

Aims & Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

1 The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist-Communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade

and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10 We oppose organised religion and cults and hold to a materialist analysis of capitalist society. We, the working class, can change society through our own efforts. Worshipping an unprovable spiritual realm, or believing in a religious unity between classes, mystifies or suppresses such self-emancipation / liberation. We reject any notion that people can be liberated through some kind of supernatural force. We work towards a society where religion is no longer relevant.

ORGANISE!

...for revolutionary anarchism



The Con-demolition and the Big Society

PLUS

- Professionalisation of the voluntary sector
 - Austerity and Internationalism
 - Back to Work or Backs Against the Wall?
- AND MORE**

75

£2.50 €3.00 Free to prisoners

Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation

Issue 75 - Winter 2010

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas. It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce Organise! twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

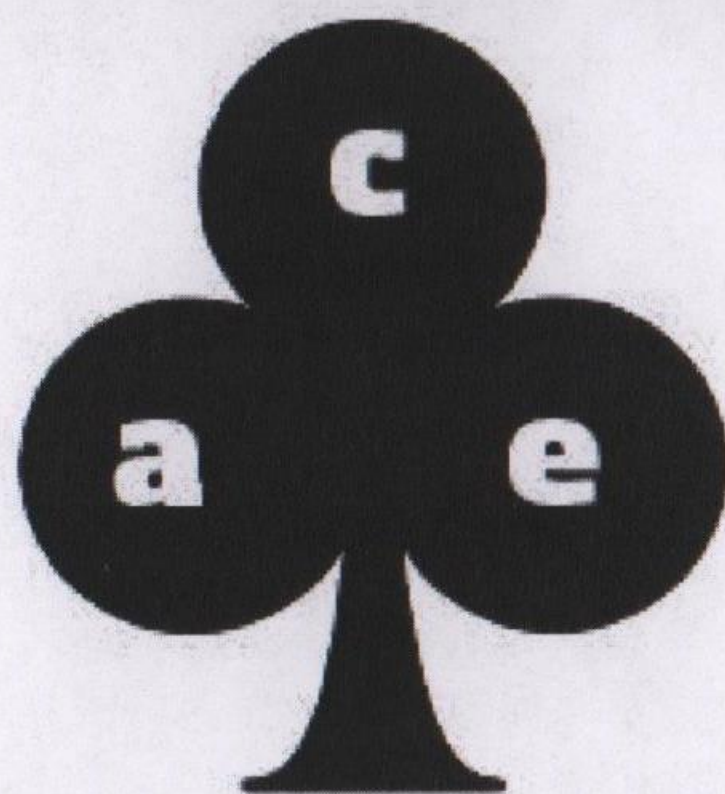
As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from our readers and spur debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of Organise! will be 18th April 2011. Please send all contributions to the address on the right. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc. Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk

What goes in Organise!

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in Organise! reflect the views of the person who has written the article and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!



**Anarchist Communist
Editions**

Anarchist Federation local groups and contacts

Scotland/Alba

scotland@afed.org.uk
<http://scotlandaf.wordpress.com/>

Aberdeen

aberdeen@afed.org.uk

Edinburgh & the Lothians

edinburgh@afed.org.uk

Glasgow

glasgow@afed.org.uk

Striling

stirling@afed.org.uk

Wales/Cymru

cardiff@afed.org.uk
wales@afed.org.uk

England (and all other areas)

BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX,
England, UK
info@afed.org.uk

Birmingham AF (including West Midlands)

birmingham@afed.org.uk

Brighton AF (including Lewes)

brighton@afed.org.uk

Bristol AF

bristol@afed.org.uk
<http://bristolaf.wordpress.com/>

East Anglia AF (including Norwich & Cambs)

eastanglia@afed.org.uk

Hereford AF (including Herefordshire)

hereford@afed.org.uk
www.afed.org.uk/hereford

Hull AF

hull@afed.org.uk
<http://yorks-afed.org>

Kent AF

East Kent
eastkent@afed.org.uk

Leicester AF

leicester@afed.org.uk

Leeds AF

leeds@af-north.org
<http://yorks-afed.org>

Lincoln AF

lincoln@afed.org.uk

Liverpool AF (including Merseyside)

c/o News From Nowhere Bookshop 96
Bold Street
Liverpool L1.
liverpool@af-north.org

London AF

BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX,
England, UK
london@afed.org.uk

Manchester AF

c/o News From Nowhere Bookshop
96 Bold Street
Liverpool, L1.
manchester@af-north.org
<http://www.af-north.org/>

Newcastle AF (including Tyneside)

Anarchist Federation, PO Box ITA, New-
castle Upon Tyne, NE99 1TA
newcastle@af-north.org

Nottingham AF (including Notts)

Box AF c/o The Sumac Centre 245 Glad-
stone Street
Nottingham
NG7 6HX
nottingham@afed.org.uk
mansfield@afed.org.uk
<http://www.afed.org.uk/nottingham/>

Organise! editors

Organise!, BM ANARFED, London,
WC1N 3XX
organise@afed.org.uk

Preston AF (including Blackpool & North Lancs)

preston@af-north.org

Resistance editors

Resistance, BM ANARFED, London,
WC1N 3XX
resistance@afed.org.uk

Sheffield AF

sheffield@af-north.org
<http://yorks-afed.org>

Surrey and Hants AF

surreyhants@afed.org.uk

Worcester AF

worcester@afed.org.uk

York AF

york@af-north.org

Organise! Issue 75 - Winter 2010

Editorial

What's in the latest *Organise!*

4

Tories! Tories! Tories! Have we seen it all before? :
New Conservatism and the Big Society

8

Social Enterprise and the 'professionalisation' of the
voluntary sector

12

Debate

Voluntary communism or voluntary slavery?

16

Sketch

The United Isle of Absinthe (UIA)

18

Back to work, or backs to the wall?

21

Austerity and Internationalism: those Responsible
for the Crisis Should Pay For It!

25

Culture

Stig Dagerman: Anarchist Writer

26

Reviews

28

Obituary

George Fontenis 1921 - 2010

34

Organise!, BM ANARFED, London,
WC1N 3XX organise@afed.org.uk

Subscriptions

Single issues £3.50 (£4.00 non-
UK) inc. postage & packaging.

Annual subscriptions to *Organ-
ise!* (two issues) are available for:
£5.00 inc. postage & packaging
(£6.00 non-UK).

£10.00 supporters

£5.00 to pay for a prisoner's sub-
scription (£6.00 non-UK)

£15.00 institutions

£10.00 for a joint subscription
to *Organise!* and *Resistance* (UK
only).

£6.00 (UK only) Resistance sub.
NB: A year's sub is 10 issues.

£15.00 – Special supporters sub:
brings you *Organise!*, *Resistance*
and all new pamphlets as they
come out (UK only)

This issue of Organise! goes to press on the eve of what will be the fiercest battle the working class in Britain has fought in its self-defence in living memory. At the time of writing, well before the full implications of the spending review to be made public on October 20th will be clear, we are hearing talk of an assault on the most vulnerable, the hardest working and lowest paid sectors that makes the fight back more essential and significant than the Poll Tax rebellion and the great strikes of the 1980s. What the Con-Demolition government proposes is not only institutionalised inequality and attacks on jobs, pay and condi-

Editorial

What's in the latest Organise!

tions; it is the dismantling of the services that currently make it possible to survive poverty, illness and unemployment in Britain, if only just. As such, it is no exaggeration to say that the working class will have to fight for its life.

As anarchists have long pointed out, Capitalism is not self-sustaining, nor even nearly or potentially so. Far from it being the case, as Adam Smith would have had it, that things work best if the state does the minimum, it makes Capitalism more viable by providing national and international infrastructures, education and also a welfare state to provide big business with available, literate and healthy workers which it otherwise could not

afford. This it does by taxing the little we have left over after the bosses have made profits from our labour. We pay the state to subsidise the bosses in exploiting us, in other words.

Capitalism is a kid

But Capitalism is only a few hundred years old. Compared to other economic systems the world has seen, it is still in its infancy. And it is failing already! This isn't a blip. What is happening to Capitalism, now that it is being tested in its most extreme form yet, is that it is collapsing. It has never been more important for anarchists to expose it and offer real alternatives, not just softer versions of

what we have already, with tighter controls on the banks, or whatever. Both state-controlled and libertarian forms of capitalism, and everything in between, have broken down. The system is now not merely being subsidised by the state. It is being kept on a life-support machine whilst our rulers work out what the hell to do next! One thing they are doing is inventing and hyping new ideologies and revisiting old values of self-reliance, hoping we won't notice what is going on and that we will take on some of the blame ourselves. The most obvious of these myths is the idea that civilisation would somehow collapse without Capitalism because it is the peak of human achievement, and it needs our help and self-sacrifice. This justifies the billions being

spent stopping banks collapsing. As we go to press, forty billion Euros are being pumped into criminal outfits like the Anglo-Irish Bank. And this after jobs and benefits have been slashed in austerity measures that the Irish working class were told would solve things. Every effort is being put into masking the fact that Capitalism is not only a system that benefits the few at the expense of the rest. Most historical societies have worked on that basis. Capitalism is based on 'nothing'. There is no actual objective 'wealth', nothing of actual 'use' at the heart of it; nothing of objective 'value' being moved around, between however few people. Through a visit to the 'Isle of Absinthe', we expose the fiction at the heart of Capitalism. We can thank the ConDems for at least making the battle lines between classes clearer than they were to some people under the Labour government, because under Labour thousands of party loyalists continued the

These calls for 'unity' are in fact calls for the working class to disarm itself politically. They are rhetorical and polemical rather than reflecting people's reality.

self-deception that the Party was redeemable and could be realigned along 'socialist' principles. Anarchists identified 'New Labour' as the enemy, just as much as 'Old Tory' had been, from the day Blair was elected and throughout that honeymoon period when those who had voted Labour 'without illusions' actually did believe that 'things could only get better.'

