take seriously. My accidental toehold in other people's journals is one way, and not necessarily the least effective way, of attempting this.

Donald Rooum

The Use of Cartoons in Anarchist Propaganda

This article will consist of a series of dogmatic assertions with little if any attempt to justify them. If you disagree, fine; I am not arguing.

There are three ways in which cartoons can be useful in anarchist propaganda. They can make simple assertions, they can express opinions in an entertaining form, and they can act as an appetiser for written material.

Cartoons as simple statements

Political cartoons are usually metaphors, and the people in them, symbols for political ideas or attitudes. A Prime Minister, depicted in a cartoon, is a symbol for the politics of the Prime Minister, or the politics of the government, or the government as an international power. When a new person attains power in a country where cartoons are permitted, the various cartoonists produce different caricatures. But as rapidly as possible they copy from each other the features they will exaggerate, and arrive at a consensus which readers will instantly recognise. A cartoonist who draws a politician every day may fail to recognise the politician in the flesh, and this does not matter at all if the cartoon ideas are good and the symbol can be read.

You cannot argue with a cartoon, because a cartoon cannot argue back. Cartoons can make assertions in the form of metaphors, and tell stories effectively and attractively, but they cannot present arguments. (Of course it is possible to put a written argument in a series of speech balloons, but surrounding an argument with cartoons is not presenting the argument in cartoon form.)

This inability of cartoons to put arguments is no disadvantage in propaganda; on the contrary, it is an asset. If you make a contentious statement using words, your audience can say or think 'But . . .', which interrupts the flow of communication. This is not the case if you make your statement in a medium where argument is impossible. Then, your assertion can be obscured only by incomprehensible metaphors, intrusive jokes, and other events which you are able to control.

One reviewer flattered me with the compliment that my Wildcat cartoons in *Freedom* 'hit the nail on the head'. Lovely. But if anyone said my cartoons made a pertinent analysis of something, that would be nonsense. Trying to use a cartoon for analysis would be as daft as trying to use a hammer as a microscope.

Cartoons as popular art

It is about a century since anarchism has been formulated in its current form. During that time there have been big changes in the techniques of mass communication, and these have produced cultural changes.

One change is that a hundred years ago, books were the most common media of popular entertainment, and this is no longer so. There is no need for me to detail the other media now available.

Since reading a lot of words is no longer a common custom, expansiveness in print is less effective than it used to be, as a means of propaganda. Indeed, it is difficult in 1990 to imagine any reader preferring verbosity to conciseness.

The anarchist classics continue to be useful, and new works of genuine scholarship also have a place in anarchist propaganda. New tub-thumping polemics, however, must be short and concise to meet the modern cultural environment.

Yet leaflets and short pamphlets are still seen as lightweight, throwaway material. The problem is to present concisely-worded propaganda in a form which looks fairly substantial. And a useful, pleasant, culturally acceptable solution is to produce books of strip cartoons.

Another important cultural change has taken place in the art galleries. The most respected gallery artists today think their job is to stimulate imagination by doing something unexpected, on a large scale ('a child of three with a heavy-duty crane . . .').

Modern art appeals to a sophisticated audience, and tends to leave unsophisticated viewers bewildered. Popular art has always needed pictures which tell stories, and since this need is no longer satisfied by gallery art, people turn to strip illustrators and cartoonists.

A snobbish superstition developed, among those sophisticated enough to understand modern art, that what may be understood without effort may be produced without effort. The composer Scott Joplin, the cinema director Charles Chaplin, and the writer P.G. Wodehouse are all artists now recognised as important innovators, whose work was belittled because it was instantly enjoyable.

Lately, art snobbery seems to be somewhat on the decline. Young

people who try to improve their skill as cartoonists and strip illustrators are still subject to opposition from their art teachers, but this is because art teachers are a conservative lot, as stuck with modernism as an earlier generation was stuck with academism.

They are not the only ones. In this country, good cartoons are never subsidised at the expense of tax-payers, because the grant-giving bodies are dominated by art snobs. The Liverpool Tate Gallery recently circulated a call for cartoons to go in an exhibition about Modern Art, offering no fee to the exhibitors except what they evidently saw as the honour of appearing alongside proper Art. And whereas the French Ministry of Culture funds an annual comics gathering, the Arts Council does not even reply to letters from the organisers of the UK Comic Arts Convention.

Modernist (ie not instantly comprehensible) comic books are produced, and I believe some of them have been publicly subsidised. But they are not by noticeably talented artists; those I have seen look as if their authors use modernism as a disguise for their inability to draw.

If it is not obvious in a cartoon who is saying what to whom, or whether a running character is running terrified or running to catch a bus, then the cartoonist is lacking in skill. Many cartooning skills can be learned by anyone with a bit of visual ability, but as with all art, there are also skills of expression which depend on the personality of the artist.

I admire those strip cartoonists who can convey elegance and heroism, though I have no ambition to draw elegance and heroism myself. I was flattered to be told by an editor of *Peace News* that my work had the quality of hatred. But the cartoonists I would most like to emulate are the visual humourists, whose drawings make you laugh even where there is no specific joke.

There is no way to draw anarchism. But if you put an anarchist statement in an amusing cartoon, you not only induce people to read the statement, but also show that anarchism is not a miserable doctrine.

Cartoons as an appetiser for words

In publications consisting mostly of text, the most important function of cartoons is to enliven their appearance.

An experiment, often repeated by trainee librarians, is to take the 'dust jackets' off half the copies of a book, leave them on the remaining copies, and observe how often each copy is borrowed. People wish to read the book, not the jacket, and they can see that all copies are of exactly the same book. Nevertheless, they prefer the books with

jackets. It is as if a visually attractive exterior acts as the equivalent of an appetiser, providing some of the energy for digesting the words.

Most magazines these days, even specialist magazines sold on subscription only, devote the front cover to a single picture, which may have little relevance to the content, and whose function is to make the magazine *look* readable.

There is a conventional wisdom that any page of text, bigger than an ordinary book page, needs an illustration or two to stop it from looking grey and boring. Even the most serious-minded of daily and Sunday newspapers take some trouble to be visually attractive.

Seen as mere decoration, photographs relieve the grey of the typesetting by varying the texture of the grey, while line drawings provide solid areas of black and white. The size, shape, and distribution of black and white in a cartoon are important design elements of the publication in which it appears.

As recently as twenty years ago, nearly all printing was done by letterpress, and using an illustration meant going to the expense of a letterpress block. Now that nearly all printing is done by lithography, illustrations are actually cheaper to use than text, because they do not involve typesetting costs. This means that even anarchist publications can be as lavish with cartoons as they like.

Most anarchist periodicals, these days, follow the commercial press in including some pictorial interest at each opening of the paper or magazine. Some illustrations are original, some lifted from other anarchist publications in an unobtrusive spirit of international anarchist co-operation. Some anarchist publications are not so much enlivened, as overwhelmed, by illustrations.

Some other anarchist publications, by contrast, embrace the prejudice that liveliness of appearance is incompatible with seriousness of purpose. The late Jack Robinson, when he was an editor of *Freedom*, would veto illustrations proposed by his fellow editors on the ground that '*Freedom* is not a comic'.

Freedom under its current editorship does not lift cartoons from other papers, and consequently has a higher proportion of words to pictures than most of its contemporaries. At first there were grumbles from readers about the unfamiliar greyness, but nobody seems to have stopped buying the paper because of it. The conventional wisdom that readers need visual stimulation seems to be mistaken, at least in the case of *Freedom* readers. If so, it is not the only case of conventional wisdom being wrong, and *Freedom* editors being right.

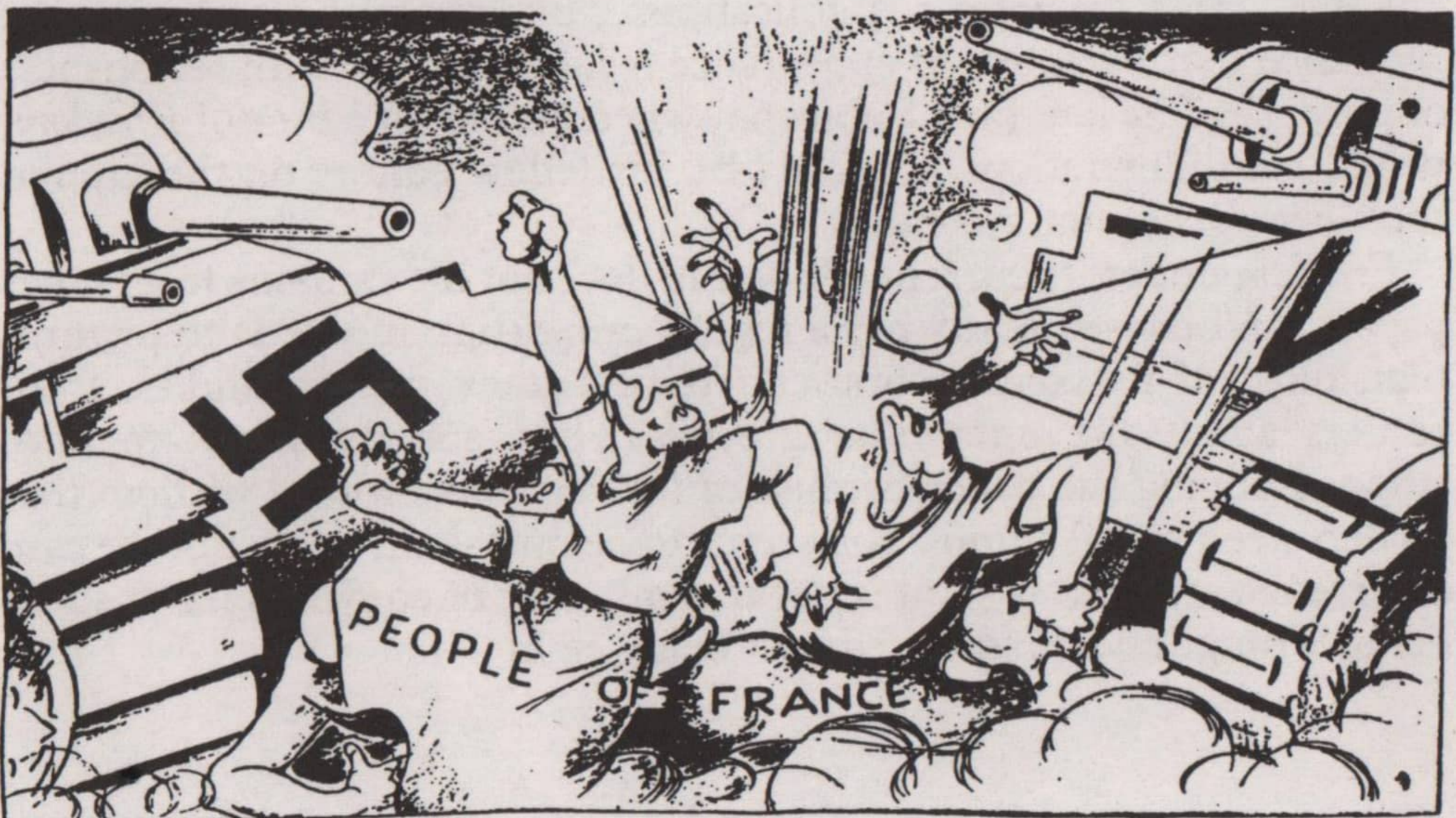
Cartoonists in *Freedom*

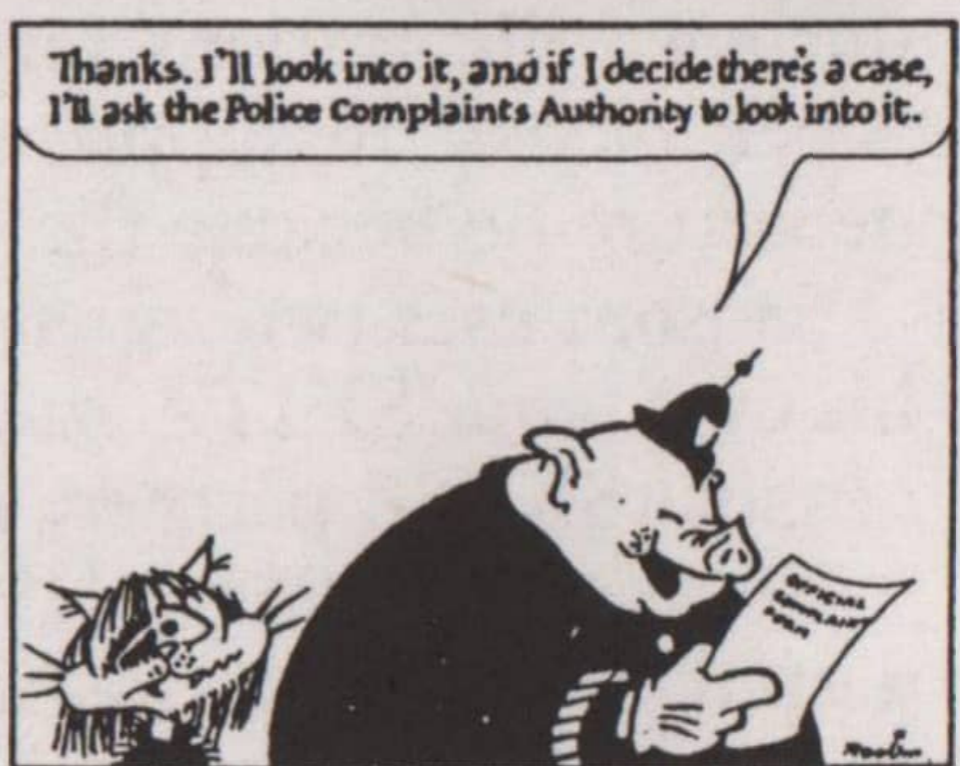
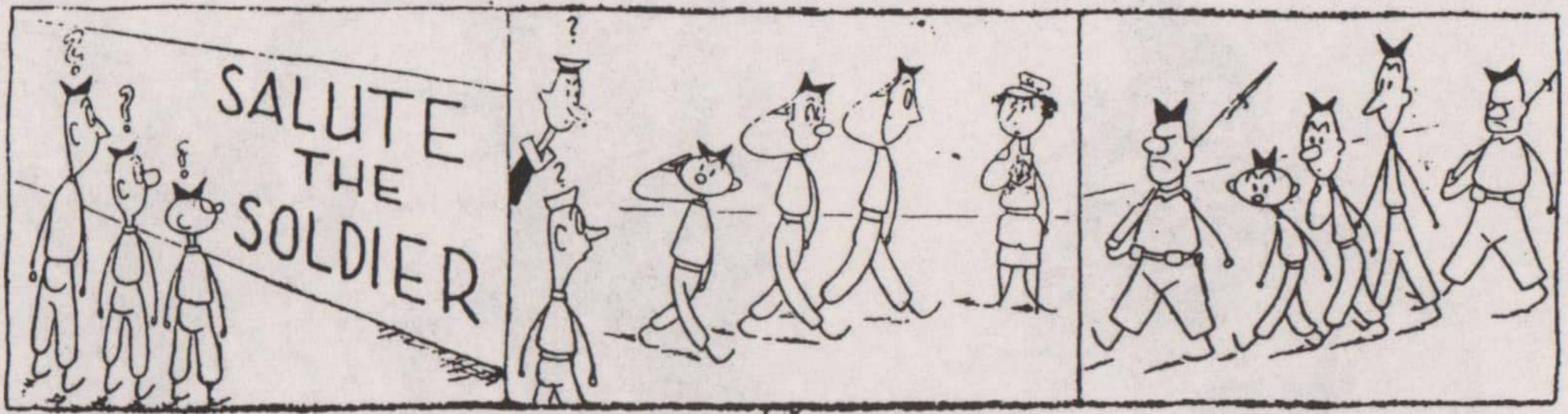
Before the 'printing revolution' of the early 1970s, newspapers and magazines were printed by the letterpress process, and letterpress blocks for pictures were time-consuming and expensive to produce. There were very few illustrations in *Freedom* before World War Two. But *War Commentary* (as *Freedom* called itself during the war) used them regularly.

John Olday was the first regular cartoonist in *War Commentary*. He stayed with the paper only a few years, from early 1942 until 1945, but remains the most celebrated of *Freedom's* artists, and deservedly so. A critic described him as 'second best after David Lowe — better than the *News Chronicle's* Vicky?'

Best remembered are his political cartoons, mostly about international affairs. Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo were depicted in lively caricature, often with broad smiles on their faces as they sent the common people to destruction in one allegory or another.

Using a more sombre drawing technique, he drew grisly pictures of the suffering brought by war to individuals. He designed small, comic, text illustrations, mostly for use with the regular 'Through the Press' feature. Several small drawings were mounted together to make a large block, which was then cut up to make stock blocks for insertion wherever the editors decided.





(above, top to bottom) John Olday, Ron Avery, Peter Rigg, Donald Room.

(opposite) John Olday.



(above left) Nick Lant. (above right) Cam Smith. (opposite) Philip Sansom.

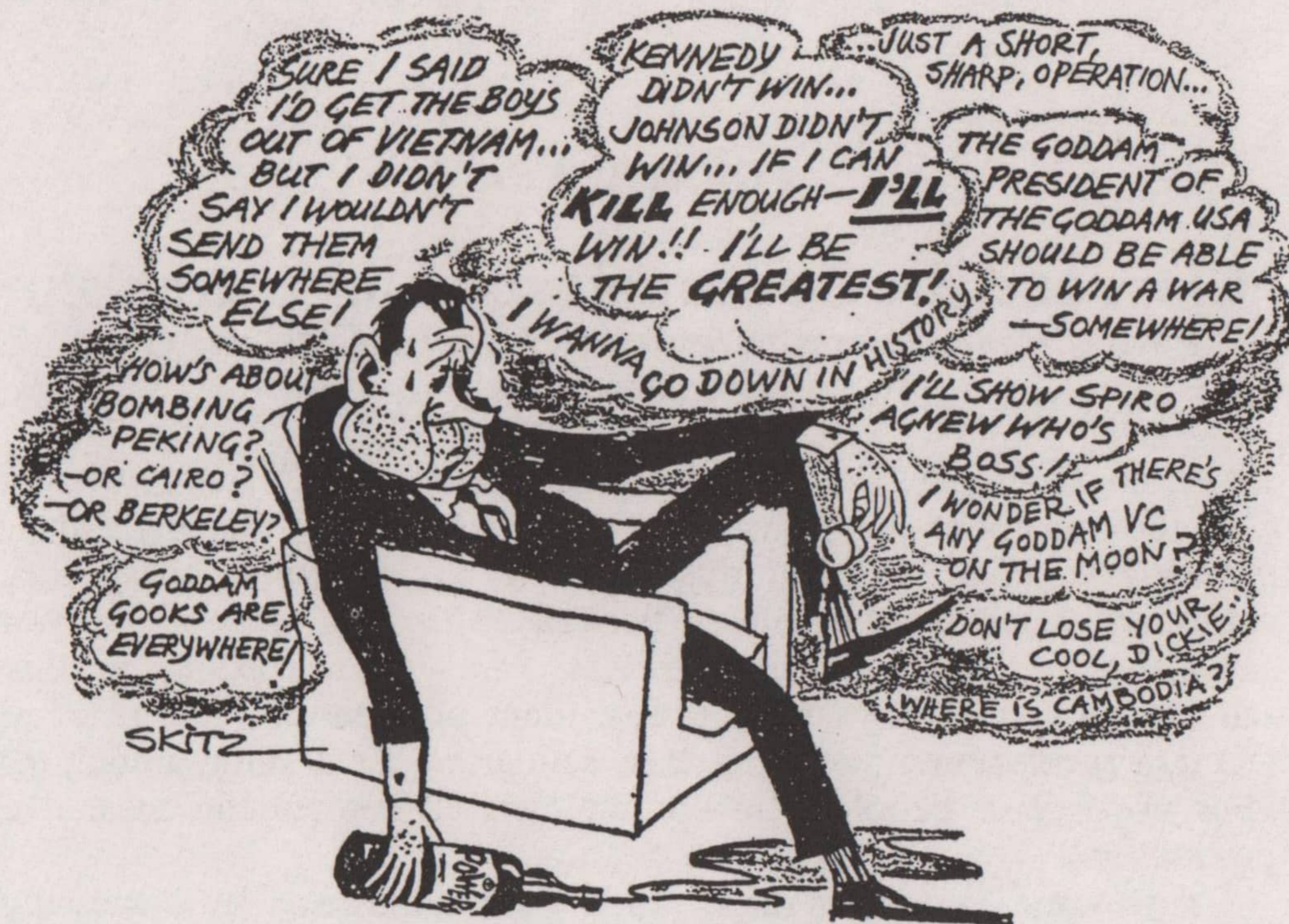
And he had a regular strip cartoon, featuring three soldiers, very simply drawn, without speech balloons. This was not the first strip in an anarchist paper, but it was the first in Britain and the first to be 'ghosted' by other artists. Arrested in 1944 he refused to give his name, and to avoid giving the police a clue to his identity, it was decided to continue the three soldiers in his absence. Philip Sansom drew one or perhaps two episodes, and after Sansom's own arrest it was taken over for a time by Ron Avery.

Philip Sansom first contributed a drawing to *War Commentary* in 1943, and still publishes cartoons in *Freedom*. His earlier drawings were unsigned illustrations for articles, and he also contributed some tiny 'stock blocks' to supplement those designed by Olday. After Olday's departure he became the political cartoonist.

Sansom uses two signatures, 'philip' when the idea for the cartoon is his own, and 'SKITZ' when he is illustrating someone else's idea. The original SKITZ partner, in the 1960s, was Bob Green.

From about 1968 to 1974 there was no regular *Freedom* cartoonist, despite the change to lithographic printing (which makes pictures cheaper than text) in 1973. One of the editors at that time took the view that an illustrated paper could not be a serious paper.

Arthur Moyse was a regular *Freedom* cartoonist from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. He drew at the same size as the drawings were to be



HERE'S — DICKIE!

reproduced, and the actual originals were stuck down on the paste-up artwork. Later, when his work was exhibited by George Melly and people were buying it, all his original drawings for *Freedom* had been destroyed. He still contributes drawings occasionally.

Donald Rooum has the longest-running strip in *Freedom*, 'Wildcat' begun in January 1980 and still going. He has also drawn political cartoons, illustrations to articles, and text decorations, mostly unsigned.

Peter Rigg contributed a popular strip cartoon called 'The Kronstadt Kids' from about 1982 to 1987, about the adventures of five young squatters, later travellers. At first the script was written by the comedian Tony Allen, later by Rigg himself. He also contributed several episodes of 'The House Next Door', an allegory of American/Soviet relations, until it was transferred to *Sanity*.

Nick Lant and **Cam Smith** also drew for *Freedom* in the 1980s, contributing decorations and headings, and political cartoons mostly illustrating ideas by Stu Stuart.

Bill Newton had a strip cartoon 'On the line', about the running conflict between police and demonstrators, published throughout 1987.

There is not space to mention the many artists who have made only occasional contributions. There are many others, whose offers have been rejected. *Freedom* is grateful to them all.

Johnny Yen

Class and the Communication of Anarchism

Further Comments on an Anarchist Model of Class and Class Consciousness

In *Raven 11* ('Class, Power and Class Consciousness') I claimed that '... the concept of class is useful to anarchists because it is *useful to the oppressed majority*'. I based this claim on my argument that, since subjective class consciousness (basically, how — and if — you categorise yourself according to class, and act according to that self-categorisation) is partially independent of economic and political factors, 'revolutionary working class solidarity can develop among *the large majority* of people who do not own or control the means of production'.

I now want to qualify these rather bald statements by discussing empirical evidence on the current status of the label 'working class', and psychological theories of the processes involved in self-categorisation. This, I hope, will help to suggest just *how* useful the label 'working class' is, and therefore what degree of reliance we should place on it in our propaganda.

The end of class as an explanatory tool?

According to Gordon Marshall (1987), sociologists are in agreement that the working class is changing; the changes are usually seen in terms of the decline of traditional proletarian occupations and communities, the growth of working class affluence, the decline of manual occupations, the growth of non-manual occupations (particularly in the service sector), the professionalisation of some non-manual jobs, the routinisation ('deskilling') of some non-manual jobs and the increasing participation of women in paid employment. These changes have been interpreted by sociologists in very different ways. But what matters to us is how they are interpreted by the vast majority of people. It has been suggested by some of a Fabian persuasion (eg Steven Lukes, Eric Hobsbawm, Ivor Crewe) that new forms of social stratification are evolving, based, for example, on *consumption* rather than *work*; people are said to identify with what they *buy* (eg home ownership) more than with what they *do*. It is implied that what many Marxists (and anarchists) regard as the dynamic of social change (ie people's

relationship to the means of production) is no longer salient. Instead, there are many subgroups with a variety of interests; if people do organise collectively it will be on the basis of these subgroups rather than on the basis of class membership, it is argued.

On the other hand, in 'Social Class in Modern Britain', Marshall, Newby and Rose claim that class remains an important source of identity in Britain and across the world; it is still the most important indicator of voting intention, for example. This claim is based on an international research project consisting of thousands of interviews on the topic of class consciousness.

But since many people for whom class membership is a more salient source of identity than patterns of consumption call themselves *middle* class rather than working class, we are still left with the problem of building unity between culturally distinct groups. Further, even if a majority of people continue to classify themselves as working class, it does not mean that they interpret this label in the same way. For example, in 'The Blackcoated Worker', David Lockwood identified three types of working class consciousness: 'traditional deferential', 'traditional proletarian' and 'new privatised'; each sees the role and interests of the working class as different.

Optimistically, one could argue that if we promote anarchism successfully among the 'traditional proletarians' then many of the others might come to identify more closely with us when the anarchist counter culture looks like supplanting the old system. But this assumes that the 'proletarian' group are the largest; as I argued in *Raven 11*, the 'middle classes' are beginning to outnumber productive manual workers; and by the time our revolution gathers pace, 'traditional proletarians' may not exist at all in some nations.

The fastest growing group of manual workers are the 'privatised' working class. These are those who are 'affluent', often self-employed, often in high-tech industries, often not unionised, who vote for whoever would seem to give them the best deal economically; in other words they have no traditional allegiances and have a more individualistic ethos than 'proletarian' workers. It is to them we must increasingly turn with our anarchist propaganda; yet, depending on how we characterise the rationale for anarchism, we could meet the same difficulties here as we might encounter when trying to communicate with the lower middle classes. Despite the fact that many first-generation middle class think of themselves as working class, many others are glad to categorise themselves differently. Similarly, many manual workers simply don't use the label 'working class' and don't want to for the same reasons as the first-generation middle classes. The label 'working class' has many historical associations which

will not easily disappear that make it an unattractive self-categorisation for many people; and if *manual* workers reject it, how likely are non-manual workers to adopt it on a wide scale? If, as the neo-Marxist Andre Gorz argues, work is no longer going to dominate our lives, how can we hope to help people to unite by using a verbal label so inextricably linked to the concept of work, and manual work in particular?

As things stand, it seems to me that the label 'working class' is highly accessible to certain groups and highly *inaccessible* to certain others. Therefore, if the term is employed equally across the population in anarchist (or other) propaganda, we might even be helping to promote only a futile conflict between those oppressed who categorise themselves as working class and those oppressed who categorise themselves as *middle* class; in other words, *divide and rule*. This will not be the result of us using too narrow a definition of the term 'working class'; this term already has certain meanings for people however *we* define it. These meanings will be consistent with or in contrast to certain values which people are not likely to give up easily since they will be closely related to their self-concept. This is why using pro-class tracts (like my class model in *Raven 11*) as popular propaganda is unlikely to persuade large numbers of people to unite as 'members of the working class'; people will simply resist such a self-categorisation, irrelevant of the merit of the arguments.

Although I believe that class consciousness is partly independent of economic factors, I do not deny that pure and simple 'objective relations to the means of production' (ie the type of work one does) is generally the most important determinant of a person's class self-categorisation (if any); this appears to be the conclusion of Marshall et al. There is no guarantee that at some point in the future, the pattern of industry and employment will not change again, enabling the label 'working class' to become easily accessible to the vast majority once more. But it must be said that this does not seem likely in the near future. Therefore, since the meanings of the label 'working class' and objective economic relations facilitating the use of that label are unlikely to work wholly to our advantage, we must find other ways of building unity among the majority of people.

Recent developments in social psychology have investigated the processes underlying group action. It seems that the existence of a goal that cannot be achieved individually, but only co-operatively, is not even necessary for social cohesion (and thus mass action); simply the awareness of *shared category membership* is enough. Although research has principally focussed on small, nominal groups in laboratory settings, 'self-categorisation' and 'social identity' theories have also

been used to explain action on a wider scale, such as the Black Power movement in the USA.

Social categorisation: a general phenomenon

If it is assumed that our mental representations of ourselves take the form of categorisations, then categorisations will always be with us. In this case, even if the label 'working class' is dropped there will be other ways of enabling the majority to see their aims as shared and thus to encourage mass activity against capitalism and the state. Self-categorisations exist on many different levels; the most superordinate (for our species) is 'human being', the most subordinate is anything you regard as idiosyncratic about yourself. Given a self-classification or self-category existing in the head as a latent entity, a person can act more in terms of this *social* identity than the (more idiosyncratic) *personal* identity, depending on the situation and the relative importance to the person of that self-classification (ie accessibility). The category needn't be an explicit verbal label, though this certainly helps when communicating in words. If it is verbal, it can be as simple as 'us' and 'them'. By highlighting the difficulty for most people of becoming owners and controllers of capital and state, we are already creating a distinction between 'them' and 'us', which in turn can lead to increased ingroup solidarity, and a need to redress a perceived imbalance among valued dimensions (ie the political and the economic).

Conclusion

The concept of working class is useful to the vast majority *contingent upon* there being a good 'fit' between people's interpretation of the verbal label on the one hand, and their representation(s) of themselves on the other. Therefore I am not advocating the abandonment of the label 'working class', but I am suggesting that we don't need to rely on it exclusively. Clearly, there are many situations where it is invaluable in enhancing political consciousness; in many industrial conflicts, by raising their awareness of class membership, workers can see more clearly the intrinsic conflict of interests between them and the capitalist/employer class. In these cases, the label is useful partly because of its (historical) associations; but in other cases, the meanings associated with the term render it counterproductive.

If people for whom the self-category working class is important become introduced to a perspective that advocates the abolition of class,

capital and employment (ie anarchism) they may realise that others who share a common enemy with them are not to be regarded as counter-revolutionary simply because they personally reject the label 'working class'. Simply the recognition of a common aim, if it is important enough, is sufficient to facilitate a shared identity and thus strengthen our solidarity.

Although categorisations are always with us, there will be times when they are not salient. In such cases, Moscovici (1976) believes that the confidence, consistency and style of negotiation of the person advocating a minority view can bring about a fundamental attitude change in those s/he is addressing. But when social categorisations *are* relevant to the situation, Turner (1987) argues that social influence is most likely when one disagrees with someone with whom one expects to agree. One expects to agree with them because one categorises oneself with them on the relevant issue. So, for example, if two Yorkshire miners are talking politics and one begins espousing anarchism, this is more likely to make the other think about anarchism much more seriously than if the anarchist was categorised in advance as dissimilar along the relevant dimension.

Sociologists continue to provide evidence that class remains an important explanatory tool, though its salience appears to have declined since the war. I contend that we should continue to use it in analysis, propaganda and practice wherever it is useful, but that where it is not seen as relevant to people who are oppressed and exploited (who should thus be receptive to anarchism), we must use other ways of creating a superordinate social category to unite against the state and capitalism.