Back to the Future

But that's all in the past, right? Apologists for the Blair-Brown regime are already telling us not to go raking over old coals; we should look to the future and work

with anyone and everyone who will oppose the 'Tory cuts'. We should seek 'unity', not re-open old wounds. But this would let today's cuts-crazy Labour councils off the hook: those that started cutting and planning cuts while Labour were still in power and have continued this since the election without even pausing for thought. And it's not just Labour Party members who are wearing rose-tinted spectacles when they reminisce. The SWP's 'Right to Work' campaign has already gone soft on the poor old Labour Party. That would be the same Labour Party regime opposed by 'Stop

Introduction to Anarchist Communism Anarchist Federation

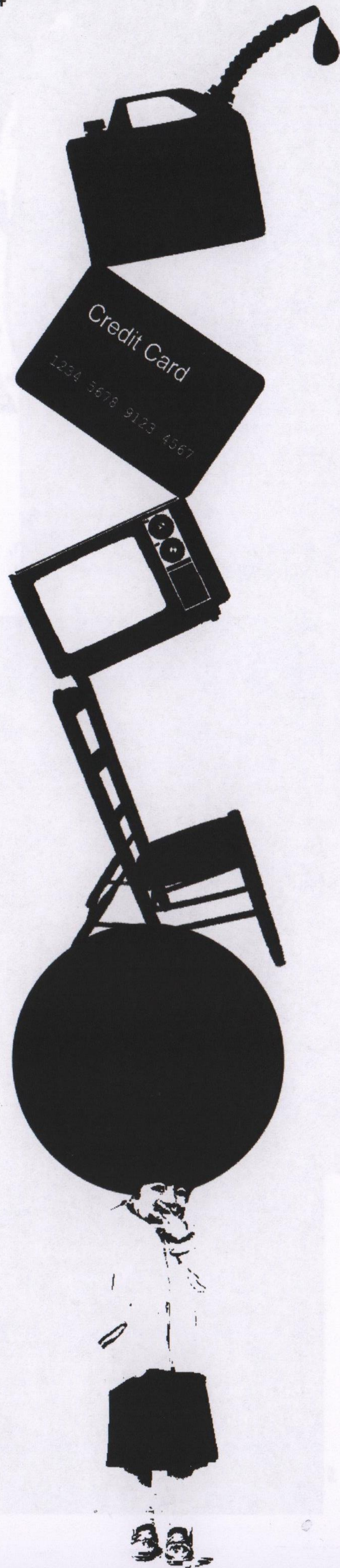
New for March 2010 An Introduction to Anarchist Communism

This pamphlet is made up of two parts that run alongside each other. The main text lays out the fundamental ideas of anarchist communism. Various boxes throughout the text give examples from history to illustrate the ideas described in the main section.

Free download. Printed copies £2.00 +p&p

We recommend online ordering of pamphlets/booklets fully inclusive of postage using Paypal with or without debit/credit card payment (both UK and overseas orders)
www.af-north.org/pamphlets

Printed publications are also available by post from: BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX. England, UK



the War' campaign? The cynicism is almost baffling!

These calls for 'unity' are in fact calls for the working class to disarm itself politically. They are rhetorical and polemical rather than reflecting people's reality. Anarchists have to be clear that we are not 'wreckers' or trouble makers for refusing to collaborate with the class enemy. We must not let official representatives of the Labour Party locally or nationally anywhere near these fragile and still-embryonic anti-cuts coalitions. What would really destroy oppositional unity against austerity measures is the illogicality of allowing people making and supporting the cuts into anti-cuts coalitions.

If we don't expose what took place under New Labour, and the fact that it made possible politically and economically what is taking place now, then all that will happen is that we will be complicit in helping the working class forget about New Labour's crimes and make it more likely that it will be re-elected without being called to account. That means it would be business as usual, and that's what got us here in the first place. *Organise!* hears about how anarchists are telling the truth about this as part of the emerging anti-cuts campaign in Nottingham in 'Aren't Labour as much to blame as the Tories?'.

At the time of writing, a nationwide network of such campaigns is emerging. We think that it is vital that this is accompanied by people in receipt of the range of state benefits organising themselves and

playing a full part in such campaigns along with workers and service users, and that 'claimant power' asserts itself again as it did under Thatcher and Major. We argue it must in 'Back to work, or backs to the wall?' We note in 'Austerity and internationalism' that it is up to anarchists to keep internationalism high on the agenda and refuse to tolerate the ugly nationalism that sometimes bubbles under the surface of labour struggles in Britain, or is imposed on them by the media and far-right.

We're all in it together!

But this issue of *Organise!* is the 'Big Society' issue, and that means that it is about more than fighting for jobs and services. David Cameron's 'Big Society' is another of those ideological assaults on non-state solutions. This one attacks something truly wonderful about human society left to its own devices, removed from the poisons of privilege and personal power. It is the human instinct to co-operate and support each other in improving our lives; doing things to help each other, not for reward but because we know that we are part of one another; because that which hurts you also hurts me. A certain bearded Russian anarchist first identified it and placed value on it in a secular context. He called it 'Mutual Aid'.

'Voluntary Communism or voluntary slavery?' explores the way that in the modern world this takes place both informally, between friends, neighbours and so on, and more formally, in which case it is often called 'volunteering'. Anarchists do it as well and as generously as anyone can, not least because we don't do it believing that we'll go to heaven if we sacrifice a bit of our free

time on earth 'doing things for other people'. We are especially good at enriching and improving the lives of people we encounter because we aren't into acquiring personal status or making money out of other people indirectly, two of the key things that make some 'not-for-profit' outfits not all they seem (and let's include the churches and mosques etc. here again). In fact, we argue that it is part of prefiguring a future anarchist society. This is in part an appeal to anarchists who take pride in living 'below the radar' – squatting, skipping, shop-lifting and living communally – refusing to collect benefits from the DSS or city councils – to also identify with claimants and recognise that not everyone is easily able to live so independently of the state. We are all unemployed workers in relation to capitalism, whether we actually want to work or not. As a class, we will have to find new collective solutions to the problems of housing and feeding ourselves. Those of us living alternative lifestyles without the state have the skills to help, and often have the time and flexibility, but we should do it from within the working class.

Big Society's Big Brother.

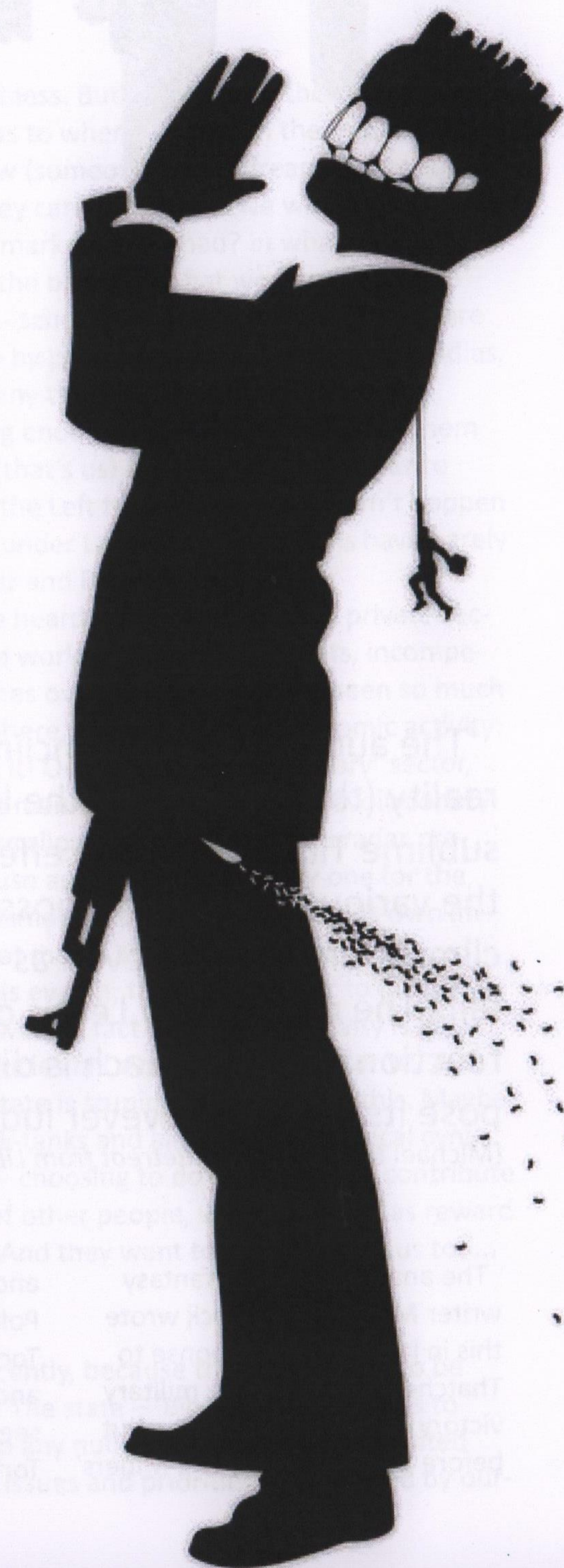
Two other articles, Tories! Tories! Have we seen it all before?' and 'Social Enterprise and the professionalisation of the voluntary sector' offer further perspectives on what is taking place in the voluntary, or 'third' sector (as opposed to the 'public' and 'private' sectors). The 'formal' third sector already offers opportunities for someone qualified in managerialism to make a living out of other people's labour (in this case, their unpaid labour!). And Cameron is about to hand even more power and resources

to informally powerful community and church leaders, patronising philanthropists, nosey-parkers and snitches and the like. So whilst the rhetoric seems to be about handing control back to some vague but ideologically constructed 'community' that doesn't quite resemble any community we have ever identified with, we look at where the power and the resources actually lie and at the middle-class fear of what we could call 'un-managed' communities, the antithesis of the idealist Cameronite 'community' that informs his apparently libertarian ideology. Again as part of encouraging a generalised fight-back against attacks on working class people, in 'Back to work, or backs to the wall?' we look at the likely impact of changes to the welfare state, the one thing that stands between thousands of people in Britain and destitution (well, that and the work we do for each other voluntarily).