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Colin Ward

George Barrett's Answers

One of the first, and best, anarchist pamphlets I ever read was George Barrett's *Objections to anarchism*. It was published by Freedom Press in 1921, but was probably written in 1912. By the time I bought it at the anarchist bookshop in George Street, Glasgow in 1943 its price had been rubber-stamped down from fourpence to twopence. It was a marvellous two-pennyworth. I always assumed that Barrett had been one of that remarkable bunch of outdoor Glasgow anarchist orators. Not until I read S. E. Parker's collection of Barrett's writings *The First Person*, published by Freedom Press in 1963, did I learn that he was, if anything, their instigator. Sid Parker has kindly provided some corrections and additions to his biographical note for this reprint.

Any anarchist who has sought to be a propagandist will feel an instant sympathy with Barrett's introduction in which he reflects on the impression on him of 'a few years of rough and tumble of propaganda in the anarchist movement'. This seems to have been written during the First World War, to judge from its comments on Lloyd George's plans for 'socialisation' and for compulsory military service, and added to his careful answers to questions that 'persistently and cheerfully' come rolling up to the platform. His greatest scorn is not for defenders of the traditional status quo, but for the socialist who objects to the socialistic measures of capitalist governments, simply because 'they have not been introduced by his party'.

The objections raised by the unconvinced are not necessarily the ones that seem important to the platform propagandist, but there is one old chestnut that begins his collection of answers. 'What will you do with the man who will not work?' He uses John Stuart Mill's comment on this question. Barrett died young. If he had lived for the usual span he would have seen his point of view confirmed by the elderly Liberal, Sir William Beveridge in the war-time report that, with the support of all parties, laid the foundations of the post-war welfare state. Beveridge insisted that society *had to* provide a subsistence income for those 'disqualified for unconditional unemployment benefit through refusal of suitable employment'. The issue is a non-issue. Or was until the 1980s.

But the questions answered by Barrett raise real and less easily

dismissed topics: problems of planning and transport. They may not loom large to the propagandist, but they do for his sceptical audience.

This is where Barrett emerges as a very interesting anarchist social thinker. Just take his Objection No 12. 'Suppose one district wants to construct a railway to pass through a neighbouring community, which opposes it. How would you settle this?'

He has several answers. The first is that 'if you have a country in which there are various communes, it stands to reason that the people in these communes will want facilities for travelling, and for receiving and sending their goods. That will not be much more true of one little community than of another. This, then, not only implies a local railway, but a continuous railway running from one end of the country to the other.' If this argument does not exist, he claims, it is a childish question, objecting not to anarchism, but to human society itself.

Now here is an instance where we can test his arguments with the history of what actually happened. In Britain private speculators built the railways, with the support of big landowners. The eventual result was that all the lines lead to London and a second grade service with second grade rolling stock serves what remains of local and cross-country traffic. In Switzerland, a decentralised, though not at all anarchist society, a social trend arose in the 19th century called the Democratic Railway Movement, which insisted that if the railway went anywhere, it should include *us*, no matter what tunnels and viaducts that implied. If accessibility is a boon we should all share it. Contrast the situation at the end of the 20th Century. The geographer Peter Hall (in *The Planner* for 7th September 1990) describes the TGV Atlantique, *le premier train du Monde* between Paris and Le Mans which 'runs at a sustained speed of 188 miles an hour, considerably faster than a jet plane at take-off' and is 'powered by four huge electric locomotives'.

And does it benefit any of the communities in between? It was not at all surprising to read (in *The Guardian*, 6th August 1990) of local protests against another French high speed train, cutting the journey-time from Paris to Marseille to only three hours, but regarded by the communities in between as 'an environmental disaster'. It was reported that three stations on the line south of Avignon were blocked by 1,000 demonstrators before riot police moved in to disperse them. The demonstrators were not objecting to human society itself, they were protesting against what they perceived as the destruction of *their* environment by a proposal whose benefits were not for them but for metropolitan businessmen and holiday-makers. Another example of the same phenomenon is the Swiss refusal to allow into the Swiss Confederation the juggernaut lorries approved by the European

Community against the wishes of the inhabitants of any particular place.

My hope is that readers will examine each of Barrett's answers, testing them against contemporary facts. Kropotkin argued that there have been two contrary traditions all through history: authoritarian and libertarian, and we can extrapolate from this the idea that according to the kind of solutions chosen, we can, in theory at least, classify societies according to the degree of anarchy they cherish or tolerate. Compare, for example, penal policy (to focus on another of Barrett's answers) in two similar countries, Britain and the Netherlands. Why does one of them reveal a quite different degree of tolerance of deviation from social norms? The answer can only be because the advocates of libertarian solutions have been more influential in one of them than in the other. This is why Barrett claims that we should recognise that the term *revolution* does not replace the term *evolution*, but accompanies it.

Barrett was a propagandist who took his anarchism seriously, not just rhetorically, and discussed real issues realistically. We could go through his answers to all those questions that kept, as he says, tumbling merrily up to the platform, and point to the modern evidence that supports, or modifies, the way he treated them. There aren't any absolute answers. But neither capitalist nor socialist governments have successfully grappled with them. It's a refreshing change to listen to the way this sensitive and intelligent anarchist tackled them more than three quarters of a century ago. Could you and I do any better? And if we could, why don't we?

S. E. Parker

George Barrett – a biographical note

*While living in Bristol from 1960 to 1962 my wife and I became friendly with Edie Ballard, the widow of George Barrett, and her sister-in-law Nell Oxley, the radio actress. We several times enjoyed their hospitality at the council house they rented in the suburb of Westbury on Trym, on occasion having tea in the charming garden they kept despite their advanced ages. It was there that one day Edie expressed the hope that a memorial volume of her husband's writings could be published and I agreed to compile it. This was published in 1963 under the title of *The First Person*. To my great regret*

Edie died before it appeared, although she had lived long enough to approve of my biographical introduction, for which she supplied most of the information, and the selection of Barrett's writings that I had made.

* * *

George Barrett was born George Powell Ballard — 'Barrett' was a *nom de guerre* — on 6th December, 1888, at Ledbury in Herefordshire. His family was well-known in the district — his father being, in the words of a local paper, 'a master genius in many bypaths of mechanical handicraft'. Tom Ballard, one of his uncles, was an artist and a friend of Samuel Butler. His paternal grandfather was also an artist, as was his brother Jack.

After finishing his education at the Cathedral High School, Hereford, Barrett became an engineering draughtsman. He was also a journalist, a poet and an outstanding orator. In him the artistic and mechanical talents of the Ballard family found a synthesis.

Bristol was the scene of his first propagandist activities. He joined the Bristol Socialist Society, but his opposition parliamentary tactics led to his resignation and he became an anarchist. It was in Bristol that he met and married the daughter of a leading local socialist, Edith Oxley, who was his staunch helpmate until he died.

London was his next port of call. He joined the Walthamstow Anarchist Group and made his *début* as an anarchist speaker. 'Barrett's energy was tremendous', wrote the late Mat Kavanagh. 'He spoke almost every night in the week, and would often cycle 20 miles each way to address a meeting, and that after a day's work.'

It was in Glasgow, however, that his most active period was spent. He began to speak at various open-air pitches with such success that he soon inspired a vigorous movement. John Paton, later a Labour MP, devotes a chapter of his book, *Proletarian Pilgrimage*, to the time when he was a member of the Glasgow Anarchist Group shortly before World War I. In it he describes his meeting with George Barrett and it is worth quoting from his account at length for the vivid picture he gives of Barrett at the height of his powers:

The break with the ILP [Independent Labour Party] left me at a loose end. The incessant round of various activity had become a habit. I sought relief from my boredom in my books and studies, but the itch to be doing something was a constant torment. The propaganda meeting drew me, but constantly drove me away as I became conscious that I was now an outsider. A demon of restlessness possessed me.

It was in this mood that one evening I saw an unfamiliar figure mounted on a

box at one of the speaking pitches. I made one of the half-dozen people listening to him. He was engaged in a familiar denunciation of capitalism and a glance at the pamphlets spread on the street told me he was an anarchist.

I studied him with a new interest. There had been no anarchist propaganda in Glasgow for many years, although at one time there had been an active group. The speaker was a tall, good-looking Englishman, extremely eloquent and able, whose speech betrayed his middle-class origin. The passionate conviction with which he spoke was extraordinarily impressive; he was undoubtedly an unusual personality; the crowd about swelled in numbers. As the speech developed, my interest quickened with excitement; he progressed from the usual attack on capitalism to a scathing indictment of politicians and particularly the leaders of the Labour Party: here was, at last, being shouted at the street corner, all the criticisms which had become common in the 'left-wing' of the ILP, but which we'd keep discreetly for party discussion. My heart rejoiced. But it was much more than a mere attack on personalities; it was a powerful analysis of the causes that produced them. When he proceeded to an equally drastic treatment of the place of religion in the enslavement of the people, his conquest of me was complete. Here, again, it was no mere rehash of the stale gibes at the Bible and the priests which formed the staple of most of the secularist speakers, and which usually bored me to death, but an able survey of the origins and development of religious belief.

It was an outstanding performance in its power and persuasiveness; it had no loose ends. He spoke for over two hours and ended completely exhausted. Much of what he said must have been over the heads of many who listened, but his deep sincerity and attractive personality held them and his audience had grown to several hundreds before the end.

At the beginning of 1911 the Houndsditch Affair — better known as the 'Siege of Sidney Street' — made anarchism headline news. Whether the burglars who shot it out with the police and military had any connection with the anarchist movement is extremely doubtful, but the fact that some of them knew anarchists was enough for the authorities and the popular press to shriek of an 'anarchist plot'. And 'anarchists' they have remained in that peculiar farrago of lies and legend that passes for history among the crowd and its manipulators.

As a result of this affair an outcry was raised against the anarchists and detectives paid a visit to the firm where Barrett worked. He was instantly sacked, although his employers had been on friendly terms with him and had no complaints about his ability. Not only this, but the police blacklisted him with other employers so that he was unable to get another job in Glasgow. From then on he earned a living by writing articles for the engineering press.

May Day, 1912, saw the publication of the first number of *The Anarchist*, a weekly paper edited by George Barrett, which lasted for 34 issues. George Davison, a wealthy comrade, gave some initial help, but Barrett was anxious that the paper should be supported by the general

anarchist movement and kept from Davison the struggle needed to keep it going. His wife recalled that:

George was working at very high pressure, writing articles and doing all the work of editing, and often, in addition, doing many odd jobs — getting the paper rolled off, folding, packing and even rushing to the post, for one or two members of the group got tired, so for weeks the strain was tremendous. They were anxious days, and yet thrilling too. Fortunately, a sense of humour pulled us through many a time, even when things went into pawn to pay the 'comps' wages.

As well as writing and editing, Barrett also made several lecture tours throughout England and Scotland, often speaking where anarchist ideas had not been heard of before.

But this intense activity could not last. Barrett caught a chill while speaking at an open-air meeting in May, 1913, and the last years of his life were spent in a long and unavailing fight against acute tuberculosis.

In spite of his illness he did not become inactive. When World War I broke out he wrote a pamphlet called *The Last War* which was published by the Bristol Workers' Freedom Group. This sold some 10,000 copies before being suppressed by the government. He was a signatory to the international manifesto published by the anti-war section of the anarchist movement as a reply to the pro-war stand of Kropotkin and others. He began a book on 'Law and Liberty', and wrote such essays as 'Substance and Shadow' and 'The First Person'. (After his death Freedom Press published two more pamphlets from his pen: *The Anarchist Resolution* and *Objections to Anarchism*.)

When he was too weak to write, he dictated his thoughts to his friends.

He died in Torquay on 7th January, 1917. He was twenty-nine years old.

George Barrett

Objections to Anarchism

Introduction

A few years of rough and tumble of propaganda in the anarchist movement leaves a strange impression of crowds on the speaker's mind. His answers to questions and opposition form much the most satisfactory part of his work after he has sufficient experience to be able to deal with them adequately, and it is just from them he gets to understand his crowd. One of the strangest things that experience at such work reveals is the similarity of the crowd's mind (if one may use such an expression) wherever it may be found.

Let the speaker choose his pitch in the middle of London, or let him go to the strange mining villages north of the Forth, and in both cases he will get the same questions in almost the same words. If he is able to understand his crowd, he will find it suffering from the same difficulties, and making the same weary and half-hearted struggle to break the bonds of the old superstitions that still bind it. It is passing strange that amid the theatres, the picture galleries, and museums of London — so suggestive of the fullness and richness of life; among the great engineering works and structures of Manchester and the Clyde, which speak so eloquently of the power man has of producing wealth; in the midst of the fruitful valleys of England, or among the vast Scotch mountains — it matters not where — there is the same lack of vision, the same sad, kind-hearted men willing to hear the new gospel, but alas! the same despair. This hopelessness on the faces of men who are all-powerful is the most exasperating and the most tragic thing in all human existence. 'Your strength lies no nearer and no further off than your own limbs. The world grows rich by your strength, no more surely than you grow poor by the same power. It were easier for you to make yourselves great than to make others so while you bring misery on yourselves.' Such is the message of the revolutionist, and the mute answer might be expressed in the tragic words of Goethe:

Hush! Leave us where we are, resigned,
Wake not ambitious longings in the mind,
Born of the night, akin with night alone,
Scarce to ourselves, and to none others known.

But I write so far of crowds, and crowds after all do not count. He who speaks merely to his crowd will become an orator, a success, and probably a Member of Parliament; but he who sees in each face confronting him a potential individual will have an experience so dear to him as it is painful. He will never grow to the size of an MP. He will not set out to teach the ignorant people, for they will teach him. Above all, he will not sacrifice his pleasure for the movement, for in it he will find all the meaning of his life, and with the unshakeable confidence of the great Titan he will say: 'I know but this, that it must come'. But I fear I grow too sensible, and must apologise to my reader for thus wasting his time.

The questions which I have set myself to answer are not arranged to give an exhibition of skill in dealing with them. Everyone of them is an old friend. They have turned up persistently and cheerfully in all sorts of halls, and at any street corner. Be they crushed with the greatest severity, they, boldly and serenely, come tumbling up to the platform on the very next occasion, until one comes to know them, and to love them for their very stupidity — for there is no denying that some of them are stupid in the extreme.

It is strange indeed to wonder how some of these questions have been born; who originated them, and why they have become so widespread.

Thus, for example, No.2 (which implies that the House of Commons can be used to obtain our ends because it has been successfully used by the capitalists to obtain theirs) is a question as common as any, and is, as its nature implies, usually put by a Parliamentary Socialist. Now, is it not a strange problem whence this question can have come, and why it should be so persistent? It is surely certain that the man who originated it must have had intelligence enough to see that the thing is absurd on the face of it. I am perfectly sure that the men who generally ask it would be quite capable of thinking out the answer to it if they devoted two minutes to the attempt. Yet that question has been created by someone, and either re-created or repeated endlessly throughout the whole country. It forms a good example of the blindness with which people fight for their political party. This party blindness and deafness (a pity it were not dumbness also) is one of the greatest difficulties to overcome. Against it our weapons are useless. Let our arguments be of the boldest or most subtle type, they can make no headway against him whose faith is in his party.

This is indeed a subject fit for the introduction to not merely a little pamphlet, but to the whole world's literature, for it is difficult to realise how many books are sealed, how many libraries are closed to that great crowd who remain loyal to their party, and consequently regardless of the truth. If it is necessary to take an example we may always find one

near at hand. The Socialist politicians are as good as any. For years their energies have been expended in advocating State control and guardianship in all things. To-day we have Old Age Pensions, Insurance Acts, and Mr Lloyd George's plans for 'Socialisation', as he terms it, ie government control of the munition works, and some prospect of compulsory military service; but though these things work towards the universal State, the average party Socialist quarrels with them all — and why?

They are not perfect from his point of view, it may be admitted; but who can deny that they are steps in the direction he has been advocating? Why then does he not hail them with delight? They have not been introduced by his party.