Thought and culture

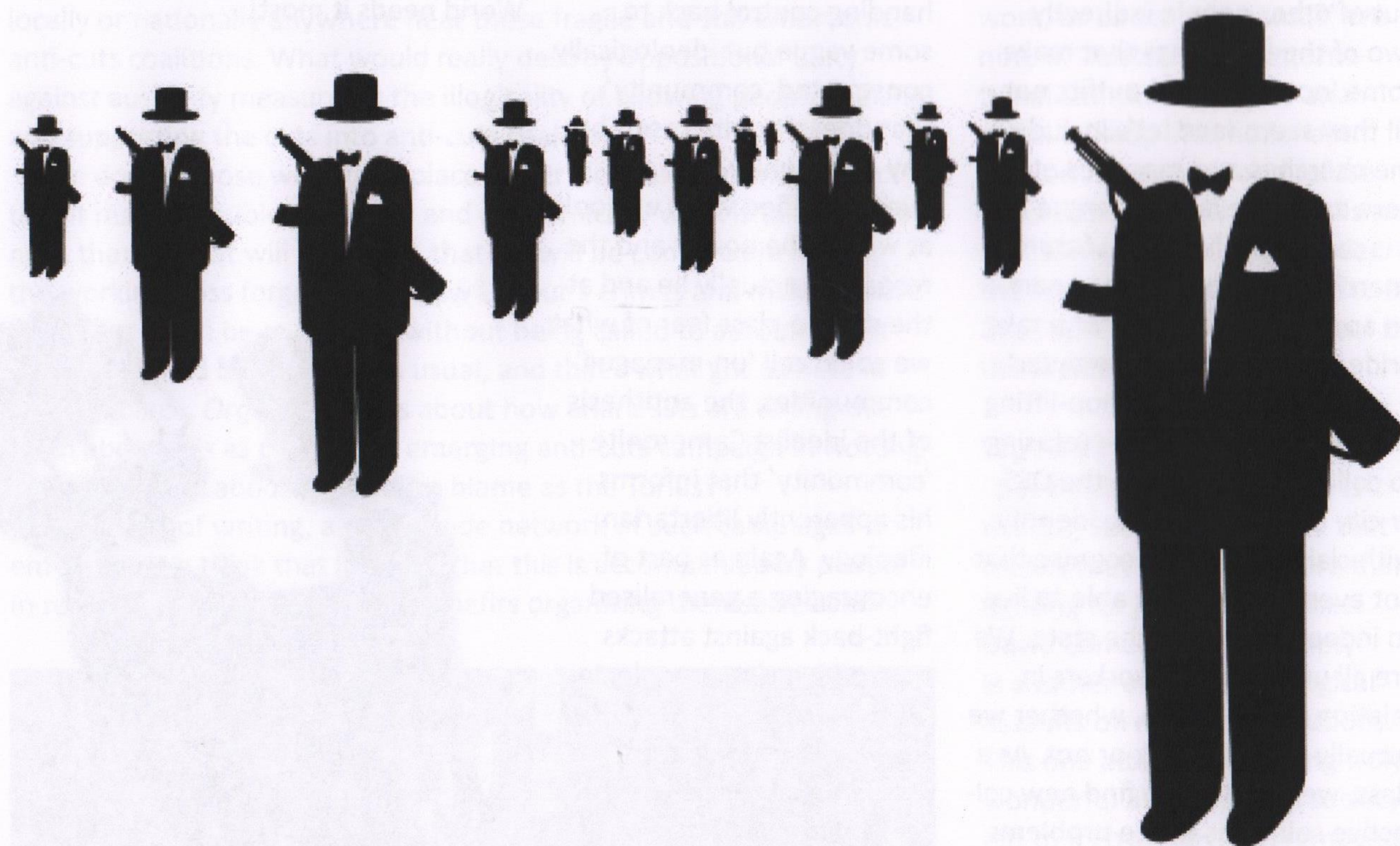
We've obviously been reading and thinking a lot too! It's cheap, after all. We review five publications in total, including two by Miguel Garcia (1908-81), one on 'neurosexism', and two on historical anarchism, from Bristol to Barcelona! We also explore the art of Stig Dagerman (1923-54). And we remember the theory and highly controversial practices of French anarchist Georges Fontinis (1921-2010), who's *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism* we translated as the Anarchist Communist

Federation, and which has given us food for thought ever since. So let's re-read the old guys and nurture and support new ideas and new revolutionary practices, and raise the profile of anarchist-communism now that the World needs it most!



Tories! Tories! Tories!

Have we seen it all before? : New Conservatism and the Big Society



'The authoritarian...is inclined to place heavy emphasis on Order when in reality (they have) only the limited imagination to visualise a kind of sublime Tidying Up. The effect is that, while the apparent Chaos is halted, the various channels of possibility which operate in a less restricted social climate are blocked even as conventional solutions are patently seen to fail...The reactionary Left is quite as capable of stifling possibilities as the reactionary Right...Each is divorced from actuality but determined to impose its dream, however ludicrously ill-fitted, upon our world'

(Michael Moorcock, *The Retreat from Liberty*, Bee in a Bonnet Books, 1983, p. 9).

The anarchist science fantasy writer Michael Moorcock wrote this in late 1983 in response to Thatcherism and British military victory in the Falklands War, but before the epoch-defining Miners'

and Printers' strikes and the anti-Poll Tax insurrection. In this new Tory Age, with all the rhetoric and bluster it has ushered in, it seems useful to recall an anti-Tory analysis that is less sloga-

neering and more nuanced in its understanding of 'Conservatism' and 'Socialism' than the opponents of Toryism would become. With Moorcock, Tory ideology is well-understood for what it was:

a feature of authoritarianism, but just one feature of it.

Certainly his understanding is subtler than that of a modern Left which hasn't skipped a beat between "Maggie! Maggie! Maggie! Out! Out! Out!" then, and "Tories! Tories! Tories!, blah blah blah" now. This parroting of old approaches says more about the poverty of the Left's analysis than about the genuine similarities between the two eras. In fact, the more obvious similarity is with New Labour, because before too long it stopped feeling much 'better' than it did under Old Tory, even to many in the Labour Party. If one thing was clear, it was that nothing was clear. New Labour was just a shade of grey. It took some people a long time to work out what 'non-socialist Labour' meant, for party members to realise that they were collaborating with something almost as sinister and culpable as Thatcherism. It took them less time to go into denial about it.

So does the return of the Tories make it simple again? Can we pick up where we left off? After the confusion of 'right' and 'left-wing' meta-narratives that was Blair and Brown, not at all.

Getting what you voted for

It isn't only that things went so far under New Labour that the tide cannot be turned back; that much of what has taken place is dystopian. In terms of the economy and its centrality to human life, we have experienced attacks on the public sector so savage that they could not have been anticipated and can never be reversed. That doesn't take much analysing.

The private sector has taken us by surprise though! Recently it has impoverished even the first world, and all behind Gordon Brown's

In terms of the economy and its centrality to human life, we have experienced attacks on the public sector so savage that they could not have been anticipated and can never be reversed. That doesn't take much analysing.

back too. That was bad for business. But even before the current crisis, Capitalism had drawn a blank as to where to go with the 'respectable' Capitalism we thought we knew (someone with a dream makes something useless and shiny that they can convince us we want, and sells it to us). Where were the new markets to be had? In what we already owned, that's where. So, now the basics of what we need, what we pay the state to provide for us - schools, healthcare, care homes - are carved up and sold at cut price by politicians to their business buddies, who sell them back to us at many times what they paid.

But the profits still weren't big enough and so they generated them out of thin air. So now the fat (that's us) has to be trimmed: hence 'The Cuts'. And let's not allow the Left to forget that this didn't happen under the Tories. It happened under Labour. The ConDems have barely had time to continue what Blair and Brown started.

But whoever started it, we've heard both the public and private sector stories before and seen the world carved up by tyrants, incompetents and the greedy many times over. What we haven't seen so much of yet is attacks on the final sphere of human social-economic activity: 'Mutual Aid', as anarchists call it! Or the 'third' or 'voluntary' sector, both formal and informal, as it manifests itself in a non-revolutionary context. Somehow, voluntarism slipped under the state's radar previously as something it could use against us. It's a tricky one for the State though. It will need to dismantle it and re-build it in its own image, because currently it's what makes the World go round.

This is what Moorcock had his eye on; the fact that, left to ourselves, we can sort things out pretty well. In fact this kind of activity is essential where centralist tendencies fail even in their own terms. But Moorcock assumed that the state is stupid in not realising this. Maybe it was, in the days before think-tanks and all-pervasive political cynicism. Now, voluntary activity - choosing to do something to contribute to the health and happiness of other people, with only itself as reward - is itself being commodified. And they want to sell it back to us too...

The 'Big Society'

Anarchist ears pricked up recently, because the Tories seem to be quoting our own canon at us! The state - 'Big Government' - is to be 'rolled back'. We can set up any number of community-initiated projects in response to social issues and priorities as identified by our-

selves. "Get on the blower! Into the streets! It's time for the working class to take over!"

Nah...you can't have both autonomy and a state, however hands off it wants to be. Instead, the ConDems' 'Big Society' means the commodification of already existing mutual solutions and collective invention, to make sure that we don't forget who is really in charge. Cameron said at the Big Society's launch, "The Big Society is one in which we all try and do more. We don't just look to Government to solve the many problems that we have, we actually look to ourselves,

to voluntary bodies, to companies, to charities, to all of those things, to build a bigger, richer country." (Maybe Scotland, Wales and the north of Ireland will be exempt?!).

Cameron's 'Big Society' speech was, on the face of it, so vague and insubstantial that it was actually difficult to work out what he really meant, let alone to find anything objectionable in it from anything other than an anarchist perspective. It isn't entirely clear to what extent he knows himself what his Big Society and some of its lovely

sub-categories actually mean in practice. But it is clearer what ideology it values and what it actually masks. Let's just call it 'B.S.' for b*** sh**t.

Here's our interpretation of the B.S. briefing document:

B.S. Communities: The state displays it's benevolence towards four, hand-picked compliant communities in the country, ones that might have actually done OK with good public services in the first place.

B.S. Bank: Dormant bank accounts to be seized to help fund worthy projects. What about seizing some very active massively fat bank accounts?

'Communities First': Supporting selected, compliant community schemes.

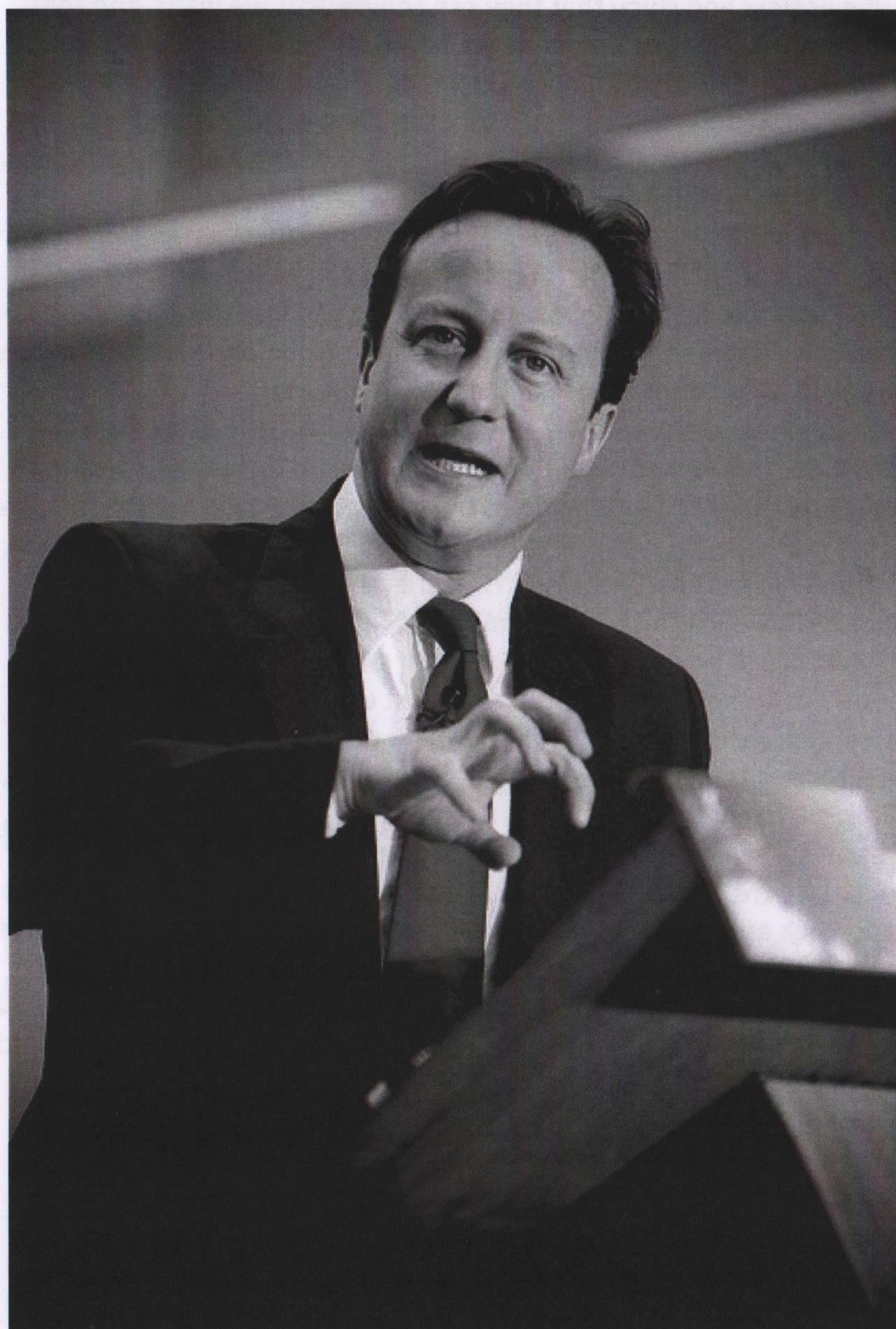
Pathfinder mutuals: Again, projects that might have been OK with some funding get micro-managed as potentially profitable 'social enterprises'.