For such men the arguments in this little book are not written. They lie under a heavy curse, which no wit of mine can lessen. Their lives in their own small way are like that of Ibsen's Emperor Julian, and with him, on the eve of battle, they cry with their petty voices: 'I must call upon something without and above me . . . I will sacrifice to this god and to that. I will sacrifice to many. One or the other must surely hear me.'

Our advanced men have ceased to pray and sacrifice to the gods in the hour of need, but still at every little difficulty they feel the necessity of some power outside themselves. Almost every objection given here is prompted by this modern form of superstition, and almost every answer may be put in the words of the philosopher Maximus, who tries in vain to stimulate self-reliance in his friend Julian: 'To what gods, oh fool? Where are they . . . and what are they? . . . I believe in you.'

1. What will you do with the man who will not work?

First of all, let us notice that this question belongs to a class to which many others belong. All social theories must obviously be based on the assumption that men are social: that is, that they will live and work together naturally, because by so doing they can individually better enjoy their lives. Therefore all such difficulties, which are really based on the supposition that men are not social, can be raised not against anarchism alone, but against any system of society that one chooses to suggest.

Questions 11, 12, 13 and 15 belong to this class, which are merely based on supposition. My opponents will realise how futile they are if I use a similar kind of argument against their system of government. Suppose, I argue, that having sent your representatives into the House of Commons they will not sit down and legislate, but that they will iust

play the fool, or, perhaps, vote themselves comfortable incomes, instead of looking after your welfare. It will be answered to this that they are sent there to legislate, and that in all human probability they will do so. Quite so; but we may still say 'Yes, but suppose they don't?' and whatever arguments are brought forward in favour of government they can always, by simply *supposing*, be rendered quite useless, since those who oppose us would never be able to actually guarantee that our governors would govern. Such an argument would be absurd, it is quite true; for though it may happen that occasionally legislators will sit down and vote themselves incomes instead of attending to the affairs of the nation, yet we could not use this as a logical argument against the government system.

Similarly, when we are putting forward our ideas of free co-operation of anarchism, it is not good enough to argue, 'Yes, but suppose your co-operators will not co-operate?' for that is what questions of this class amount to.

It is because we claim to be able to show that it is wrong in principle that we, as anarchists, are against government. In the same way, then, those who oppose anarchism ought not to do so by simply supposing that a man will do this, or won't do that, but they ought to set themselves to show that anarchism is in principle opposed to the welfare of mankind.

The second interesting point to notice about the question is that it is generally asked by a Socialist. Behind the question there is obviously the implication that he who asks it has in his mind some way of forcing men to work. Now the most obvious of all those who will not work is the man who is on strike, and if you have a method of dealing with the man who will not work it simply means that you are going to organise a system of society where the government will be so all-powerful that the rebel and the striker will be completely crushed out. You will have a government class dictating to a working class the conditions under which it must labour, which is exactly what both anarchists and Socialists are supposed to be struggling against to-day.

In a free society the man who will not work, if he should exist at all, is at least brought on equal terms with the man who will. He is not placed in a position of privilege so that he need not work, but on the contrary the argument which is so often used against anarchism comes very neatly into play here in its favour. It is often urged that it is necessary to organise in order to live. Quite so, and for this reason the struggle for life compels us to organise, and there is no need for any further compulsion on the part of the government. Since to organise in society is really to work in society, it is the law of life which constantly tends to make men work, whilst it is the artificial laws of privilege which put

men in such a position that they need not work. Anarchism would do away with these artificial laws, and thus it is the only system which constantly tends to eliminate the man who will not work.

We might perhaps here quote John Stuart Mill's answer to this objection:

The objection ordinarily made to a system of community of property and equal distribution of produce — 'that each person would be incessantly occupied in evading his share of the work' — is, I think, in general, considerably overstated . . . Neither in a rude nor in a civilised society has the *supposed difficulty* been experienced. In no community has idleness ever been a cause of failure.¹

2. The House of Commons and the Law have been used by the present dominant class to gain their ends; why cannot they be used by us to gain ours?

This question is based on an extraordinary misunderstanding. It seems to be taken for granted that Capitalism and the workers' movement both have the same end in view. If this were so, they might perhaps use the same means; but as the capitalist is out to perfect his system of exploitation and government, whilst the worker is out for emancipation and liberty, naturally the same means cannot be employed for both purposes. This surely answers the question sufficiently so far as it is a definite question. In so far, however, as it contains the vague suggestion that government is the agent of reform, progress, and revolution, it touches the very point upon which anarchists differ from all political parties. It is worth while, then, to examine the suggestion a little more closely.

It is thought by the enthusiastic politicians that once they can capture government, then from their position of power they would be able very quickly to mould society into the desired shape. Pass ideal laws, they think, and the ideal society would be the result. How simple, is it not? We should thus get the Revolution on the terms promised us by the wonderful Blatchford — 'without bloodshed, and without losing a day's work'. But, alas! the short cut to the Golden Age is an illusion. In the first place, any form of society shaped by law is not ideal. In the second place, law cannot shape society; indeed, rather the reverse is true. It is this second point which is all-important. Those who understand the forces behind progress will see the law limping along in the rear, and never succeeding in keeping up with the progress made by the people; always, in fact, resisting any advance, always trying to start reaction, but in the long run always having to give way and allow more and more liberty. Even the champions of government recognise this when they want to make a drastic change, and then they throw aside the pretence of the law and turn to revolutionary methods. The present ruling class,

who are supposed to be a living proof that the Government can do anything, are in themselves quite candid in the admission that it can do very little. Whoever will study their rise to power will find that to get there they preach in theory, and establish in fact, the principle of resistance to the law. Indeed, curious as it may seem, it is a fact that immediately after the Revolution it was declared seditious to preach against resistance to law, just as to-day it is seditious to speak in favour of it.

To sum up, then, if there was any logic in the question, which there is not, we might restate it thus: 'Since the present dominant class were unable to gain their ends by use of the House of Commons and the Law, why should we hope to gain ours by them?'

3. All change is slow by Evolution, and not sudden, as the anarchists wish to make it by Revolution.

It is quite true that every great change is slowly prepared by a process of evolution almost imperceptible. Sometimes changes are carried right through from beginning to end by this slow process, but on the other hand it is quite clear that very often evolution leads slowly up to a climax, and then there is a sudden change in the condition of things. This is so obvious that it seems scarcely worth while to elaborate the point. Almost anywhere in Nature we can see the double process: the plant which slowly, very slowly, ripens its germs of new life, quite suddenly exposes these to new conditions, and when they enter these new conditions they slowly begin to change again. An almost laughably good example of this, amongst many others, is furnished by a little fungus called the *pilo bolus*. This, which very slowly and innocently ripens its spores like any other ordinary little plant, will, when the moment comes, suddenly shoot out a jet of water in which the spores are carried, and which it throws to a distance of sometimes as much as three feet, although the plant itself is very small. Now it is perfectly true that in this case the necessary pressure is slowly evolved; it has taken long for all the conditions to imperceptibly ripen, and as the pressure has increased the cell wall has been giving way. There comes a time, however, when that wall can stretch no further — and then it has suddenly burst asunder, and the new germs of life have been thrown violently into their new conditions, and according to these new conditions so do they develop.

So it is with the conditions of society. There is always amongst the people the spirit of freedom slowly developing, and tyranny is slowly receding or stepping back to make room for this development. But there comes a time when the governmental or tyrannical part has not

enough elasticity to stretch so far as the pressure of Liberty, developing within, would make it. When this point is reached the pressure of the new development bursts the bonds that bind it, and a revolution takes place. In the actual case in point the change proposed is so radical that it would mean the entire extinction of the governmental element in society. It is certain, then, that it will not gently *stretch* itself to this point, especially as it shows us on every possible occasion that it is ready to use violence in its most brutal forms. For this reason most anarchists believe that the change will be sudden, and therefore we use the term 'revolution', recognising that it does not replace the term 'evolution', but accompanies it.

4. It is necessary to organise in order to live, and to organise means Government; therefore anarchism is impossible.

It is true that it is necessary to organise in order to live, and since we all wish to live we shall all of our own free will organise, and do not need the compulsion of government to make us do so. Organisation does not mean government. All through our ordinary daily work we are organising without government. If two of us lift a table from one side of the room to the other, we naturally take hold one at each end, and we need no government to tell us that we must not overbalance it by both rushing to the same end; the reason why we agree silently, and organise ourselves to the correct positions, is because we both have a common purpose: we both wish to see the table moved. In more complex organisations the same thing takes place. So long as organisations are held together only by a common purpose they will automatically do their work smoothly. But when, in spite of conflicting interests, you have people held together in a common organisation, internal conflict results, and some outside force becomes necessary to preserve order; you have, in fact, governmental society. It is the anarchist's purpose to so organise society that the conflict of interests will cease, and men will co-operate and work together simply because they have interests in common. In such a society the organisations or institutions which they will form will be exactly in accordance with their needs; in fact, it will be a representative society.

Free organisation is more fully discussed in answer to Questions 5 and 23.

5. How would you regulate the traffic?

We should not regulate it. It would be left to those whose business it was to concern themselves in the matter. It would pay those who use the roads (and therefore had, in the main, interests in common in the matter) to come together and discuss and make agreements as to the

rules of the road. Such rules in fact which at present exist have been established by custom and not by law, though the law may sometimes take it on itself to enforce them.

This question we see very practically answered to-day by the great motor clubs, which are entered voluntarily, and which study the interest of this portion of the traffic. At dangerous or busy corners a sentry is stationed who with a wave of the hand signals if the coast is clear, or if it is necessary to go slowly. First-aid boxes and repair shops are established all along the road, and arrangements are made for conveying home motorists whose cars are broken down.

A very different section of road users, the carters, have found an equally practical answer to the question. There are, even to-day, all kinds of understandings and agreements amongst these men as to which goes first, and as to the position each shall take up in the yards and buildings where they work. Amongst the cabmen and taxi-drivers the same written and unwritten agreements exist, which are as rigidly maintained by free understandings as they would be by the penalties of law.

Suppose now the influence of government were withdrawn from our drivers. Does anyone believe that the result would be chaos? Is it not infinitely more likely that the free agreements at present existing would extend to cover the whole necessary field? And those few useful duties now undertaken by the government in the matter: would they not be much more effectively carried out by free organisation among the drivers?

This question has been much more fully answered by Kropotkin in *The Conquest of Bread*. In this he shows how on the canals in Holland the traffic (so vital to the life of that nation) is controlled by free agreements, to the perfect satisfaction of all concerned. The railways of Europe, he points out, also, are brought into co-operation with one another and thus welded into one system, not by a centralised administration, but by agreements and counter-agreements between the various companies.

If free agreement is able to do so much even now, in a system of competition and government, how much more could it do when competition disappears, and when we trust to our own organisation instead of to that of a paternal government.

6. *If a man will not vote for the Revolution, how can you anarchists expect him to come out and fight for it?*

This question is very often asked, and that is the only excuse for

answering it. For my part, I find it generally enough to suggest to the questioner that though I find it very difficult to imagine myself voting for him, I do not find it half so unlikely that I might shoot him.

Really the objection entirely begs the question. Our argument is that to vote for a labour leader to have a seat in Parliament is *not* to vote for the Revolution. And it is because the people instinctively know that they will not get Liberty by such means that the parliamentarians are unable to awaken any enthusiasm.

7. If you abolish competition you abolish the incentive to work.

One of the strangest things about society to-day is that whilst we show a wonderful power to produce abundant wealth and luxury, we fail to bring forth the simplest necessities. Everyone, no matter what his political, religious or social opinions may be, will agree in this. It is too obvious to be disputed. On the one hand there are children without boots; on the other hand are the boot-makers crying out that they cannot sell their stock. On the one hand there are people starving or living upon unwholesome food, and on the other hand provision merchants complain of bad trade. Here are homeless men and women sleeping on the pavements and wandering nightly through our great cities, and here again are property-owners complaining that no one will come and live in their houses. And in all these cases production is held up because there is no demand. Is not this an intolerable state of affairs? What now shall we say about the incentive to work? Is it not obvious that the present incentive is wrong and mischievous up to the point of starvation and ruination. That which induces us to produce silks and diamonds and dreadnoughts and toy pomeranians, whilst bread and boots and houses are needed, is wholly and absolutely wrong.

To-day the scramble is to compete for the greatest profits. If there is more profit to be made in satisfying my lady's passing whim than there is in feeding hungry children, then competition brings us in feverish haste to supply the former, whilst cold charity or the poor law can supply the latter, or leave it unsupplied, just as it feels disposed. That is how it works out. This is the reason: the producer and the consumer are the two essentials; a constant flow of wealth passes from one to the other, but between them stands the profit-maker and his competition system, and he is able to divert that stream into what channel best pleases him. Sweep him away and the producer and the consumer are brought into direct relationship with one another. When he and his competitive system are gone there will still remain the only useful incentive to work, and that will be the needs of the people. The need for

the common necessities and the highest luxuries of life will be not only fundamental as it is to-day, but the direct motive power behind all production and distribution. It is obvious, I think, that this is the ideal to be aimed at, for it is only in such circumstances that production and distribution will be carried on for its legitimate purpose — to satisfy the needs of the people; and for no other reason.

8. Socialism or Social Democracy must come first; then we may get anarchism. First, then, work for Social Democracy.

This is one of those oft-repeated statements which apparently have no argument or meaning behind them. The modern Socialist, or at least the Social Democrats, have steadily worked for centralisation, and complete and perfect organisation and control by those in authority above the people. The anarchist, on the other hand, believes in the abolition of that central power, and expects the free society to grow into existence from below, starting with those organisations and free agreements among the people themselves. It is difficult to see how, by making a central power control everything, we can be making a step towards the abolition of that power.

9. Under anarchism the country would be invaded by a foreign enemy.

At present the country is held by that which we consider to be an enemy — the landlord and capitalist class. If we are able to free ourselves from this, which is well established and at home on the land, surely we should be able to make shift against a foreign invading force of men, who are fighting, not for their own country, but for their weekly wage.

It must be remembered, too, that anarchism is an international movement, and if we do establish a revolution in this country, in other countries the people would have become at least sufficiently rebellious for their master class to consider it advisable to keep their armies at home.

10. We are all dependent upon one another, and cannot live isolated lives. Absolute freedom, therefore, is impossible.

Enough has been said already to show that we do not believe people would live isolated lives in a free society. To get the full meaning out of

life we must co-operate, and to co-operate we must make agreements with our fellow-men. But to suppose that such agreements mean a limitation of freedom is surely an absurdity; on the contrary, they are the exercise of our freedom.

If we are going to invent a dogma that to make agreements is to damage freedom, then at once freedom becomes tyrannical, for it forbids men to take the most ordinary everyday pleasures. For example, I cannot go for a walk with my friend because it is against the principle of Liberty that I should agree to be at a certain place at a certain time to meet him. I cannot in the least extend my own power beyond myself, because to do so I must co-operate with someone else, and co-operation implies an agreement, and that is against Liberty. It will be seen at once that this argument is absurd. I do not limit my liberty, but simply exercise it, when I agree with my friend to go for a walk.

If, on the other hand, I decide from my superior knowledge that it is good for my friend to take exercise, and therefore I attempt to compel him to go for a walk, then I begin to limit freedom. This is the difference between free agreement and government.

11. If two people want the same piece of land under anarchism, how will you settle the dispute?

First of all, it is well to notice here that Questions 11, 12 and 13 all belong to the same class. No. 11, at least, is based upon a fallacy. If there are two persons who want the exclusive right to the same thing, it is quite obvious that there is no satisfactory solution to the problem. It does not matter in the least what system of society you suggest, you cannot possibly satisfy that position. It is exactly as if I were suggesting a new system of mathematics, and someone asked me: 'Yes, but under this new system suppose you want to make ten go into one hundred eleven times?' The truth is that if you do a problem by arithmetic, or if you do it by algebra, or trigonometry, or by any other method, the same answer must be produced for the given problem; and just as you cannot make ten go into one hundred more than ten times, so you cannot make more than one person have the exclusive right to one thing. If two people want it, then at least one must remain in want, whatever may be the form of society in which they are living. Therefore, to begin with, we see that there cannot be a satisfactory way of settling this trouble, for the objection has been raised by simply supposing an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

All that we can say is that such disputes are very much better settled

without the interference of authority. If the two were reasonable, they would probably mutually agree to allow their dispute to be settled by some mutual friend whose judgement they could trust. But if instead of taking this sane course they decide to set up a fixed authority, disaster will be the inevitable result. In the first place, this authority will have to be given power wherewith to enforce its judgement in such matters. What will then take place? The answer is quite simple. Feeling it is a superior force, it will naturally in each case take to itself the best of what is disputed, and allot the rest to its friends.

What a strange question is this. It supposes that two people who meet on terms of equality and disagree could not be reasonable or just. But, on the other hand, it supposes that a third party, starting with an unfair advantage, and backed up by violence, will be the incarnation of justice itself. Commonsense should certainly warn us against such a supposition, and if we are lacking in this commodity, then we may learn the lesson by turning to the facts of life. There we see everywhere Authority standing by, and in the name of justice and fair play using its organised violence in order to take the lion's share of the world's wealth for the governmental class.

We can only say, then, in answer to such a question, that if people are going to be quarrelsome and constantly disagree, then, of course, no state of society will suit them, for they are unsocial animals. If they are only occasionally so, then each case must stand on its merits and be settled by those concerned.

12. Suppose one district wants to construct a railway to pass through a neighbouring community, which opposes it. How would you settle this?

It is curious that this question is not only asked by those who support the present system, but it is also frequently put by the Socialists. Yet surely it implies at once the aggressive spirit of Capitalism, for is it not the capitalist who talks of opening up the various countries of the world, and does he not do this in the very first instance by having a war in order that he may run his railways through, in spite of the local opposition by the natives? Now, if you have a country in which there are various communes, it stands to reason that the people in those communes will want facilities for travelling, and for receiving and sending their goods. That will not be much more true of one little community than of another. This, then, not only implies a local railway, but a continuous railway running from one end of the country to the other. If a certain district, then, is going to object to have such a

valuable asset given to it, it will surely be that there is some reason for such an objection. That being so, would it not be folly to have an authority to force that community to submit to the railway passing through?

If this reason does not exist, we are simply supposing a society of unreasonable people and asking how they should co-operate together. The truth is that they could not co-operate together, and it is quite useless to look for any state of society which will suit such a people. The objection, therefore, need not be raised against anarchism, but against society itself. What would a government society propose to do? Would it start a civil war over the matter? Would it build a prison large enough to enclose this community, and imprison all the people for resisting the law? In fact, what power has any authority to deal with the matter which the anarchists have not got?

The question is childish. It is simply based on the supposition that people are unreasonable, and if such suppositions are allowed to pass as arguments, then any proposed state of society may be easily argued out of existence. I must repeat that many of these questions are of this type, and a reader with a due sense of logic will be able to see how worthless they are, and will not need to read the particular answers I have given to them.

13. Suppose your free people want to build a bridge across a river, but they disagree as to position. How will you settle it?

To begin with, it is obvious, but important, to notice that it is not *I*, but *they*, who would settle it. The way it would work out, I imagine, is something like this:

We will call the two groups who differ A and B. Then —

- 1 A may be of opinion that the B scheme would be utterly useless to it, and that the only possible position for the bridge is where it has suggested. In which case it will say: 'Help our scheme, or don't co-operate at all.'
- 2 A may be of opinion that the B scheme is useless, but, recognising the value of B's help, it may be willing to budge a few yards, and so effect a compromise with B.
- 3 A, finding it can get no help from B unless it gives way altogether, may do so, believing that the help thus obtained is worth more than the sacrifice of position.

These are, I think, the three courses open to A. The same three are open to B. I will leave it to the reader to combine the two, and I think he will find the result will be either:

-
- 1 That the bridge is built in the A position, with, we will say, the half-hearted support of B;
or
 - 2 The same thing, but with letters A and B reversed;
or
 - 3 The bridge is built somewhere between, with the partial support of both parties;
or
 - 4 Each party pursues its own course, independent of the other.

In any case it will be seen, I hope, that the final structure will be *representative*, and that, on the other hand, if one party was able to force the other to pay for what it did not want, the result would not be representative or just.

The usefulness of this somewhat dreary argument will be seen if it be applied not merely to bridge-building but to all the activities of life. By so doing we are able to imagine growing into existence a state of society where groups of people work together so far as they agree, and work separately when they do not. The institutions they construct will be in accord with their wishes and needs. It will indeed be representative. How different is this from the politician's view of things, who always wants to force the people to co-operate in running his idea of society!

14. What would you do with the criminal?

There is an important question which should come before this, but which our opponents never seem to care to ask. First of all, we have to decide who are the criminals, or rather, even before this, we have to come to an understanding as to who is to decide who are the criminals? To-day the rich man says to the poor man: 'If we were not here as your guardians you would be beset by robbers who would take away from you all your possessions.' But the rich man has all the wealth and luxury that the poor man has produced, and whilst he claims to have protected the people from robbery he has secured for himself the lion's share in the name of the law. Surely then it becomes a question for the poor man which he has occasion to dread most — the robber, who is very unlikely to take anything from him, or the law, which allows the rich man to take all the best of that which is manufactured.

To the majority of people the criminals in society are not to be very much dreaded even to-day, for they are for the most part people who are at war with those who own the land and have captured all the means of life. In a free society, where no such ownership existed, and where all that is necessary could be obtained by all that have any need, the

criminal will always tend to die out. To-day, under our present system, he is always tending to become more numerous.

15. It is necessary for every great town to have a drainage. Suppose someone refuses to connect up, what would you do with him?

This objection is another of the 'supposition' class, all of which have really been answered in dealing with question No. 1. It is based on the unsocial man, whereas all systems of society must be organised for social people. The truth, of course, is that in a free society the experts on sanitation would get together and organise our drainage system, and the people who lived in the district would be only too glad to find these convenient arrangements made for them. But still it is possible to suppose that somebody will not agree to this; what then will you do with him? What do our government friends suggest?

The only thing that they can do which in our anarchist society we would not do, is to put him in prison, for we can use all the arguments to persuade him that they can. How much would the town gain by doing this? Here is a description of an up-to-date prison cell into which he might be thrown:

I slept in one of the ordinary cells, which have sliding panes, leaving at the best two openings about six inches square. The windows are set in the wall high up, and are 3 by 1½ or 2 feet area. Added to this they are very dirty, so that the light in the cell is always dim. After the prisoner has been locked in the cell all night the air is unbearable, and its unhealthiness is increased by damp.

The 'convenience' supplied in the cell is totally inadequate, and even if it be of a proper size and does not leak, the fact that it remains unemptied from evening till morning is, in case of illness especially, very insanitary and dangerous to health. 'Lavatory time' is permitted only at a fixed hour twice a day, only one water-closet being provided for twenty-three cells.²

Thus we see that whilst we are going to guarantee this man being cleanly by means of violence, we have no guarantee that the very violence itself which we use will not be filthy.

But there is another way of looking at this question. Mr Charles Mayl, MB (Bachelor of Medicine) of New College, Oxford, after an outbreak of typhoid fever, was asked to examine the drainage of Windsor; he stated that:

In a previous visitation of typhoid fever the poorest and lowest parts of the town had entirely escaped, whilst the epidemic had been very fatal in good houses. The difference was that whilst the better houses were all connected with sewers, the poor part of the town had not drains, but made use of cesspools in the gardens. And this is by no means an isolated instance.

It would not be out of place to quote Herbert Spencer here:

One part of our Sanitary Administration having insisted upon a drainage system by which Oxford, Reading, Maidenhead, Windsor, etc, pollute the water which Londoners have to drink, another part of our Sanitary Administration makes loud protests against the impurity of water which he charges with causing diseases — not remarking, however, that law-enforced arrangements have produced the impurity.

We begin to see therefore that the man who objected to connecting his house with the drains would probably be a man who is interested in the subject, and who knows something about sanitation. It would be of the utmost importance that he should be listened to and his objections removed, instead of shutting him up in an unhealthy prison. The fact is, the rebel is here just as important as he is in other matters, and he can only profitably be eliminated by giving him satisfaction, not by trying to crush him out.

As the man of the drains has only been taken as an example by our objector, it would be interesting here to quote a similar case where the regulations for stamping out cattle diseases were objected to by someone who was importing cattle. In a letter to the *Times*, signed 'Landowner', dated 2nd August, 1872, the writer tells how he bought 'ten fine young steers, perfectly free from any symptom of disease, and passed sound by the inspector of foreign stock'. Soon after their arrival in England they were attacked by foot and mouth disease. On inquiry he found that foreign stock, however healthy, 'mostly all go down with it after the passage'. The government regulations for stamping out this disease were that the stock should be driven from the steamer into the pens for a limited number of hours. There seems therefore very little doubt that it was in this quarantine that the healthy animals contracted the disease and spread it among the English cattle.³

Every new drove of cattle is kept for hours in an infected pen. Unless the successive droves have been all healthy (which the very institution of the quarantine implies that they have not been) some of them have left in the pen disease matter from their mouths and feet. Even if disinfectants are used after each occupation, the risk is great — the disinfectant is almost certain to be inadequate. Nay, even if the pen is adequately disinfected every time, yet if there is not also a complete disinfection of the landing appliances, the landing-stage and the track to the pen, the disease will be communicated . . . The quarantine regulations . . . might properly be called 'regulations for the better diffusion of cattle diseases'.

Would our objector to anarchism suggest that the man who refuses to put his cattle in these pens should be sent to prison?

16. Even if you could overthrow the government to-morrow and establish anarchism, the same system would soon grow up again.

This objection is quite true, except that we do not propose to overthrow the government to-morrow. If I (or we as a group of anarchists) came to the conclusion that I was to be the liberator of humanity, and if by some means I could manage to blow up the King, the Houses of Lords and Commons, the police force, and, in a word, all persons and institutions which make up the government — if I were successful in all this, and expected to see the people enjoying freedom ever afterwards as a result, then, no doubt, I should find myself greatly mistaken.

The chief results of my action would be to arouse an immense indignation on the part of the majority of the people, and a re-organisation by them of all the forces of government.

The reason why this method would fail is very easy to understand. It is because the strength of the government rests not with itself, but with the people. A great tyrant may be a fool, and not a superman. His strength lies not in himself, but in the superstition of the people who think that it is right to obey him. So long as that superstition exists it is useless for some liberator to cut off the head of tyranny; the people will create another, for they have grown accustomed to rely on something outside themselves.

Suppose, however, that the people develop, and become strong in their love of liberty, and self-reliant, then the foremost of its rebels will overthrow tyranny, and backed by the general sentiment of their age their action will never be undone. Tyranny will never be raised from the dead. A landmark in the progress of humanity will have been passed and put behind for ever.

So the anarchist rebel when he strikes his blow at governments understands that he is no liberator with a divine mission to free humanity, but he is a part of that humanity struggling onwards towards liberty.

If, then, by some external means an Anarchist Revolution could be, so to speak, supplied ready-made and thrust upon the people, it is true that they would reject it and rebuild the old society. If, on the other hand, the people develop their ideas of freedom, and they themselves get rid of the last stronghold of tyranny — the government — then indeed the revolution will be permanently accomplished.

17. *If you abolish government, what will you put in its place?*

This seems to an anarchist very much as if a patient asked the doctor, 'If you take away my illness, what will you give me in its place?' The anarchist's argument is that government fulfils no useful purpose. Most of what it does is mischievous, and the rest could be done better without its interference. It is the headquarters of the profit-makers, the rent-takers, and of all those who take from but who do not give to society. When this class is abolished by the people so organising themselves that they will run the factories and use the land for the benefit of their free communities, ie for their own benefit, then the government must also be swept away, since its purpose will be gone. The only thing then that will be put in the place of government will be the free organisations of the workers. When Tyranny is abolished Liberty remains, just as when disease is eradicated health remains.

18. *We cannot all agree and think alike and be perfect, and therefore laws are necessary, or we shall have chaos.*

It is because we cannot all agree that anarchism becomes necessary. If we all thought alike it would not matter in the least if we had one common law to which we must all submit. But as many of us think differently, it becomes absurd to try to force us to act the same by means of the government which we are silly enough to call representative.

A very important point is touched upon here. It is because anarchists recognise the absolute necessity of allowing for this difference among men that they are anarchists. The truth is that all progress is accompanied by a process of differentiation, or of the increasing difference of parts. If we take the most primitive organism we can find it is simply a tiny globule of plasm, that is, of living substance. It is entirely undifferentiated: that is to say, all its parts are alike. An organism next above this in the evolutionary scale will be found to have developed a nucleus. And now the tiny living thing is composed of two distinctly different parts, the cell-body and its nucleus. If we went on comparing various organisms we should find that all those of a more complex nature were made up of clusters of these tiny organisms or cells. In the most primitive of these clusters there would be very little difference between one cell and another. As we get a little higher we find that certain cells in the clusters have taken upon themselves certain duties, and for this purpose have arranged themselves in special ways. By and by, when we get to the higher animals, we shall find that this

process has advanced so far that some cells have grouped together to form the breathing apparatus, that is, the lungs; others are responsible for the circulation of the blood; others make up the nervous tissue; and so on, so that we say they form the various 'organs' of the body. The point we have to notice is that the higher we get in the animal or vegetable kingdom, the more difference we find between the tiny units or cells which compose the body or organism. Applying this argument to the social body or organism which we call society, it is clear that the more highly developed that organism becomes, the more different will be the units (ie the people) and organs (ie institutions and clubs) which compose it.

(For an answer to the argument based on the supposed need of a controlling centre for the 'social organism', see Objection No. 21.)

When, therefore, we want progress we must allow people to differ. This is the very essential difference between the anarchists and the governmentalsists. The government is always endeavouring to make men uniform. So literally true is this that in most countries it actually forces them into the uniform of the soldier or the convict. Thus government shows itself as the great reactionary tendency. The anarchist, on the other hand, would break down this and would allow always for the development of new ideas, new growth, and new institutions; so that society would be responsive always to the influence of its really greatest men, and to the surrounding influences, whatever they may be.

It would be easier to get at this argument from a simpler standpoint. It is really quite clear that if we were all agreed, or if we were forced to act as if we did agree, we could not have any progress whatever. Change can take place only when someone disagrees with what is, and with the help of a small minority succeeds in putting that disagreement into practice. No government makes allowance for this fact, and consequently all progress which is made has to come in spite of governments, not by their agency.

I am tempted to touch upon yet another argument here, although I have already given this question too much space. Let me add just one example of the findings of modern science. Everyone knows that there is sex relationship and sex romance in plant life just as there is in the animal world, and it is the hasty conclusion with most of us that sex has been evolved for the purposes of reproduction of the species. A study of the subject, however, proves that plants were amply provided with the means of reproduction before the first signs of sex appeared. Science then has had to ask itself: what was the utility of sex evolution? The answer to this conundrum it has been found lies in the fact that 'the

sexual method of reproduction multiplies variation as no other method of reproduction can^{2,4}.

If I have over-elaborated this answer it is because I have wished to interest (but by no means to satisfy) anyone who may see the importance of the subject. A useful work is waiting to be accomplished by some enthusiast who will study differentiation scientifically, and show the bearing of the facts on the organisation of human society.

19. If you abolish government, you will do away with the marriage laws.

We shall.

20. How will you regulate sexual relationship and family affairs?

It is curious that sentimental people will declare that love is our greatest attribute, and that freedom is the highest possible condition. Yet if we propose that love shall go free they are shocked and horrified.