B.S. deregulation taskforce: OK that just sounds scary...and centralised, ironically...

Decentralisation and Localism Bill – this will devolve greater powers to councils: to the same idiots that have ruined our communities, using our money, in the first place.

'Big Society Network' - These vacuous losers came up with the idea in the first place and the Tories pinched it: <http://www.thebigsociety.co.uk/>.

National Citizen Service: Young people must 'volunteer', or else!



the voluntary sector's first response was to positively fume at Cameron's claim to have worked out how to fix something that would have fallen apart long ago if it wasn't for the millions of hours of voluntary work undertaken in Britain each year.

Let's look at the last one of these in more detail, and suggest a way to fight it.

A rock and a hard place: National Citizen Service

From July 2011 pilots of Cameron's 'National Citizen Service' will start. He observes, "There is a tragic waste of potential in this country today. The young people of this country are as passionate and idealistic as any generation before – perhaps more passionate. But too many teenagers appear lost and feel their lives lack shape and direction. National Citizen Service will help change that. A kind of non-military national service, it's going to mix young people from different backgrounds in a way that doesn't happen right now. It's going to teach them what it means to be socially responsible. Above all it's going to inspire a generation of young people to appreciate what they can achieve and how they can be part of the Big Society".

Although authoritarians in government have argued vaguely for the re-introduction of National Service since the 1960s, for at least a decade it has been clear

that an attempt to make this 'military' would likely result in a civil war! Instead, the state has worked towards tying up our time and energies on projects that it defines as socially useful. Again, Cameron cannot take the credit. Gordon Brown was working with the sinister-sounding company simply called 'v' (*sic*, for 'volunteer', presumably) to realise his vision of compulsory 'national youth community service' for the under-19s. Brown was actually planning to force us to be good citizens!

The Tories, wisely, pulled the plug on that partnership. They have gone solo and softened the 'compulsory' element slightly. In the NCS briefing document Cameron says: "My original idea was that it should be compulsory, like national service was, to make it something the whole country could do together. But youth leaders told me that would have been the kiss of death". No shit! Nonetheless, the message is confusing and the voluntary sector is talking about 'voluntary pilot schemes', as opposed to the compulsory real thing?

But is legal compulsion the issue anyway? What would actually have happened to people refus-

ing to take part? Prison? A fine? What? But the 'black mark' on the school or college reference could make or break you by the age of 19. So the result is the same, 'compulsion' or otherwise: what will happen when employers look at the CVs of young people who don't take part? This scheme is set to make an even clearer distinction than ever between compliant youth and those who are disenfranchised or subversive.

But defiance or non-co-operation on the part of individuals is only a partial solution, because even when you leave school or college their power over your reference remains. The only solution is mass-refusal by young people with the support of their communities, their parents and even their teachers. Anarchist youth organisations have never been more important than they are right now!

What is really going on?

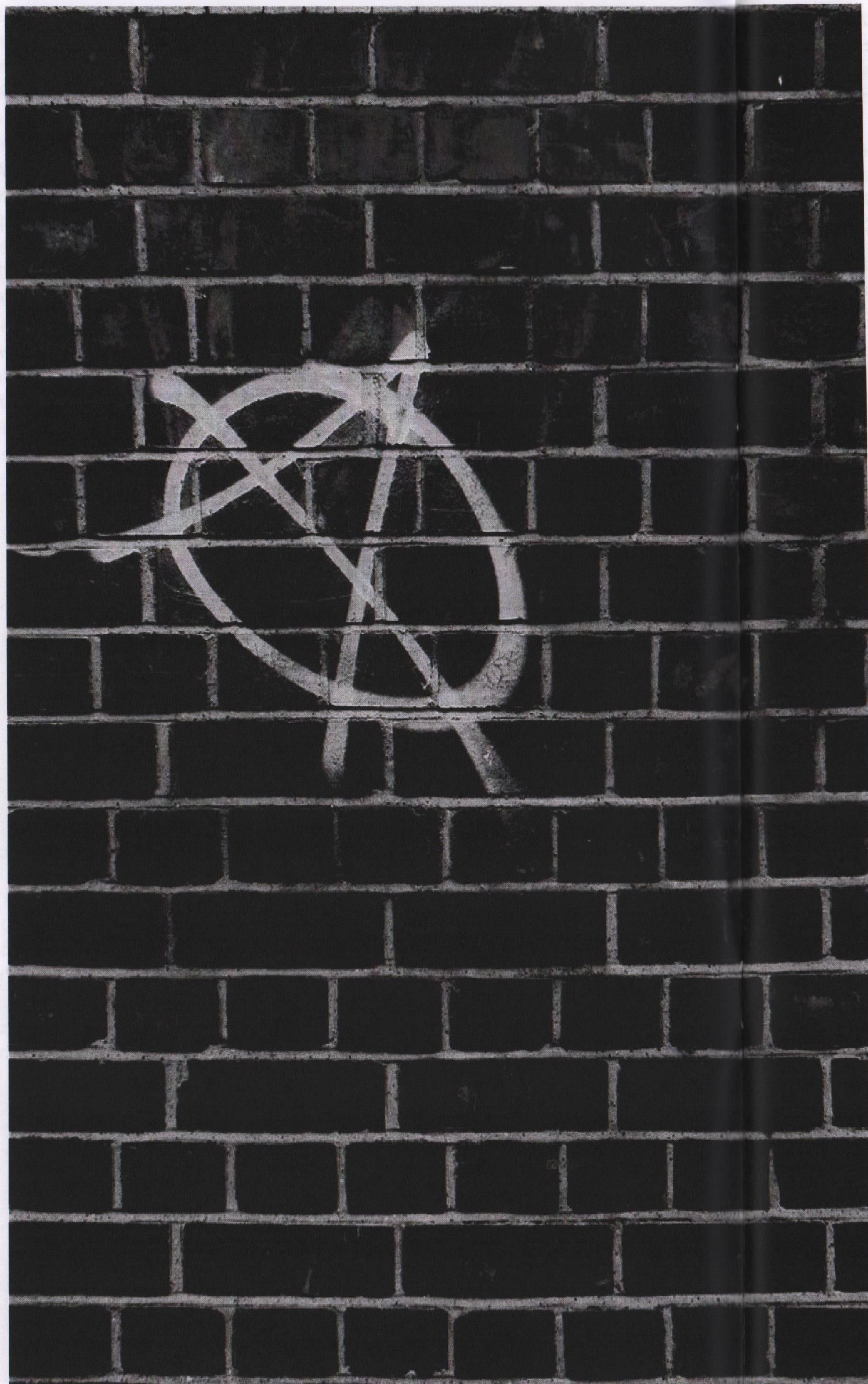
One thing is immediately clear and it doesn't take an anarchist to spot it: Big Society is an attempt to conceal Big Cuts. Even the liberal-minded intellectuals and 'think-tanks' are naturally responding with the obvious objection that none of this will work without funding; that communities where there is money don't have as many problems to solve in the first place; that communities that are poor have seen state support withdrawn under New Labour and the local state, and won't see it coming back under the Tories, 'Big Society' or otherwise. Without funding and support, any amount of good will and any number of willing hands are not enough to address most of the social and economic problems ordinary people would identify as the ones that they

face.

Not all the catches are as easily spotted though. Central is the concept of mending what Cameron famously calls our 'broken society'. The problem here is, in what way is society 'broken'? Certainly not in that people don't do things for each other already, and for no quantifiable reward either. In fact, the voluntary sector's first response was to positively fume at Cameron's claim to have worked out how to fix something that would have fallen apart long ago if it wasn't for the millions of hours of voluntary work undertaken in Britain each year.

But there are so many things wrong with the most formalised and 'professional' elements of the third economic sector. Like the world of work, the 'formal' voluntary sector is dominated by middle class professionals, building careers on other people's graft and telling working class people what to do. Not least is that many of the roles it plays let the state off the hook for under-funding the public sector. One new volunteer at what used to be a hostel for vulnerable women, which has had its funding slashed, worked out that she was doing what used to be someone's job, and with only six-days training. Such stories are commonplace already.

If the voluntary sector won't stand up to the



Cuts in the same way as the public sector and its users must, Cameron will win ideologically. More than ever we need to make explicit the connections between the three economic sectors – public, private and voluntary – and the combined power of workplace and community activism. That 'informal' voluntary sector – where people respond to each other's needs spontaneously and with unmeasured reciprocity, in a self-organised way – cannot be sold out by the unions, local councils and petty-politicians, self-made community leaders, philanthropic business people, and the churches and mosques.

This is vital because it is with the latter groups that Cameron actually wants to place the 'Big Society's Money' (OK not with the unions, but with other bodies that mediate between the working class and the state and neutralise the real threat we pose). The think tanks haven't flagged this up, because they are part of this problem. The state will be very picky about who within a community gets to dominate. This has to happen because the state does not want to turn the informal power structures that govern many communities on their heads at all. This is in part about vested interests but also about something else. The middle class is worried about what might actually happen if you remove the state from working class

communities. Cameron's vision is still the nanny-state, but a small nanny-state. He will never turn control over to the working class. It is about playing on, rather than not addressing, the middle class' fear of 'Chaos', as Moorcock put it.

Disorder! Disorder!

Deprived communities left to their own devices – even empowered to make decisions for themselves – are terrifying to the middle class. The New Economic Foundation states: '(W)e do need a strategic state that is democratically controlled, and that becomes an effective facilitator, broker, enabler, mediator and protector of our shared interests. Without a properly functioning state, society collapses'. The Young Foundation says of schemes like the B.S. internationally, '(o)ften the spaces left by government were filled by organised crime or gangs...the countries where civil society is strongest are also the ones with active government'. Brendan Barber, the TUC's General Secretary, said at the TUC conference that cuts would make Britain a 'darker, brutish and more frightening place.' Sorry...what, or who, exactly are they afraid of?

This fear is of what Moorcock meant by 'apparent Chaos'. This means state fear of autonomy, of people living outside what it prescribes for us, coming up with their own solutions. Instead, the Left and the centre-Left want an over-regulated, micro-managed nanny-state to stop us looking after ourselves, because we can't do it properly. The Tories also think we can't look after ourselves, but won't allow what we really need to be independent of it. They just fund the police, to force us into compliancy.

This is not to say that our communities would thrive if the state pulled out and left us to our own devices. Some of us might have said differently in Thatcher's '80s, when class politics resurfaced in the anarchist movement convincingly again. We celebrated our communities. Only anarchists realised that the workplace had been defeated as the major arena of struggle and that the 'community' was where the power lay. At this year's TUC conference Bob Crow spoke of how the unions must lead the working class as they did against the Poll Tax. Was he actually there? The unions failed the working class entirely, too afraid in the main even to ask their members not to co-operate with the tax.

But the truth is that working class communities are mostly in tatters. Trying to address this on a practical level takes up so much of anarchists' time that we have to think hard to remember why we are doing this: to make a new world, not fix the old one. But we deny that there is genuine 'chaos' in the first place. What exist instead are the very predictable and inevitable social problems that are the result of poverty, the fear of poverty, and of shattered dreams. It will take more than being allowed to run the services we already pay the state to run, to change that.

Social Enterprise and the 'professionalisation' of the voluntary sector

Question: What would you call an organisation that employs a Finance Director at £70,000 while relying on unpaid labour for the bulk of its operations?

Answer: A social enterprise.

This is the new face of charity and the voluntary sector (now more often 'the third sector') where the charitable impulse rubs up against cut-throat business practices. Many of us are involved with voluntary organisations, not least because as anarchists (as human beings) we want to make a difference in peoples' lives: we know that as social beings our well-being is linked to the well-being of all those around us. But increasingly the voluntary sector is being seen not as a vocation, but as a career, and with that comes the 'career ladder', with highly-paid managers and directors remote from the work of caring.

The language and practice of business is being introduced to voluntary sector groups and organisations with wide-eyed promises of its dynamism and innovation but without critique of its negative effects. Similar rhetoric has been applied to the public sector in the last 15 years. There too, no-one has bothered to explain why methods designed to extract

maximum monetary value make sense when meeting peoples' needs. Cutting wages makes sense if your mission is to make as much profit as possible for shareholders from your workers. But if a poverty advice service fails to pay its workers a living wage then something is going wrong, business sense or not.

When there's a crisis, we work harder

Of course, people have always volunteered their time to help others. We don't think of it as work and when there's a crisis, we work harder for our friends and neighbours than we ever would for money. The emergence of a new type of voluntary organisation points towards this unpaid, free, voluntary 'labour' becoming a new source of profit for the propertied class. A new frontier in exploitation that goes hand-in-hand with 'Big Society' rhetoric from the Prime Minister. Consider this definition of a social enterprise: 'a business or service with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.' [<http://communityfirst.org.uk/>

social-enterprise.htm]

It sounds reasonable, but it leaves loopholes you can drive a community transport minibus through. What kind of 'social objectives?' Notice that it's defined as a business first. What happens when business 'needs' run counter to the social objectives – which are dropped first? There's also nothing to stop any money raised from being diverted to executive pay or bonuses instead of its intended cause.

Examples of long-term positive change brought about by social enterprises are thin on the ground. Admittedly it is a relatively new field, but innovative, life-changing projects existed before this new fashion. Though results are lacking, we can sense the approach of several of the private sector's worst habits. Chief among these are increasing wage differences between those at the top of an organisation and those at the bottom.

Managers and directors

A voluntary organisation needs volunteers and a minimum of administration, but a social enterprise needs managers and directors. Now that its purpose is defined as making money to achieve its social aims (instead of just achieving its social aims), the

logic dictates that it must think like a business. Businesses pay their directors many multiples of what they pay their workers, not because they are more valuable but because they set the rules. Large charitable organisations are starting to move in this direction, with CEOs on six-figure salaries. The Anchor Trust's chief executive paid himself £391,000 in 2008-9, while workers at the Trust's elderly care homes were on little more than the minimum wage. This is despicable but makes sense in the social enterprise world. Consultants and training courses are also on the increase – offering variable quality advice at a price beyond the reach of individuals and small voluntary organisations.

The relationship between the voluntary and public sectors throws up interesting conflicts. Income from public sector contracts rose from 18% to 23% in the 2 years from 2007-9 in Scot-

land (Third Force News, 21 May 2010). Most of these are in the social care sector (53% of public funding), where local councils are 'contracting out' these services to lower-paying third sector groups. Recent conflicts over contracting out in Edinburgh have shown that for the state, voluntary sector organisations are a useful way to reduce the wage bill and the number of unionised workplaces by shifting the work to lower-paid and more precarious positions (pay in the charity sector is 21% below that of the private sector). Charitable or voluntary sector status makes this more palatable than full privatisation. After a successful fight against council proposals to cut the rate for care work through a 'lowest bid wins' tendering process, some organisations approached the City Council to offer to take the work at that lower rate regardless.

Conflict is set to spread as the

public sector implements cuts and seeks to 'contract out' those cuts to voluntary organisations as much as possible. This would allow them to claim fewer redundancies and avoid fights with their own workforces, among the last bastions of organised workers in the UK (no matter how tame they can be). Voluntary work remains vital, life-affirming and valuable as our active expression of our shared life as a community. It's crucial that we don't allow it to be co-opted by parasitic business practices and a government dead-set on paring back social provision under the guise of 'society'. Highly paid bosses are even less welcome in the voluntary sector than in the private sector. As for Cameron's version of the Big Society? We'll run the libraries unpaid and unfunded once the banks and the army are run the same way, not before.

if a poverty advice service fails to pay its workers a living wage then something is going wrong, business sense or not.



Voluntary communism or voluntary slavery?

The government's Big Society initiative harks back to attitudes popular amongst the ruling class in the Victorian era. Back then the idea of the state looking after the basic needs of working class people would have seemed ridiculous to their top-hatted capitalist employers. It took generations of working class struggle until the 'social democratic consensus' emerged after the Second World War, when all political parties became convinced of the need for a welfare state to appease the workers' movement and ensure the continued existence of capitalism. Before this, notions of self-help and the 'deserving poor' justified the lack of state intervention in working people's lives. The 'respectable' rich would aid the 'deserving' through charities, and everyone else would be expected to either achieve some miraculous rags-to-riches transformation or die in a gutter because they were supposedly too lazy to.

Propping up big business

What this Liberal economic ideology masks is the fact that volunteers, either in charities or community 'self-help' projects are effectively aiding the rich, not the poor. Our labour cannot be exploited to make profits if we are dead, or too hungry, sick or psychologically and physically exhausted to work. If 'voluntary' associations or the state fulfill the tasks that enable us to be fit enough to keep working, then our bosses can pay us less and make more profit. If the state (which is

a boss as well) has to pay less people because the voluntary sector has taken on more and more of these functions, then it can spend more on what Liberal economic theory calls its essential functions: propping up big business and 'security' (attacking the working class through the militarisation of society at home and imperialist war abroad).

This is basically what's happening now. More and more of us are being expected to perform essential tasks for the running of a capitalist economy without getting paid through the recent reforms to the benefits system, the cuts to the public sector, and the State's promotion of the voluntary sector. All this amounts to voluntary slavery to a system that exploits, oppresses and murders us as a class.

But if we're dead from poverty, oppression or overwork we can't struggle against Capitalism either, and this is why class-struggle Anarchists are not opposed to 'volunteering' as such. In fact the future society we are fighting for is often described as 'voluntary communism' - a world in which people collectively fulfill the tasks necessary for the functioning of society, not out of coercion by governments or the wage system, but of their own free will. And despite the fact that it is painfully obvious that this society has not yet been achieved, it is generally true that almost all anarchists are involved in 'volunteering' work in one form or another.

There are many reasons for this, not all of them related to the class struggle or anarchist ideas in general. Someone may be a revolutionary militant by day and an ordinary helpful neighbour by night, looking after next door's kids or something. But there is a connection between the revolutionary struggle and certain kinds of voluntary activities in the here-and-now through what we might call 'active prefiguration'.

Active prefiguration

Almost everyone has had thoughts or conversations along the lines of "in an ideal world how would we organise x,y or z?". It is a human trait to imagine how things might be better than they are now, and for anarchists the question would simply be phrased more precisely: "in a classless stateless society, how would we organise x,y or z?"

This is prefiguration, and it is one of the things that make anarchists different from nihilists who believe simply in smashing to pieces the existing system and refuse to suggest better alternatives to it. Despite the annoying fact that we are usually portrayed as exactly the same as nihilists, we are not, and theorising about better alternatives to hierarchy, capitalism and the state has been one of the hallmarks of our movement. Some of the most important anarchist thinkers dedicated years of their lives to trying to answer such questions, such as Peter Kropotkin who collected data on the possibilities of small scale ag-

riculture and industry by travelling the world inspecting farms and workshops for Fields, Factories and Workshops, trying to prove that a society made up of small productive communes federated together would be able to produce at least as much, or more, than capitalism did. Errico Malatesta, in his essay 'Lets Destroy... And Then?' went as far as to say that unless anarchists had enough well thought out practical alternatives to the state and capitalism that could be put into effect immediately following a successful insurrection, any revolution would

be doomed to failure because society's needs would not be met.