There is one really genuine difficulty, however, which people do meet in regard to this question. With a very limited understanding they look at things as they are to-day, and see all kinds of repulsive happenings: unwanted children, husbands longing to be free from their wives, and — there is no need to enumerate them. For all this, the sincere thinker is able to see the marriage law is no remedy; but, on the other hand, he sees also that the abolition of that law would also in itself be no remedy.

This is true, no doubt. We cannot expect a well-balanced humanity if we give freedom on one point and slavery on the remainder. The movement towards free love is only logical and useful if it takes its place as part of the general movement towards emancipation.

Love will only come to a normal and healthy condition when it is set in a world without slums and poverty, and without all the incentives to crime which exist to-day. When such a condition is reached it will be folly to bind men and women together, or keep them apart, by laws. Liberty and free agreement must be the basis of this most essential relationship as surely as it must be of all others.

21. Society is an organism, and an organism is controlled at its centre; thus man is controlled by his brain, and society by its government.

This is one of the arguments so often used by the so-called scientific Socialists. It is quite true that society as a whole, if it is not an organism, at least can be very closely compared to one. But the most interesting thing is that our scientific objectors have quite forgotten one of the most important facts about the classification of organisms. All organisms may be divided into one of two classes — the 'morphonta' or the 'bionta'. Now each morphonta organism is bound together into one whole necessarily by its structure; a bionta organism, on the contrary, is a more or less simple structure, bound together physiologically; that is, by functions rather than by its actual form. This can be made much simpler. A dog, for example, which we all know is an organism, is a morphonta, for it is bound together necessarily by its structure; if we cut a dog in two, we do not expect the two halves to live, or to develop into two complete dogs. But if we take a plant and cut it in two, the probability is that if we place it in proper conditions each half of that plant will develop into as healthy an organism as the original single one. Now, if we are going to call society an organism, it is quite clear to which of these two classes it belongs; for if we cut society in two and take away one half the people which compose it, and place them in proper conditions, they will develop a new society akin to the old one from which they have been separated.

The really interesting thing about this is that the morphonta — the dog — is by all means an organism controlled by the brain; but on the other hand, the bionta is in no case a centralised organism. So that so far as the analogy does hold good it certainly is entirely in favour of the anarchist conception of society and not of a centralised state.

There is, too, another way of looking at this. In all organisms the simple cell is the unit, just as in society the individual is a unit of the organism. Now, if we study the evolution of organisms (which we have touched upon in Question No. 18), we shall find that the simple cell clusters with or co-operates with its fellow-cells, not because it is bossed or controlled into the position, but because it found, in its simple struggle for existence, that it could only live if the whole of which it formed a part lived also. This principle holds good throughout all organic nature. The cells which cluster together to form the organs of a man are not compelled to do so, or in any way controlled by any outside force; the individual struggle for life forces each to take its place in the organ of which it forms a part. Again, the organs themselves are not centralised, but are simply interdependent; derange one, and you upset

more or less the organs of all, but neither can dictate how the other shall work. If the digestive organs are out of order, it is true that they will probably have an effect upon the brain; but beyond this they have no control or authority over the brain. The reverse of this is equally true. The brain may know absolutely well that the digestive organs are for some reason or other neglecting their duties, but it is unable to control them or tell them to do otherwise. Each organ does its duty because in doing so it is fulfilling its life-purpose, just as each cell takes its place and carries on its functions for the same purpose.

Viewed in this way, we see the complete organism (the man) as the result of the free co-operation of the various organs (the heart, the brains, the lungs, etc), whilst the organs in their turn are the result of the equally free co-operation of the simple cells. Thus the individual life-struggle of the cell results in the highest product of organic nature. It is this primitive struggle of the individual cell which is, as it were, the creative force behind the whole complexity of organic nature, including man, of this wonderful civilisation.

If we apply the analogy to society, we must take it that the ideal form would be that in which the free individuals in developing their lives group together into free institutions, and in which these free institutions are naturally mutually dependent upon the other, but in which there is no institution claiming authority or the power to in any way control or curb the development of any of the other institutions or of the individual.

Thus society would grow from the simple individual to the complex whole, and not as our centralisers try to see it — a development from the complex centre back to the simple parts.

22. You can't change human nature.

To begin with, let me point out that I am a part of human nature, and by all my own development I am contributing to and helping in the development and modification of human nature.

If the argument is that I cannot change human nature and mould it into any form at will, then, of course, it is quite true. If, on the other hand, it is intended to suggest that human nature remains ever the same, then the argument is hopelessly unsound. Change seems to be one of the fundamental laws of existence, and especially of organic nature. Man has developed from the lowest animals, and who can say that he has reached the limits of his possibilities?

However, as it so happens, social reformers and revolutionists do not so much rely on the fact that human nature will change as they do upon

the theory that the same nature will act differently under different circumstances.

A man becomes an outlaw and a criminal to-day because he steals to feed his family. In a free society there would be no such reason for theft, and consequently this same criminal born into such a world might become a respectable family man. A change for the worse? Possibly; but the point is that it is a change. The same character acts differently under the new circumstances.

To sum up, then:

- 1 Human nature does change and develop along certain lines, the direction of which we may influence;
- 2 The fundamental fact is that nature acts according to the condition in which it finds itself.

The latter part of the next answer (No. 23) will be found to apply equally here.

23. Who would do the dirty work under anarchism?

To-day machinery is introduced to replace, as far as possible, the highly paid man. It can only do this very partially, but it is obvious that since machinery is to save the cost of production it will be applied to those things where the cost is considerable. In those branches where labour is very cheap there is not the same incentive to supersede it by machines.

Now things are so strangely organised at present that it is just the dirty and disagreeable work that men will do cheaply, and consequently there is no great rush to invent machines to take their place. In a free society, on the other hand, it is clear that the disagreeable work will be one of the first things that machinery will be called upon to eliminate. It is quite fair to argue, therefore, that the disagreeable work will, to a large extent, disappear in a state of anarchism.

This, however, leaves the question only partially answered. Some time ago, during a strike at Leeds, the roadmen and scavengers refused to do their work. The respectable inhabitants of Leeds recognised the danger of this state of affairs, and organised themselves to do the dirty work. University students were sweeping the streets and carrying boxes of refuse. They answered the question better than I can. They have taught us that a free people would recognise the necessity of such work being done, and would one way or another organise to do it.

Let me give another example more interesting than this and widely differing from it, thus showing how universally true is my answer.

Within civilised society probably it would be difficult to find two classes differing more widely than the University student of to-day and

the labourer of Western Ireland nearly a hundred years ago. At Ralahine in 1830 was started the most successful of the many Co-operative or Communist experiments for which that period was remarkable. There, on the poorest of bog-soil, amongst 'the lowest order of Irish poor, discontented, disorderly and vicious, and under the worst circumstances imaginable', an ideal little experimental community was formed. Among the agreements entered into by these *practical impossibilists* was one which said that 'no member be expected to perform any service or work but such as is agreeable to his or her feelings', yet certain it is that the disagreeable work was daily performed. The following dialogue between a passing stage-coach passenger and a member of the community, whom he found working in water which reached his middle, is recorded:

'Are you working by yourself?' inquired the traveller. 'Yes', was the answer. 'Where is your steward?' 'We have no steward.' 'Who is your master?' 'We have no master. We are on a new system.' 'Then who sent you to do this work?' 'The committee', replied the man in the dam. 'Who is the committee?' asked the mail-coach visitor. 'Some of the members.' 'What members do you mean?' 'The ploughmen and labourers who are appointed by us as a committee. I belong to the new systemites.'

Members of this community were elected by ballot among the peasants of Ralahine. 'There was no inequality established among them', says G. J. Holyoake,⁵ to whom I am indebted for the above description. He adds: 'It seems incredible that this simple and reasonable form of government⁶ should supersede the government of the bludgeon and the blunderbuss — the customary mode by which Irish labourers of that day regulated their industrial affairs. Yet peace and prosperity prevailed through an arrangement of equity.'

The community was successful for three and a half years, and then its end was brought about by causes entirely external. The man who had given his land up for the purposes of the experiment lost his money by gambling, and the colony of 618 acres had to be forfeited. This example of the introduction of a new system among such unpromising circumstances might well have been used in answer to Objection No. 22 — 'You can't change human nature'.

24. *But you must have a government. Every orchestra has its conductor to whom all must submit. It is the same with society.*

This objection would really not be worth answering but that it is persistently used by State Socialists against anarchists, and is even

printed by them in the writings of one of their great leaders. The objection is chiefly of interest in that it shows us painfully plainly the outlook of these wonderful reformers, who evidently want to see society regulated in every detail by the batons of government.

Their confusion, however, between the control of the conductor's baton and that of government really seems to indicate that they are not aware of any difference between government and liberty. The relationship of the subject to the government is entirely unlike that of the musician to the conductor. In a free society the musician would unite with others interested in music for one reason only: he wishes to express himself, and finds that he can do so better with the assistance of others. Hence he *makes use* of his brother musicians, while they similarly make use of him. Next, he and they find they are up against a difficulty unless they have a signalman to *relate* their various notes. They therefore determine *to make use of* someone who is capable to do this. He, on the other hand, stands in just the same relationship to them: he is making use of them to express himself in music. If at any time either party finds the other unserviceable, it simply ceases to co-operate. Any member of the party may, if he feels inclined, get up at any moment and walk away. The conductor can at any minute throw down his baton, or upset the rest by going wilfully wrong. Any member of the party may at any time spoil all their efforts if he chooses to do so. There is no provision of such emergencies, and no way of preventing them. No one can be compelled to contribute towards the upkeep of the enterprise. Practically all the objections which are raised against anarchism may be raised against this free organisation. What will you do with the drummer who won't drum? What will you do with the man who plays out of tune? What will you do with the man who talks instead of playing? What will you do with the unclean man who may sit next to you? What will you do with the man who won't pay his share? etc etc.

The objections are endless if you choose to base them on what *might* happen, but this fails to alter the fact that if we consider what actually does happen we find a free organisation of this kind entirely practical.

It is not, I hope, necessary now to point out the folly of those who pretend that such an organisation is analogous to government.

In a government organisation people are bound together not by a common purpose, but by law, with the threat of prison behind. The enterprise is supported, not in accordance with the amount of interest taken in it, but by a general compulsion. The part played by each is dictated, and can be enforced. In a free organisation it is merely suggested, and the suggestion is followed only if the individual agrees, for there can be no compulsion.

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1. J. S. Mill, *Political Economy* Vol. I, p.251.
 2. *Women and Prisons* Fabian Tract No. 16.
 3. The typhoid and the cattle disease cases are both quoted in the notes to Herbert Spencer's *The Study of Sociology*.
 4. *The Evolution of Sex in Plants* by Professor J. Merle Coulter. It is interesting to add that he closes his book with these words: 'Its [sexuality's] significance lies in the fact that it makes organic evolution more rapid and far more varied.'
 5. *History of Co-operation*.
 6. I need not, I think, stay to explain the sense in which this word is used. The committee were workers, not specialised advisers; above all, they had no authority and could only suggest and not issue orders. They were, therefore, not a Government.

Andrew Hedgecock

Challenging the New Church

From the middle ages to the nineteenth century the church was the institution with responsibility for propagating the ideology of the state. Today, the state attempts to determine our beliefs, attitudes and desires through communications technologies. The institutions and companies which control these mass media constitute the new church.

Many anarchists seem to hold the view that the best approach to the capitalist controlled mass media is to ignore it. By adopting this 'ostrich' strategy we are denying ourselves the opportunity to identify the extent to which social reality is moulded by popular forms of communication — and we may even be missing the opportunity to discover ways of delivering the anarchist message to a wider audience. The mainstream media currently function to preserve the power of the state and the communications barons like Murdoch and Maxwell — but are there strategies which would enable us to reclaim them as agencies for social change? Or should anarchists and socialists confine themselves to dedicated political magazines like *Freedom* and *Socialist Worker* — where the danger of preaching to the converted is compensated by the knowledge that the integrity of our message will not be diluted by commercial demands? We should at least consider the view that formats and techniques employed by the mass media might be used to increase the popular appeal — and political efficacy — of publications aiming to bring about a free society.

When writers of the revolutionary left engage with the subjects of television and the popular press it is usually to condemn the capitalist media's handling of a specific issue. The production of propaganda which aims to persuade people of the possibility of creating a better society should be informed by an understanding of the techniques, formats and institutions used by the state to perpetuate the view held by Voltaire's Dr Pangloss: 'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds'.

Whether we like it or not, our vision of the world is profoundly affected by the way the media represents ideas and issues, individuals, social classes, races and political groups. Since we are all affected by the state's use of mass communications, it is essential that the debate on the media is dragged from the sequestered groves of academe into the

glaring light of the public domain. An accessible, critical work — addressing the complex issues of mass communication — would be a welcome addition to any anarchist or socialist bookshelf.

Editors Marc Raboy and Peter A. Bruck declare the concerns of *Communication For and Against Democracy*¹ to be ‘questions of communication development and policy, of media organization and production practices, of social relations between producers and publics’. The volume consists of 15 contributions to the 1988 Conference of the Union of Democratic Communications — held in Ottawa — and provides an international perspective on the problems surrounding the complex relationship between communication and social change.

The material is organised into four sections: the editors’ introduction outlines the major issues; ‘Contexts of Domination’ is concerned with the state’s consolidation of its power through media institutions; the essays in ‘Understanding Communication’ describe the media’s role in producing social reality and ‘Contexts of Liberation’ draws upon recent examples of critical work within existing media structures to develop proposals for a liberatory approach to *communication*.

The State’s New Weapons

Raboy and Bruck’s introduction (‘The Challenge of Democratic Communication’) describes the growing importance of information in determining social and cultural activity. It is suggested that while the analysis of social inequality by radical social theorists in the nineteenth century remains relevant, political dominance is no longer effected through uneven economic relationships alone. The political left must identify and engage with a new social force: ‘Overlapping and extending the parameters of political and economic struggle, we find the undeniable reality of profound social and cultural changes through electronic mass (re)production of symbols’. In other words, Mao Tse-Tung’s assertion that ‘political power grows out of the barrel of a gun’ is no longer as apposite as it was: power also stems from control of the wide range of media tools which transmit symbolic information. Today, Mao would need several aphorisms: political power grows out of the screen of a television; political power grows out of the page of a tabloid newspaper; political power grows out of the screen of a cinema; political power grows out of the VDU screen of a computer; and so on.

Raboy and Bruck warn that those of us taking our information from ‘alternative’ media sources (like *Freedom* and *The Raven*) are not immune from the influence of capitalist communication. In the first

place, the political consequences of mass exposure to the mainstream media are visited upon those who do not use it themselves. We would do well to bear in mind, for example, that attempts to propagate the values of internationalism in *Freedom* take place against a background of popular images of 'foreigners' peddled by the tabloid press. Consider the *Sun*'s recent attempts to drum up support for the xenophobia of Nicholas Ridley by equating German citizenship with military expansionism: headlines included 'HANS OFF NICK!', and a piece entitled 'LAGER KRAUTS!' likened the boozy antics of a visiting German band to atrocities committed by an invading army. (Question: could the circulation of *Freedom* be massively increased by having a pun and an exclamation mark in every headline?) the editors' second argument against adopting a policy of 'splendid isolation' from the established media is that the smug notion that radicals are unaffected by its influence ignores the pervasive role it plays in *everyone's* life: 'The media shape our symbolic universe'. Through its communications institutions, the state tries to influence every aspect of our behaviour towards each other and tries to constrain the way we look at the past and present.

Communication is Power

How do those in power use media institutions and technologies to constrain cultural development and determine the way we perceive our society? The papers collected under the heading 'Contexts of Domination' offer valuable insights into the ways in which states and capitalist multinationals create, manipulate and disseminate information — and thus limit the freedom of the majority, for whom access to the media comes in the role of passive consumer.