The Home Secretary's face

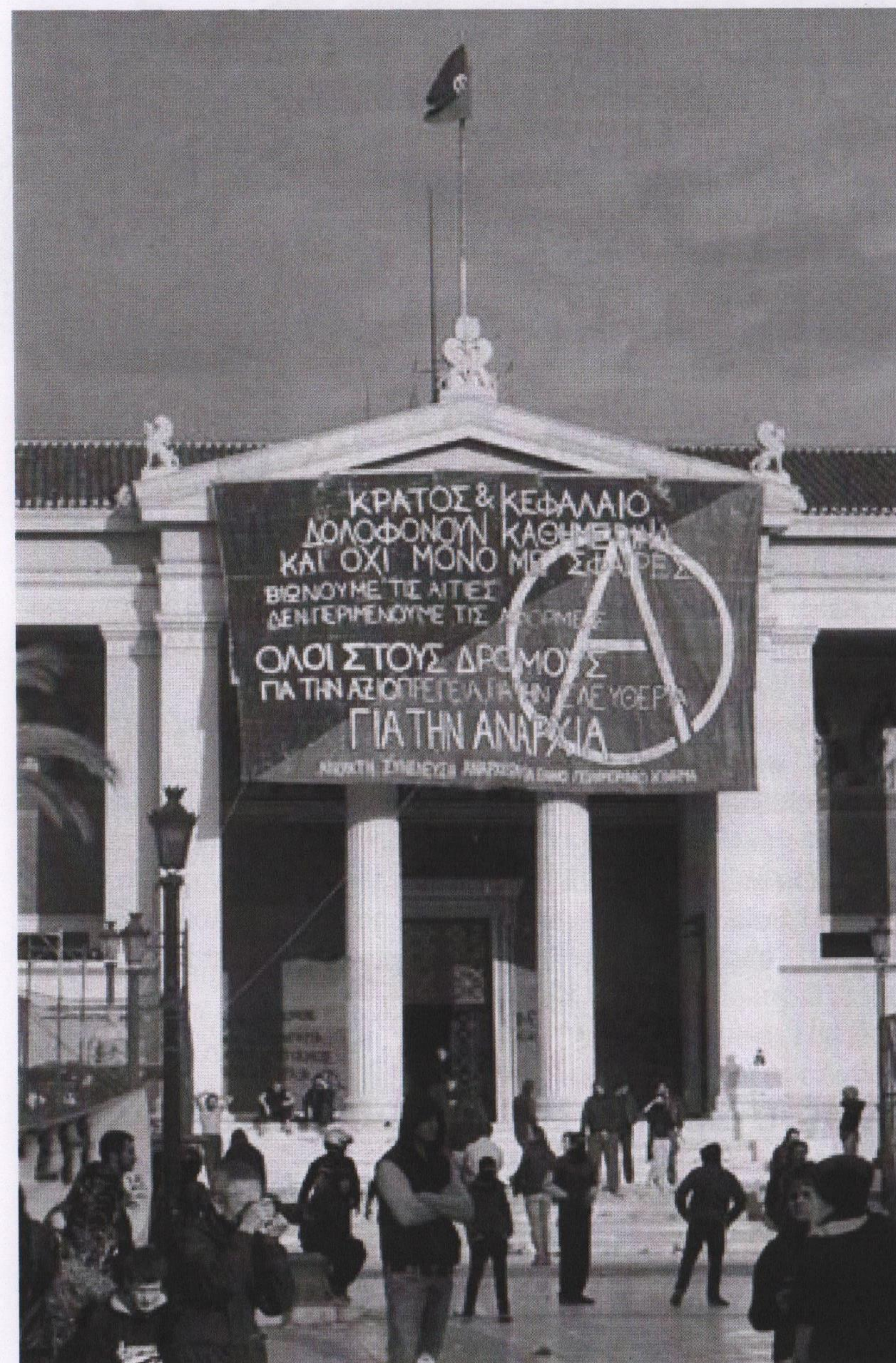
But we cannot come up with successful anarchist communist alternatives to essential social institutions by simply sitting around thinking about them. Wherever possible, we must actually put these ideas into place to see if they really work or not. Of course, under the present system our ability to perform such experiments in post-revolutionary organising is extremely limited. We

cannot, for example, take away the police for a day and replace them with peoples' militias and see what the effect would be (though the expression on the Home Secretary's face if we suggested that might be interesting).

There are spaces though where limited experimentation with anarchist communist ways of organising is possible though. Many environmentally minded anarchists are involved in 'eco village' projects, where in a limited space which has either been occupied illegally or paid for, people try to manage their relationship to their environment and to one another in radically different ways, such as using permaculture to grow food and building structures with sustainable or recycled materials. In many squatting scenes around the country (those that aren't completely dominated by drug and alcohol abuse) people also experiment with different ways of managing their social relationships, through communal ownership of food and other resources. Many anarchists are also involved in 'temporary autonomous zones' where art, music and other activities are organised in radically different ways. In such 'anarchist subcultures' there have also been increasing attempts to develop practical alternatives to the police in collectively dealing with issues such as sexual assault and other forms of violence, with differing levels of success.

Genuinely revolutionary struggle

Interesting as many of these projects may be, they can only play a very small part in genuinely revolutionary struggle, as they only involve a tiny minority of the working class. But prefiguration is also something anarchists apply to our revolutionary activities in



The United Isle of Absinthe (UIA)

I'm not going to conclude anything for you. I'll just tell you a story: you draw your own conclusion. I'll explain how the financial system works and why are we in crisis.

Let us assume we - Me, You and John Smith - flew on an aircraft over Pacific Ocean. On the way we three get drunk on absinthe. We break off the door of the toilet. For this they throw us in the sea through the emergency exit. Luckily enough, next to the point of our impact was a small nameless Polynesian island. After being washed to the coast, we consulted, and decided to consider this island a new state: The United Isle of Absinthe (UIA).

When they threw out us of the aircraft, naturally our luggage did not follow us. So, our only material and tangible asset is the toilet door, which You managed to keep with you. And in spite of the absinthe, you prove to be thriftiest - you have £100 with you in your wallet.

This is our economy. We have one real estate asset - a door, worth £100. With Your £100 our national assets total £200.

When we sober up, we decide that it is necessary to settle in somehow. The fastest of us

proves to be John Smith. He is a man of work: he can't just lie down and not do anything. He declares that he has created a bank and it is ready to take our money for 3% interest.

You give him the £100 and he writes it in his notebook into articles of "Liabilities ->Debits". But I, who wasted my time learning about the financial world, know how to get that £100 and the door as well. I propose to You to borrow £100 from you for 5% APR. I pull out a page of my notebook and write on it, "Promise for £100 at 5% APR".

You think that you have got lucky. You withdraw your money from John Smith's bank and you lend it to me in exchange for my Promise.

I take your £100 and deposit it into John Smith's bank. Obviously it's time for us to stop, go shake a palm tree to get some coconuts, or dive to catch couple of crayfish, or work out what to eat tomorrow.

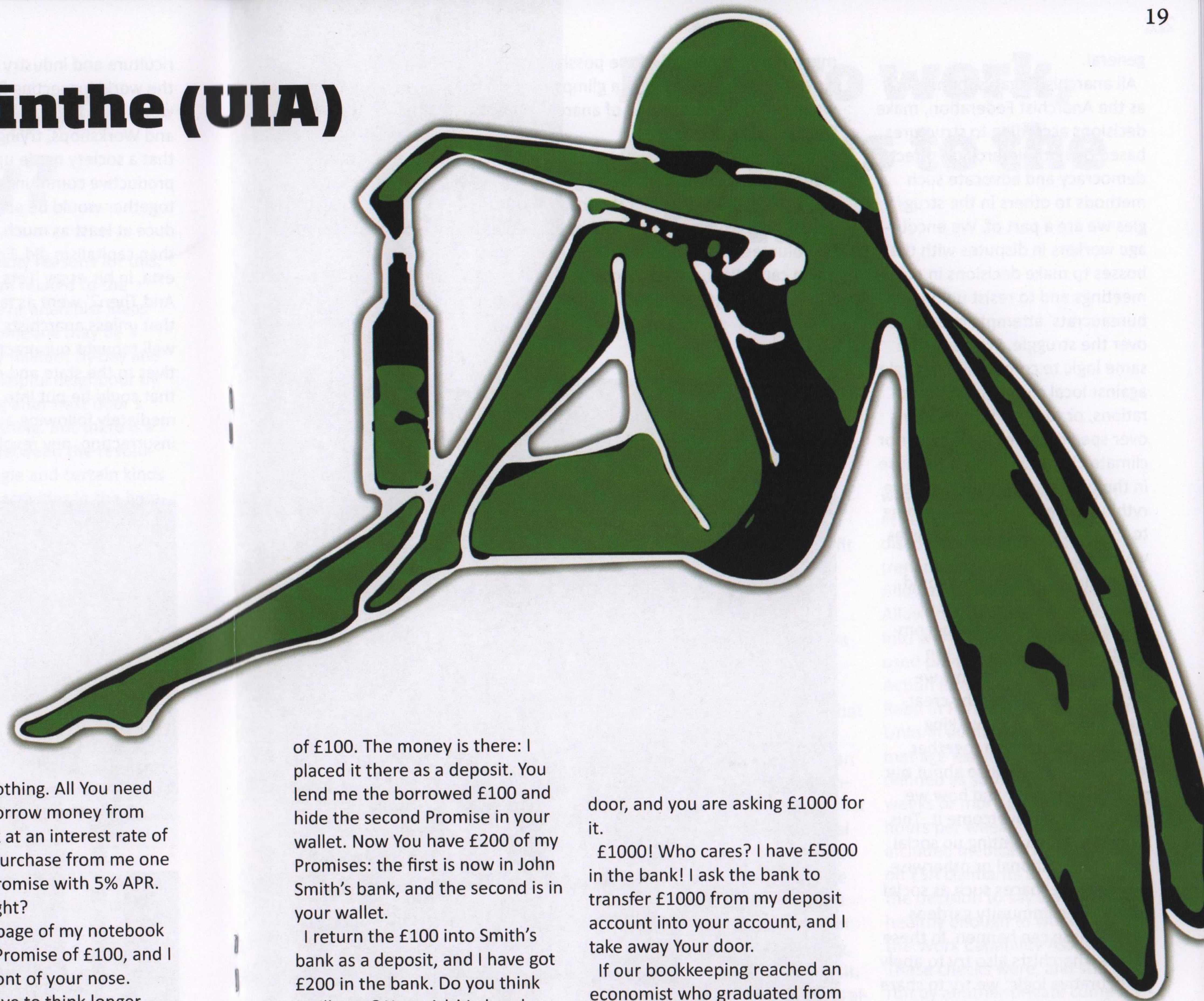
If you think so, you don't know Me! While I was walking across the island, 50 steps to the north and back, I created a genius financial scheme!

I approach You and tell you how you can earn 1% more annu-

ally out of nothing. All You need to do is to borrow money from Smith's bank at an interest rate of 4%, and to purchase from me one additional Promise with 5% APR. Simple!!! Right?

I write on a page of my notebook the second Promise of £100, and I wave it in front of your nose. You don't have to think longer than a second. You run into the bank and borrow £100 under the guarantee of my first Promise

Only complete idiots would spend the whole day playing with pages from a notebook instead of collecting coconuts and making fishing nets. Which of them is right? You decide...



of £100. The money is there: I placed it there as a deposit. You lend me the borrowed £100 and hide the second Promise in your wallet. Now You have £200 of my Promises: the first is now in John Smith's bank, and the second is in your wallet.

I return the £100 into Smith's bank as a deposit, and I have got £200 in the bank. Do you think I will stop? You wish! I already wrote out a third Promise for you...

In the evening, after ripping all pages from my note book of Promises, we have the following picture: You have £5000 worth of my Promises, while I have £5000 deposited in John Smith's bank. Now, I feel, is the right time to get Your door! I propose to purchase it from You for £100. But You are the clever one. There is only one

door, and you are asking £1000 for it.

£1000! Who cares? I have £5000 in the bank! I ask the bank to transfer £1000 from my deposit account into your account, and I take away Your door.

If our bookkeeping reached an economist who graduated from Oxford, he would say that the economy of UIA has £1000-worth of real-estate assets - the door - and £10,000 in financial assets in the form of Promises and Deposits. So, the value of our national assets increased by more than 2200% in one day!

A less well educated person would say that we are three morons, given that all we have is one door, which didn't increase in value, and £100 in cash. Only

complete idiots would spend the whole day playing with pages from a notebook instead of collecting coconuts and making fishing nets. Which of them is right? You decide...but this is the system we live in.

general.