In 'Development Sabotage Communication', Howard H. Frederick examines the United States' conduct of a war of ideas with the aim of preserving its power in Central America. He describes distortions of information about the Sandinista revolution by the US government and the media techniques which facilitated them. Nicaragua received high quality TV and radio signals from US controlled stations, but the Sandinistas were not even able to consistently cover their home territory with their own transmitters. This exploitation of mass communication channels at home and abroad is an incursion into the civil rights of the people of America as well as the people of Nicaragua since both are victims of skilled practitioners of the art of mass disinformation: neither group has access to the point of view of the

general population of the other nation — only the distorted views presented by agencies like the CIA.

Frederick calls for an extension to UNESCO's Mass Media Declaration of Human Rights: he suggests that, in addition to the right to receive information, the list of human rights should include the right to communicate. A widespread acceptance of the notion that communication should be a two-way process is a welcome move towards a liberatory media, but few anarchists will share the author's faith in legal solutions. In turning its superior communications firepower on the people of Nicaragua the US has shown no qualms at flouting international law.

Vincent Mosco's 'Critical Thinking About The Military Information Society' deals with the extent to which 'Star Wars' (the Strategic Defence Initiative) has *already* begun to have ideological, economic and political effects within the US. SDI promotes a view of America as the world's peace-keeper, provides short-term rewards for the military technology sector of US industry and gives the government the political leverage to dictate the scientific research agenda and silence criticism of defence policy. Mosco points out that while 'Star Wars' has been presented as a defensive technology, it could be used to intimidate third world nations which challenge US interests.

The enormous capacity and rapid retrieval capability of the computer programs which manipulate 'databases' pose an enormous threat to privacy. In Britain, many councils intend to release personal information from the 'poll tax' register to private companies (in some areas the registration forms demanded a great deal more information than a list of all the adults in a household). These developments — coupled with our lack of awareness about the way our behaviour as workers, consumers and citizens is categorised — make Oscar H. Gandy's study of public attitudes to widespread information-based surveillance particularly timely. Gandy outlines the findings of a survey into attitudes to surveillance and calls for increased public debate on the way personal information is used as a means of social control.

In recent years the media's creation of marketable images has begun to make incursions into our freedom to live our lives as we might wish. There is an increasing trend for the state to engage in the 'top-down' manufacture of culture. A key example of this in Britain is the Tories' repeated calls for the return of 'Victorian Values'. Fortunately for us, Margaret Thatcher's attempts to justify various aspects of her social and economic engineering with a distorted model of nineteenth century Britain has not — so far — led to the creation of culture 'from above' on a scale practiced by the government of Singapore. Wai-Teng Leong reports that, in its drive to create a modern capitalist economy,

Singapore is contriving a culture which can be marketed to tourists. Most tourists stay in Singapore for three days while en route for somewhere else; so to save them the trouble of understanding the complexities of its mix of ethnic groups and cultures the state provide a simplified version for their consumption. The complex multi-racial composition of the population is reduced to four ethnic categories (Chinese, Malay, Indian and 'Other') and ethnic traditions are marketed in terms of these divisions. The state is attempting to create cultural traditions for the various groups — even to the extent of applying economic pressures to force the 'Chinese' group (comprising at least 16 groups with different languages) into living in extended families. One ethnic group in particular has suffered the top-down imposition of a state-manufactured culture: Chinese Baba children are required to learn Mandarin as their 'mother tongue' even though their home language is Malay, because they have been placed in the broad racial category of Chinese.

In 'Global Economy, Global Communications', Lanie Patrick discusses the implications of rapid technological development for the idea of nationhood and the power of transnational conglomerates. The development of telecommunications technology over the past decade has led to an explosion of electronic trade and a concomitant transformation of many types of work. Occupations, industries and products have been turned into services which can be traded via telecommunications networks. The result has been the creation of a new type of international market place which has operated free from the usual rules on tariffs, taxes and company mergers. To capitalise on the potential of this development, companies like IBM and American Express are lobbying for an unregulated free market in global communications (which calls for unrestricted market access on the one hand and the setting up of strict laws on copyright on the other). The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement is seen as the first step in setting up an international legal charter to protect the interests of these huge capitalist enterprises, and Patrick warns that we may soon be seeing the pan-national corporation wielding power greater than any state's — and without even the pretence of democratic protection for their workers and customers; 'or victims, depending on how it chooses to use its power'. Patrick's solution is to call for a 'comprehensive and legally enforceable policy framework' to defend the public interest against the rapacity of the transnational conglomerates. This is a fundamentally flawed approach to this type of problem. States will become clients and sponsors of these multi-national corporations — and on the basis of previous experience, do we really expect our elected leaders to protect our interests or serve their own? If these companies are potentially as

powerful as Patrick suggests, their 'clout' within international capitalism will make international laws as ineffective a constraint as they have been against territorial aggression and human rights violations since the setting up of the United Nations Organisation. While Patrick's article suggests a solution which few anarchists will find useful, it identifies a new and alarming threat to our freedom. This article alone should make *Communication For and Against Democracy* essential reading for anyone concerned with the way technological developments are facilitating a rapid erosion of liberty: those with power are becoming less and less accountable to the rest of us.

Media Manipulation: Theories, Models and Methods

The theme of the section entitled 'Understanding Communication' is less clearly defined than in the others. The four articles under this heading deal with 'difficult' material, and tend to be concerned with theoretical issues of media production. As in the 'Contexts of Domination' section, there is an attempt to identify the key problems inherent in capitalist controlled media and a variety of proposals for a democratic transformation are put forward.

I've always suspected Jean Baudrillard's 'The Ecstasy of Communication' to be one of those books that few people read but many like to be seen reading. There can be no doubt that he is currently fashionable: a couple of years ago the speed of ticket sales for the Baudrillard 'gig' at the ICA would have put the Stones and Madonna to shame. In 'Resurrecting McLuhan', Douglas Kellner questions the basis of the adulation this 'postmodernist' communications theorist has received. Kellner feels that, like his predecessor Marshall McLuhan, Baudrillard fails to supply a theory which adequately describes the role of media in modern capitalist societies. The theory asserts that the media's reproduction of images, signs and codes creates a simulated realm called '(hyper)reality' which is 'more real than real'. In (hyper)reality a mass of information obliterates (or 'implodes') meaning to create a world where information has no content. It becomes impossible to distinguish between real objects and their simulated (media) representations.

It is claimed that the masses want only spectacle, not meaning: we are not manipulated from above, but are supplied with the only thing we demand — entertainment. Baudrillard's theory makes no attempt to consider the use and effects of media: he considers only the surface form of a medium and no attention is paid to the issues of alternative approaches to communication. All media are said to merely produce

noise (or non-communication). This 'technological determinism' implies that all communication is essentially authoritarian, but Kellner argues that the media can be restructured along more democratic lines and calls for a broader theory of the way media interact with politics and society.

Luigi Manca draws upon concepts from cybernetics to outline a 'Communication Model for Democracy' which expresses the complexities of communication between editors, journalists and the public. Manca proposes some fundamental democratic alterations to the present communication system: journalists and editors should encourage the public to become senders of information rather than merely passive receivers; they should operate as 'advocates' making a plurality of opposing views available to the public rather than merely presenting a house line on an issue. Those journalists whose aim is to represent the public would be well served by Manca's advocacy model, since they would be able to develop a more accurate perception of the public's concerns and beliefs. Imagine a plurality of views in the editorial columns of British tabloids; 'The *Sun* says . . . but on the other hand . . .'. This unbelievable image demonstrates the problematic nature of Manca's proposals. A more rigorous professional standard and code of practice for journalists may highlight the immoral practices of certain sections of the press, but it would not prevent departures from the ethical ideal. We will not see the type of objectivity Manca envisages — or increased public access to the press — while control of the public agenda remains firmly in the hands of those who own the means of producing and distributing information.

Are we too quick to dismiss the tabloid form as an intrinsically authoritarian medium? Graham Knight suggests that the political left cannot afford to ignore it since 'the banality, triviality, prurience, and anti-intellectualism of tabloid culture' make the tabloid press the 'place where contradictions and excesses of dominant ideology shine through'. In terms of television news, Knight suggests that tabloid techniques could be subverted, and alterations made to the ways in which they are combined and used, to produce an accessible and popular media form which challenges the dominant ideology rather than supporting it. Many anarchists hold the belief that the tabloid form oversimplifies issues for mass consumption, and that a liberatory media must communicate the complexities of our world. While the tabloid approach tends not to credit its audience with sufficient intelligence to produce its own analysis of current affairs, and tends to assume a prurient interest in the trivial and the spectacular, it remains tremendously popular. Even if we do not believe it represents a worthwhile approach for anarchist communication we should,

nevertheless, attempt to identify the reasons for its popularity and the effect it has upon popular perceptions of society.

In 'Television News and the Public Sphere', Gertrude J. Robinson and Claude-Yves Charron consider the trend for the media to use 'image politics' as a replacement for genuine public debate. Using coverage of the 1980 Quebec Referendum as a model, the authors consider ways in which TV news programmes set agendas, legitimise certain views and manufacture consent. Political issues are reduced to the spectacle of a politician's victory celebration and democracy is defined as the right to contribute to a TV opinion poll: the majority of citizens have no opportunity to make their voices heard. Even when the views of non-celebrity citizens are solicited they are awarded low status in terms of mode of presentation and their place within the programme structure. Robinson and Charron warn that TV news has begun to adopt the techniques of the advertising presentation and that 'political manipulation is increasingly substituting methods of manipulation for methods of voluntary persuasion'.

Reclaiming Communication: challenges and solutions

Can the state's means of communication be reclaimed for the creation of a freer society? The final section of the volume, 'Contexts of Liberation', describes a number of attempts to employ the technologies, methods and institutions of the existing mass media in order to promote social change and the development of a more democratic communications ideology.

Can an individual seeking a fundamental transformation of mass communications work from within existing media organisations? Robert Lewis Shayon's anecdotal evidence — based upon his personal experience within a variety of radio and television institutions — demonstrates that programme makers with respect for the intelligence of their audience, and a genuine desire to involve citizens in decision-making, can facilitate worthwhile social change on a local level. In 'The Education of a Media Activist', Shayon suggests that television should not merely constitute the business of programme production, but should be aiming at extending community organisation and offer channels of action for audiences after the stimulus of a programme. Throughout his career Shayon has demonstrated his faith in the notion that 'people would rather solve their own problems than be led'. His model for a more democratic approach to TV includes a continuous feedback of information between 'special-interest professionals', professional communicators and the mass audience. Shayon's

insights ought to be of great value to TV professionals committed to social change, but I suspect that it is far from easy to implement these ideas in a climate where the demands of senior management, government and (in some cases) advertisers dictate programme making to a greater extent than the needs of the community.

Levon Chorbajian gives us an insight into the content of Soviet Armenian television: it carries Russian folk music, Western rock videos, public information items, lots of old films and a slot which features the public humiliation of drunken drivers. The schedule is irregular and, while every household has a set, TV plays a less important role in people's lives than in the West. Chorbajian reports that there is little reporting from an Armenian perspective, frequent use of reductionist *clichés* and distorted portrayals of the unrest within the Soviet empire. While Armenian TV has been employed as a means of social control, access to Soviet Armenian TV was a significant demand of Karabakh Armenians, which suggest that — despite its authoritarian shortcomings — many Armenians value it as a means of cultural expression.

In 'Alternative Press and Political Practice', Keyan G. Tomaselli and P. Eric Louw outline the problems faced by the South African alternative press in their opposition to the apartheid system. Theoretical questions are posed in relation to democratic media practices, the constitution of a socialist media and the provision of an accessible media infrastructure. Tomaselli and Louw suggest that the threat posed by the state towards alternative media groups tends to lead to the creation of clandestine revolutionary vanguards. Workshops are seen as a means of avoiding this kind of elitism since they provide an opportunity to develop the link between journalists, academics and the masses. Recent media workshops in South Africa have provided small groups with wider perspectives on issues such as finance, keeping up with advances in communications technology, distribution and printing, harassment by police and — perhaps most importantly — the development and dissemination of media skills. This 'popular', non-elitist approach provides a welcome antidote to a number of essays in this volume which stress the role of media professionals in developing democratic communications and play down the role of the mass audience. In rejecting the notion of creating a freer media from the top down, Tomaselli and Louw recognise that reliance on a professional elite would merely replace one set of media manipulators with another.

Lorna Roth and Gail Guthrie Valaskakis describe the development of a democratic approach to broadcasting by the Inuit community in the north of Canada. 'Aboriginal Broadcasting in Canada' describes the way

Inuit broadcasters have used federal government funding to create a communications infrastructure which meets the needs of the community. Roth and Valaskakis suggest that the rejection of the model provided by US broadcasting, and a focus on regional culture and local issues, has acted 'to pry open old relationships and represent new discursive opportunities between producers and consumers of cultural products'.

In 'What is Socialist Cultural Practice' Geoff Mulgan draws upon his experience with the GLC [Greater London Council] and 'Red Wedge' to discuss the complexities of the relationship between the users of culture and its producers. Mulgan argues that the rights of producers and users are best served through the mechanism of the market place — a view shared by the present Labour Party hierarchy. One of his arguments in support of this notion is that Channel 4 (responding to commercial requirements) has been more 'successful, innovative and radical' than the BBC ('a nationalised bureaucratic monolith'). Once again we are offered a choice between the Scylla of state patronage and the Charybdis of free-market capitalism. Why should culture be determined by the market or the state? If we are to pay for the production of our culture, as Mulgan suggests, we will be stuck with the present situation where the majority of people are merely passive consumers. An anarchist approach to cultural production would revolve around encouraging widespread participation in the production of alternative media and the erosion of categories like 'producer' (writer, artist, performer etc) and 'audience'.

The New Threats to Freedom

Communication For and Against Democracy raises many vital issues, provides a welcome international perspective, carries out a rigorous analysis of some existing media practices and institutions and makes practical proposals for transforming various branches of the mass media into forces for greater personal and political freedom. While there is material in this collection which is essential for an understanding of the social and political implications of mass communication, it is only partially successful in meeting the urgent need for a book which extends the debate on these vital issues into the public arena.

My most serious criticism is that a number of the articles make very difficult reading, not because of the complexity of the issues discussed — but as a result of the academic jargon employed. In some essays the reader's task in extracting the relevant information is of a similar degree of difficulty to solving the *Guardian* cryptic crossword. It is ironic that

one is expected to swallow indigestible chunks of academic erudition, since the editors declare in their preface that their target audience is 'not only within the scholarly "discipline" of communication but, more important, within a broad general constituency of progressive minded people . . .'. By using the type of obscure language that was the subject of George Orwell's attack in *Politics and the English Language*, some of the contributors have missed an opportunity to take their ideas to a wider readership.

While *Communication For and Against Democracy* covers a wide range of media institutions and technologies — in a variety of national settings — there is an over-emphasis on the role of traditional journalism in communication. Over the last 10 years there has been an increasing tendency for agencies outside TV and radio news and the newspapers to play a major role in moulding public consciousness. I would like to have seen some analysis of the influence of 'style bibles' like *The Face*, *Vogue* and *Arena*. These magazines sell off-the-peg lifestyles which include clothes, hairstyles, leisure activities, concerns and attitudes. Social issues are reduced to image and sound-bite. How can anyone who subscribes to such manufactured designs for living, and sees the world in these simplified terms carry out an informed critique of society? It would be interesting to see some systematic analysis of the influence of the glossy image catalogues: how critical are the readership of the ideology presented?

We are also bombarded with images of the good life, and ideologically charged portrayals of social behaviour in TV advertisements and popular music videos. To what extent do these representations determine our aspirations and the way we look at each other? The recent video for Betty Boo's record 'Doin' the do' features the ever-popular subject of teenage rebellion: the character portrayed by Betty reacts against the oppressive discipline of her school. Is there a sense in which this surrogate ('designer') rebellion replaces genuine criticism of repressive institutions? The lack of attention to these forms of communication may relate to the fact that the majority of contributors are academics working with traditional forms of news production. The influence of these popular forms — which appeal to the younger end of the market — should not be ignored in case they are providing capitalists with another means of preventing us from imagining ways of transforming our society.