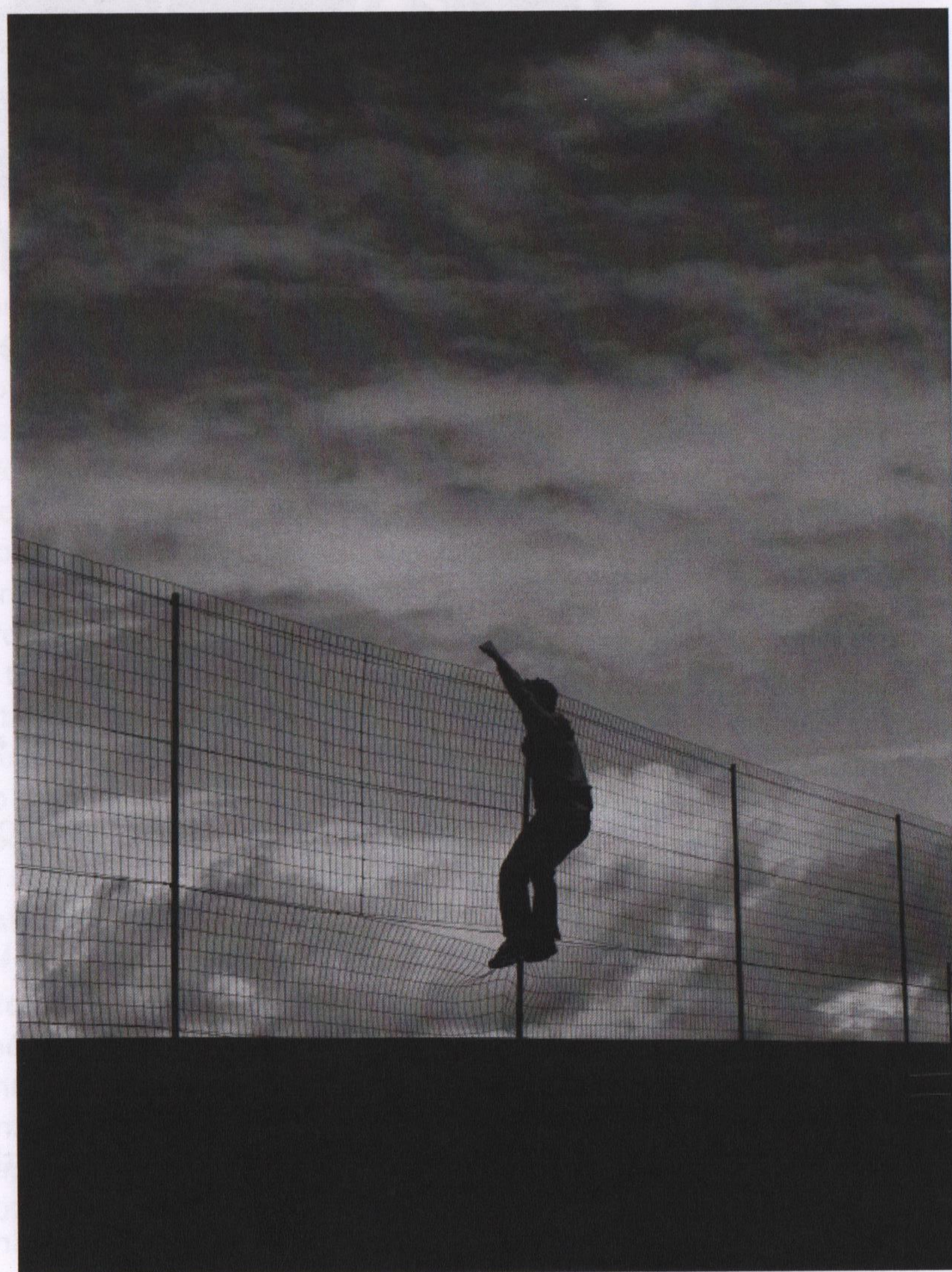
All anarchist organisations, such as the Anarchist Federation, make decisions according to structures based on non-hierarchical direct democracy and advocate such methods to others in the struggles we are a part of. We encourage workers in disputes with their bosses to make decisions in mass meetings and to resist union bureaucrats' attempts to take over the struggle. We apply the same logic to community struggles against local councils and corporations, or to mass mobilisations over specific issues such as war or climate change. All this is because in the future society we want everything to be organised according to these principles, so we may as well start now.

A revolution of any kind could not exist without a culture of solidarity and resistance becoming generalised amongst the working class. Part of how we try to achieve these is by creating opportunities as working class people to come together, form links and theorise about our position in society and how we can collectively overcome it. This is done through setting up social events, educational or otherwise, and creating spaces such as social centres or community gardens where these can happen. In these spaces Anarchists also try to apply prefigurative logic: we try to share resources in a communistic fashion and to make decisions non-hierarchically.

Community projects like donation-based kitchens and 'free shops' are both means that anarchists use to reach out to other working class people by offering food and other resources they need and are not otherwise able to afford, and real life functioning examples of communistic ways of distributing material goods. People are often

much more convinced of the possibility of alternatives to capitalism when they actually get a glimpse of how they might work than when they just read a load of anarchist propaganda that could seem utopian and unrealistic.

Doing all of the above, as well as producing actual propaganda, like leaflets, newsletters and the magazine you're now reading, takes a LOT of hard work. The fact that capitalists are obviously not going to pay us to do this work means that all revolutionary activity amounts to 'volunteering' in a sense. But it is voluntary work we do to bring down capitalism, not sustain it, and so it is diametrically opposed to the vision the government is currently pushing on us.



Against hierarchical society, no matter how 'Big'.

For voluntary communism and voluntary revolution.

Back to work, or backs to the wall?

Behind the June 2010 headline of Iain Duncan Smith's extra £4m of welfare benefit cuts lies a sustained attack on claimants that was well under way before Labour lost the General Election. At the time of writing we are waiting for the Con-Dem's autumn spending review that may well introduce some nasty surprises, but the plan is already clear. The government's Work Programme that replaces Labour's New Deal next year will have the same emphasis on forcing a large percentage of unemployed claimants into some kind of work placement or training, on to a lower rate of benefit, or hassle them off benefits altogether. Other welfare payments such as Disabled Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance are also facing renewed attack, something that will affect carers as well as their recipients.

Pathways to nowhere

Under the Blair/Brown Labour government a number of new back-to-work schemes were begun. One of these

was Pathways to Work, aimed at getting as many people with disabilities off Incapacity Benefit (renamed Employment Support Allowance) on to Job Seekers Allowance and then, supposedly, into work. Pathways to Work used private companies such as Action for Employment (A4E), Reed in Partnership and Working Links in addition to Jobcentres to manage placing people in 'jobs', defined as something lasting 13 weeks or more and 16 or more hours per week. The process also included medical checks foisted on ESA claimants to inform the decision to say someone is healthy enough to work, called the Work Capability Assessment. These checks were, and still are, run by another private company, ATOS Healthcare, which employs doctors or nurses to judge a person's 'fitness' using a computerised questionnaire that is in reality designed to get people on to JSA.

The money involved in implementing this programme was quite staggering. £760m was spent on Pathways to Work, but between 2005 and 2009 the number of people on incapacity benefits was reduced by just

125,000, according to an assessment by the Commons Public Accounts Committee that reported in September 2010. Plus the committee said it could not be clear how many of these were due to the Pathways project anyway! Furthermore the programme had contracted work to private providers who 'seriously underperformed' and had lower success rates than Jobcentre Plus, saying 'All the contractors employed to deliver Pathways have performed well below their contractual targets despite the Department paying service fees earlier than planned in order to improve performance. The target job rate agreed with contractors was to move, on average, more than one in three of the claimants required to participate in the programme (37%) into work over the life of contracts. To date, on average, providers have found work for 12% of mandatory participants.'

It also known that the private providers were 'cream-skimming' claimants, that is to say, selecting those most likely of getting a 'job outcome' and 'parking' the rest. This was because the companies were under a system of 'payment by results' for 70% of their income, although the other 30% was guaranteed.

The implication of all of this, is that most people who are moved on to JSA from ESA after a degrading medical test just lose money with little hope of getting a job, with the provider's selection process affecting up front those least able to get a job. Not surprisingly there have been huge numbers of appeals.

The government has now brought forward Labour's deadline to move existing IB claimants onto ESA to 2011 instead of 2014, with pilots in Aberdeen and Burnley starting in October 2010. This

The implication of all of this, is that most people who are moved on to JSA from ESA after a degrading medical test just lose money with little hope of getting a job, with the provider's selection process affecting up front those least able to get a job. Not surprisingly there have been huge numbers of appeals.

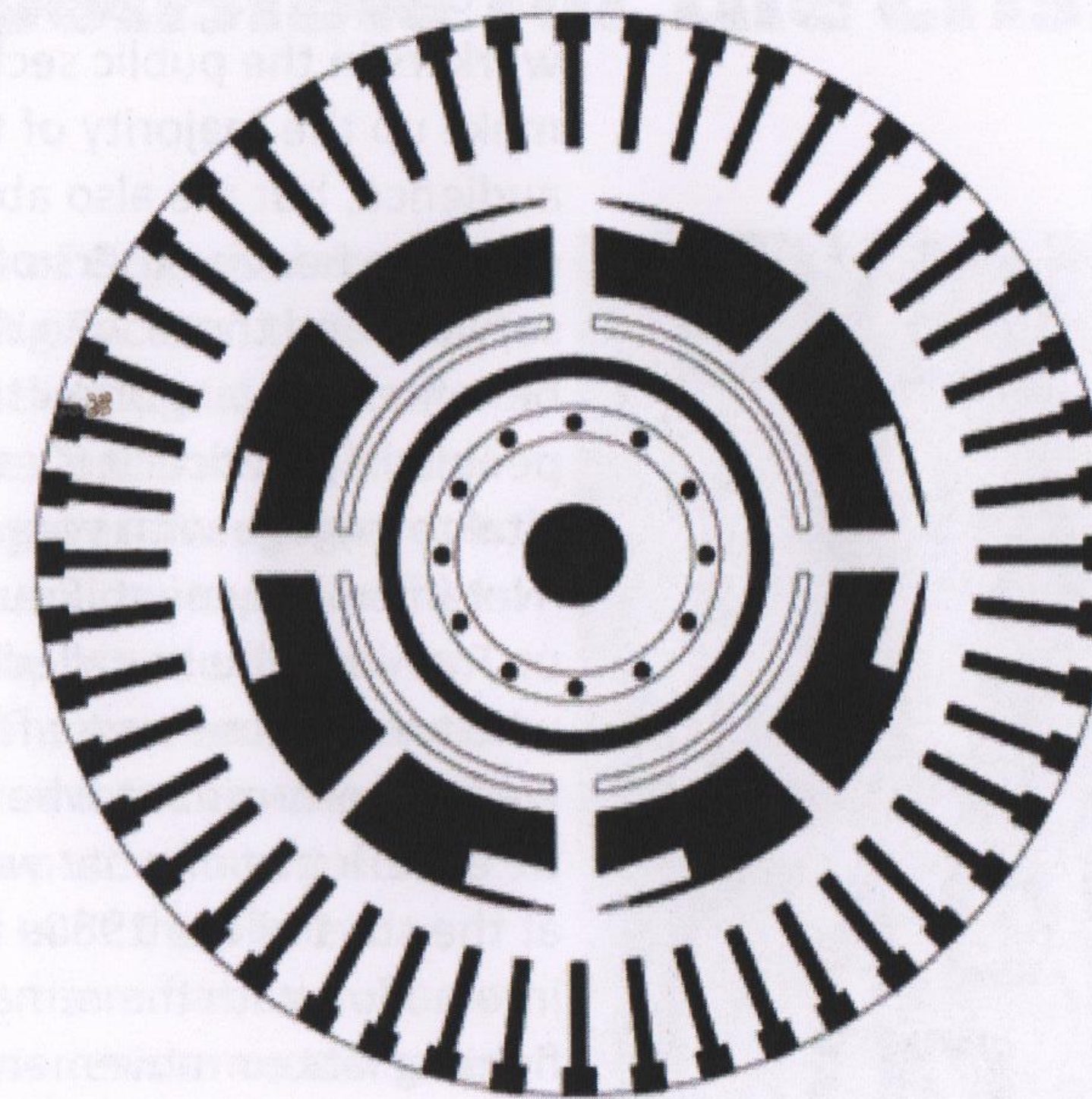
means many claimants will face the Work Capability Assessment sooner. The Coalition has also got its teeth into Disability Living Allowance, a non-means tested benefit that is available by right for those on incapacity benefits as well as those persons with disabilities who are working. It is supposed to be a compensation for the increased costs that people face due to disability, but from 2013 all 2.9 million DLA recipients will undergo a medical assessment which is likely to be similar to the ESA one. Disabled people's Direct Action Network (DAN) campaigners previously took action against Labour's attack on DLA and are unlikely to let the Tories off lightly.