Communication For and Against Democracy concentrates on well established forms of mass communication (TV, radio and the press) at the expense of new communications media based on developments in Information Technology. For example, 'computer networks' — linking users working at remote terminals via a central computer — may bring

about profound social changes, especially in the realm of work. Some pundits have suggested that these networks will undermine traditional worker-employer relationships by generating a freer flow of information among workers at the same level in the social hierarchy. It is more likely, however, that the main effect of this type of technology will be to isolate us from each other, thus preventing the formation of organisations to challenge the interests of capitalism. Those who control computer networks have virtually absolute power over the flow of communication within the system: they can operate total surveillance of information produced by the system's users, and are in a position to immediately censor any information they do not wish the rest of us to see. Public access to information is, therefore, limited to the passive reception of 'top-down' communications from those in authority. Raboy and Bruck's volume ought to have recognised that IT based media have the potential to provide one of the most effective means of transmitting the dominant capitalist ideology.

Most of the prescriptions for developing a more democratic approach to mass communications in this volume are based upon a 'top-down' managerial approach. There is too much emphasis on the role of professional vanguards, and the framing of legislation, in the democratisation of media production: I remain unconvinced by the notion that communication can be liberated from capitalist domination by a handful of well meaning academics, lawyers and journalists. Tomaselli and Louw's report on attempts in South Africa to develop a genuinely participatory role for the mass audience is an honourable exception to this criticism. What this volume does brilliantly is to identify some of the most serious threats to freedom we will have to face in the 1990s and beyond. If mass communications continue to be developed as a means of social control by governments and super-rich industrialists, it will become increasingly difficult to challenge capitalism and the state. While it is by no means certain that mass media technologies can be used to develop a forum for the discussion of alternative forms of social organisation, we cannot afford to ignore their dangerous potential for creating and maintaining a uniform ideology all over the world. The real value of *Communication For and Against Democracy* lies in the fact that it draws attention to these problems — which we ignore at our peril. Anarchists and genuine socialists need to devote a great deal more attention to these issues, and it is to be hoped that the work in this volume inspires further debate.

Freedom Press

Discussion Notes on Communicating

There is no denying that there is a crisis on the Left. The collapse of the Communist bloc has provided the capitalist politicians with ammunition to declare that socialism is now dead and buried. Anarchism suffered serious defections at the time of the Russian Revolution, including a number of well-known comrades who sought an accommodation with Lenin. Now the Media in this country have more news — bad news — about the Soviet Union than about this country's bad news and irrespective of its accuracy the intention is clear: to show that communism/socialism doesn't work and that these countries are all turning to the market economy.

No one replies because there is virtually no Leftist press in this country. The Labour Party had the *Labour Weekly* and the *New Socialist*. The former was axed by the Party a few years back when they had to prune their expenditure. The latter has had a chequered career. It started independently as a bi-monthly, for a short time was a party monthly, then a bi-monthly, then had financial problems and was rescued by the Fabians and until recently appeared with a joint editorship. It now announces that it is suspending publication until more finance is available to spend on promotion and editorial staff. *Tribune* goes on being a weekly only because the *Transport and General Workers Union* coughed up some £20,000 and promises of more a year or two ago. It had a circulation of only 7,000 copies at the time and one cannot imagine that it has since increased. *Peace News* collapsed a couple of years ago and has only resumed publication as a monthly under the wing of the WRI (War Resisters' International). As we write these lines *City Limits* has called in the Receiver as it cannot meet its commitments.

In the publishing world the demise of the original Pluto Press group, in spite of a £250,000 'sweetener' or life-saver by the late-lamented Greater London Council and Ken Livingstone, was taken over by an optimistic entrepreneur who added a Libertarian Classics series to its list. *Freedom Press Distributors* have now taken over five important titles in that series (see advertisement on inside back cover).

Without modesty *Freedom Press* can report mainly successes. The Bookshop since clearing out the 'saboteurs' four years ago and managing to run it with four volunteers (five at one time) has gone from strength to strength and considering that it is not a bookshop with a shop front on the main street, but one room on the first floor of our premises in Angel Alley, last year's sales of £15,000 worth of literature is surely something to boast about, more so since a large proportion of the customers are not from the anarchist 'ghetto'.

From October 1988 to July 1989 only two issues of *The Raven* were published. From October 1989 to November 1990 we have published five issues. For a number of years *Freedom* had been published monthly. Since the beginning of this year we have been publishing fortnightly.

Slowly, but surely, the *Freedom Press* Centenary volumes, as well as a number of supplementary volumes, are appearing. Far from being an academic exercise, these volumes shed valuable light on contemporary events. A truly topical example is the supplementary volume *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis Selections from Freedom 1937-1949* with a postscript 1989.

We have also published two more volumes on the Spanish Revolution making a total of five FP titles now in print. And with the three Black Rose Books titles for which FP are the European distributors, we can confidently suggest that we offer the most important material on the most important social revolution since the Russian revolution of 1917 available in print.

Over the last five years new *Freedom Press* titles have appeared at the rate of five a year, as well as reprints of existing titles. All this was made possible, in the first place, by two friends of *Freedom Press*, Attilio Bartell in Canada, and Hans Deichmann in Milan, with generous financial help. But since then we have developed the activities of the *Freedom Press Distributors* which has added to our retail and trade list with titles from Black Rose Books (Canada) Chas Kerr Publishing Co (Chicago) See Sharp Press (San Francisco) and all titles handled by *A Distribution*. This side of our activities has enabled us to meet the losses on *Freedom* and *The Raven*. And the income from sales of *Freedom Press* back list alone now makes it possible to finance the publication of up to three books a year.

One last statistic. In 1986, the last year of the 'saboteurs' in charge, total income was £26,000. In 1990, at the end of *September* it was £44,500. We anticipate a total of £55,000 for 1990 — more than double the 1986 total.

We have presented the money side of *Freedom Press*' activity not only to show that our small-scale enterprise is viable, but also to

indicate what can be achieved by a handful of voluntary workers in their 'spare' time.

★ ★ ★

Freedom Press are the publishers of nearly 50 titles in print and trade and retail distributors of at least another 100. All on anarchist or Libertarian subjects. In our opinion this would warrant having a full-time travelling salesman calling on bookshops all over the country. Apart from finding a retired person with no attachments and willing to lead a wanderer's life for anarchy, one has to think in terms of payment for services rendered and expenses. We are open to suggestions. In the past year Black Rose Books have appointed Turnaround Distribution as representatives for their editions — which are nevertheless still distributed by FP — and Turnaround are now also representing FP titles. The fact that they have three travelling salespersons has made a big difference, there can be no question. We are convinced that one FPD travelling salesperson would be even more effective.

★ ★ ★

In our Editorial we said that in theory we had no objection to paying contributors to our journals. How do the commercial journals pay contributors? From advertising revenue. The *New Statesman* which hosts one of Colin Ward's regular columns charges £1,050 a page. An average issue of that journal carries 10 pages of advertisements and sells at nearly three times the price of *Freedom*. It is also distributed nationally and sells 35,000 copies.

Paying contributors at the *New Statesman* rates we would have to find an extra £1000 an issue for *Freedom* and £3000 for *The Raven*, which would add £1.50 per copy to costs of a 2000 copies edition of *The Raven* and a £3 increase to selling price (allowing for 50% minimum to cover discounts for shops and overheads), or £5.50 a copy! *Freedom* would have to sell at £1.00 a copy. Paying writers, editors, administrators of anarchist journals is a two-fold question.

In his much more acerbic contribution on the subject in *Freedom's* Centenary issue ' "I think that's a terrible thing to say!" Elderly anarchist hack tells all . . . ' ¹ Colin Ward wrote:

1. *Freedom: A Hundred Years Oct 1886 – Oct 1986* (Freedom Press £10, limited hardback edition only)

I just want to establish the fact that it isn't easy to make a living if you are an anarchist author

The obvious answer is 'So why be an anarchist author' since Colin Ward before he decided to be a professional writer not only held down a full time rewarding job but in his 'spare time' produced 118 monthly issues of *Anarchy* from 1961-1970, unpaid but praised worldwide to this day.

A few years ago when at Freedom Press we were exploring the possibilities of having more titles to distribute so as to justify a full time paid travelling salesman we approached Colin Ward with a view to establishing a parallel publishing venture with the imprint Aldgate Publications: a cooperative involving authors, printers and publishers. Freedom Press and the Aldgate Press were in favour. Colin Ward turned it down as not financially viable, and the project was dropped.

In his introduction to the Centenary issue of *Freedom* he recounts the story of his valuable book *Anarchy in Action*, first published by Allen and Unwin in London as well as in America and in a number of translations. When the Anglo-American publishers had exhausted what they thought was its financial potential they dropped it. When Colin Ward offered it to *Freedom Press* we did not hesitate in agreeing to publish immediately. We quote from Ward's centenary article:

It was Freedom Press which rescued that book of mine from being out of print in English, and I'm pleased. I am *not* suggesting that *Freedom Press* (even if it had the cash) should start paying authors. But I do think there is something rather short-sighted about our automatic anarchist sneer at anarchist authors who write for the non-anarchist press as 'academics', 'intellectuals' or 'literary gents'. It's one explanation of why there are so few of them.

Since we have never looked upon our comrade as any one of these 'gents' — and we don't think he describes himself as such — this is really a red herring. What we do regret is that so many comrades who have as it were done their writing apprenticeship in our journals no longer find the time to write for us when they join the ranks of the professional writers, journalists etc . . . And generally they seek to rationalise their decision saying that by writing for the commercial Press they are reaching 'a wider public', 'the real world', 'moving out of the anarchist ghetto'. We have picked on Colin Ward since he has offered us the ammunition, but what we have written could be applied to former editors such as George Woodcock as well as declared anarchists such as Herbert Read and Alex Comfort.

The anarchist criticism of the Labour Party is that their objective is not socialism but to operate the capitalist system more equitably than the Tories. With a Labour government the State with all its coercive

institutions — police, military, civil servants, banks, stock exchange, church, large landowners and multinationals — remain intact — and *in control*.

The anarchist 'criticism' of anarchists writing for the capitalist Press is that we want to abolish the capitalist Press, not reform it. This can only be done by producing an Alternative Press which will attract all the best writers, thinkers, journalists and researchers. The capitalist Press must be starved of good people.

Anarchist contributions, even in the broadsheet 'serious' Press, are lost in the overwhelming capitalist approach on every topic be it Sport, the Arts, Economics, Finance, Politics. But the Establishment gets kudos from these contributions by being able to claim that it is a Free Press.

The Alternative — that is the non-capitalist, libertarian — Press that we want to see taking over will never come about until there are enough communicators who are convinced libertarian socialists or anarchists prepared to earn a modest living not as journalists or researchers for the capitalist Press but in any other occupation — especially one which provides the needed money with the fewest hours in acquiring it (we are not suggesting breaking into banks!) so that they have time to create that Alternative Press which will win the hearts and minds of good people who are already deeply dissatisfied with the values of capitalist society.

If the Alternative Press is to operate on the kind of scale we envisage it will have to be a combination of paid and voluntary workers. However it must not be controlled or dominated by the paid workers: nor must the paid workers be treated as employees by their non-paid comrades. It also involves cooperation among a number of groups at present producing their own, mostly irregular, publications, who would agree to submerge the individual for the collective enterprise. The most recent issue of the *CIRA Bulletin* (from the International Centre for Anarchist Research of Lausanne) publishes a list of anarchist periodicals received by them including no less than 40 in the English language! Subject to correction *Freedom* fortnightly is the journal most frequently published but how easy it would be if all the effort and money put into producing these 40 journals was used to produce an International anarchist weekly to which local groups could add a Local News Sheet locally produced on a duplicator or better still on a photocopier.

The anarchist weekly would need at least a part-time paid editor/co-ordinator and 100% commitment from national and international contributors. It would also require a part-time paid office worker.

We are not suggesting that the anarchist weekly should be called *Freedom* or be published by *Freedom Press*, unless it is generally accepted by all the comrades involved in such an enterprise that *Freedom Press* with printing facilities on the premises is well situated to undertake such an enterprise. As to the title — well, it has a reputation (for some of us!) going back a century but just as in its early days it had a sub title A Journal of Anarchist Socialism and later socialism was dropped and Communism substituted why not a title which includes Alternatives and Anarchism? Suggestions invited!

Not only do we think that we need to create a weekly alternative journal — as opposed to 40 occasional English language journals mostly depending on the whims of one or two people for them appearing — we must also create an international news gathering and research group which, again, must include at least one full time worker.

The most practical arrangement, in our opinion, would be for that activity to be centred on the CIRA in Lausanne, though it would involve that group actually putting into operation their title as an International Centre for Anarchist *Research*, for at present they are simply an archive of anarchist literature which relies on people wanting to come along and consult their growing volume of literature. No research actually comes from CIRA. Anarchist research, as we see it, certainly is to learn the lessons from the past but above all it is to provide the anarchist answers to the basic problems of society today and in the future. This can only be done by a ruthless analysis of contemporary material which, with all its faults and bias and lies, is provided by the media every day, world wide, and in our opinion is a vindication of the anarchist arguments. It is the day to day material provided by the media (and not to forget some excellent TV programmes) which needs to be classified and analysed to produce the material for an International Anarchist Press if we are seriously intending to make more than a dent in the mass media and the Establishment.

After all mass communications have created 'one world' and just as we have suggested that the anarchist international weekly can be, in its English edition, supplemented so far as local groups are concerned, by their adding a duplicated sheet this concept can be applied world wide with the news centre — if in Lausanne — providing translations of the international weekly in a number of languages. It is difficult to assume that all these services can be provided by unpaid translators, news gatherers, reporters.

The CIRA bulletin to which we referred earlier lists no less than 200 plus anarchist journals world wide. Surely even a modest financial commitment by all could establish a research organisation to which we

would all send the articles, newspaper cuttings, which we accumulate in producing our papers and bulletins but of which we only use a fraction. They end up in the dustbin because we have neither the time nor the organisation to classify those worth keeping.

The Alternative Press must give no excuses to our Colin Wards and Joe Kellys to accuse us of not being of this world! We are without the kind of research/documentation that we desperately need. But to produce an Alternative Press that can hope to challenge the capitalist 'serious' press *for readers* we must produce a much more 'professional' product and it must be a weekly.

This will only be done when those 200+ titles listed in the *CIRA Bulletin* as anarchist periodicals they receive (and there are probably a lot more) are ready to join with us in seeking to establish and finance a serious newsgathering and research group to ensure a high standard in anarchist journalism. We shall go on relying on our unpaid contributors to create a genuine Alternative Press but we must also have articles and features which we can only provide if we can pay comrades to undertake commissions which require more time and expense than most of us can provide in our 'spare time'.

The commercial press depends on advertising. We cannot. Years ago George Woodcock and his wife tried to pay contributors to the magazine *Now* (the first six issues of the second series of which were published and financed by *Freedom Press*). They brought out three more issues (*Freedom Press* continued to distribute 2000 copies of each issue) and managed to obtain only five pages of advertisements in all, and as a result *Now* folded.

Our enterprising Italian comrades have over the years organised International conferences of every kind most successfully. The time is ripe for one *On Communicating* anarchism, with a view to establishing the kinds of services which we think would add considerably to the quality and variety of the International Anarchist Press.

Such a conference, we believe, should be one enabled to take decisions. This implies that delegates have been briefed by their groups or organisations after thorough debate on an agreed agenda. Otherwise it is a waste of time however pleasant the social side of such occasions. The much quoted Amsterdam conference of 1907 was supposed to have set up an International Correspondence Committee, which in fact never materialised. And all the spectacular gathering in Venice six years ago produced was a splendid coffee table volume of photographs.

If we are serious about wanting to communicate anarchism and see the task as world wide, then the sooner we can establish an international anarchist information network the more effective our propaganda will be.

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