Your flexible enemy

Flexible New Deal was another Labour scheme, one which has been terminated by the Con-Dems, but whose aims will now be rolled into their Work Programme. This is a workfare scheme where you have to do

some kind of work (often the same as voluntary work run by charities, but in this case compulsory), in order to get benefits. In opposition, the Tories complained about Labour's implementation of FND as they wanted to have a small number of very big providers, but essentially there was a consensus on privatisation of Jobcentres and introduction of workfare as quickly as possible. In fact David Freud, a banker whose report Labour based much of their Welfare Reform policy on, jumped ship to advise the Conservative Party shortly before the General Election.

Other parts of Labour's Welfare Reform Act (2009) that are being taken up by the Con-Dems include subjecting single parents with young children to the rules of Job Seekers Allowance or face loss of support. New Labour had said those on Income Support with children over seven would have to claim JSA by October 2010. The coalition government has lowered the child age to five and say it will



be introduced by October 2011. Carers will also be affected by the more recent changes; the coalition's Green Paper for Social Care is considering changing access to Attendance Allowance, a benefit to support carers' of people over 65. Changes to DLA will likewise affect those who support disabled people as carers or personal assistants.

Housing Benefit

One particularly regressive new initiative from the Con-Dem's that will affect a lot of claimants and low paid workers is a cap on Housing Benefits. From April 2011 the government plans to drastically cut the rates of housing benefit, so if your rent is more than the defined maximum amount then the benefit will not be enough to pay it. The limits are £250 a week for a 1 bedroom property, £290 a week for 2 bedroom, £340 a week for a 3 bedroom and £400 a week for a 4 bedroom property or larger. Tenants in London will be hardest hit because of the

relatively higher rents there and it is estimated that the average amount of money lost per household will be £23 a week. Another vindictive cut to housing benefit from 2013 will be its reduction to 90% of the full amount that will affect JSA claimants who have been signing on for over a year. There is a lot more detail of course, and much that is still to be announced, but the picture is one of a continued erosion of the social wage, begun by the Tories in the 1980s and 90s, taken forward by New Labour, and now accelerating under the Con-Dem coalition.

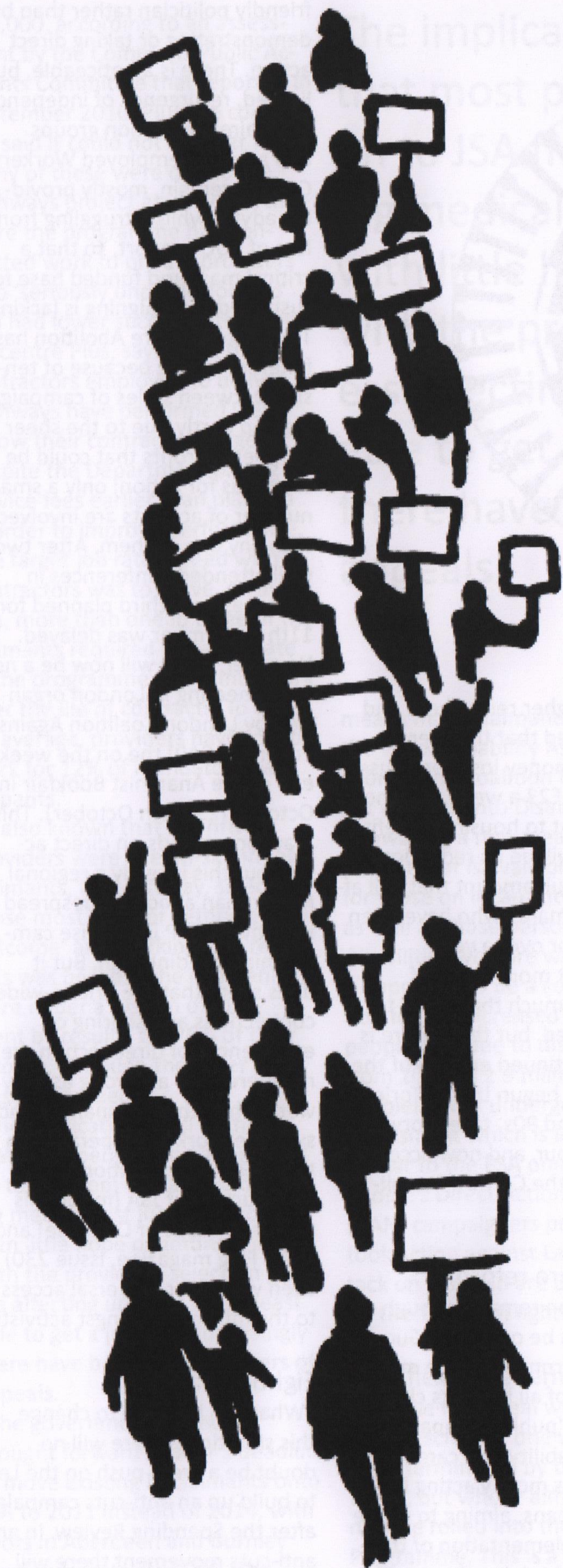
Fight welfare reform

The question remains though – how can this be opposed? Successive governments have made pariahs out of all benefits claimants so that 'public' sympathy is low. The disability and carer lobby is vocal but is mostly acting by reformist means, aiming to refine detail of implementation of the reforms by obtaining the ear of a

friendly politician rather than by demonstrating or taking direct action. There is a noticeable, but limited, resurgence of independent claimants' action groups and a few Unemployed Workers Centres remain, mostly providing advice whilst struggling from loss of TUC support, so that a critical mass and funded base for sustained campaigning is lacking. The No to Welfare Abolition has faltered, in part because of tension between styles of campaigning and partly due to the sheer number of fronts that could be the focus for action; only a small number of activists are involved with any one of them. After two well attended conferences in Manchester, a third planned for 11th September was delayed. However, there will now be a network meeting in London organised by London Coalition Against Poverty (LCAP) the on the weekend of the Anarchist Bookfair in October (23/24th October). This may focus minds on direct action but this is really a regional rather than a more widespread initiative. ECAP is likewise campaigning in Edinburgh. But it does seem that the Britain-wide connections and sharing of experiences of direct action are nowhere near as strong as they were when the national Groundswell network was operating in the 1990s in opposition to the introduction of JSA (for details see back issues of *Organise!* and *Black Flag* magazine, issue 230) even with near universal access to the internet amongst activists.

Fighting back

What can be done to change this situation? There will no doubt be a great push on the Left to build up an anti-cuts campaign after the Spending Review. In any anti-cuts movement there will



be a need to continually stress the issues of claimants, because the cuts are not only about the workers in the public sector who make up the majority of the Left's audience, but are also about their effect on heavier users of public services and those who depend on benefits, who are often the same people in practice. It is especially vital to engage with young people 'Not in Employment, Education or Training', the so called 'NEETs' who are a prime target for the welfare reforms but who have little experience of what we still had at the start of the 1980s and scant interaction with the remains of a fighting labour movement.

We also need to create an awareness that the 'third sector', which is supposed to be a major player in the realisation of the social enterprises that form the basis of Cameron's Big Society, must be watched very carefully. Those organisations whose income is dependent on public money will be looking to please the Coalition to get their slice, even if they are a bit critical. This means that many third sector organisations will want to be involved with workfare schemes, in the guise of public good, as they were in the 1990s when Project Work was introduced by the Conservatives, continued as Labour's New Deal. Finally, the role of Labour in dismantling welfare must be highlighted at all times. This article has shown how little is actually new in the Con-Dem's plans. This is yet another reason why the Labour Party itself must not be allowed to form any part of the emerging anti-cuts movement.

Austerity and Internationalism: those Responsible for the Crisis Should Pay For It!

This issue of *Organise!* deals with the 'Big Society', that wolf in sheep's clothing 'idea' peddled by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government where an attack on services and benefits is disguised by pseudo-libertarian verbiage. The horrendous austerity measures that this new government is putting into place is echoed all over the planet.

In Greece there has been fierce and massive resistance to these austerity measures, but it is not only Greece that this resistance is to be seen. As this issue is being written, a huge demonstration is taking place in Brussels. All across the Eurozone, one of the worse hit, resistance appears in response to vicious cuts on living standards and services. In Spain a new-found unity is emerging within the radical workers' movement and strikes have already broken out. In Romania, against attacks on wage cuts and pensions, tens of thousands took to the streets of Bucharest in May and the biggest demonstration since the fall of the Ceaucescu regime took place. The minister of economy was harassed and water and stones were hurled at him. In France massive demonstrations have taken place alongside strikes in the public sector against the attacks on pensions and other measures. The Sarkozy government is looking particularly brittle. In Portugal 300,000 demonstrated in Lisbon against the austerity measures, the attacks on pensions and the hike in VAT under the slogan 'Those Responsible for the Crisis Should Pay For It!'

However these welcome signs of the stirring of the sleeping gi-



We as anarchists have to continue to argue that those effected most by the cuts, those who resist them, must be in charge of their own struggles.

ant that is our class should not make us complacent. We should beware of the moves by Labour and social democratic politicians everywhere to hijack these revolts and to tame them. The rhetoric of the TUC and other union centrals globally should not be ignored. Whilst talking about a campaign of civil disobedience the TUC intends really to do very little, and in other countries a tad more radical the union leaderships will stop at one-day and perhaps two-day strikes rather than general mass action.

Neither should we be complacent about the machinations of the Communist and other 'radical' parties globally to harness the wave of unrest to electoral programmes or to recruit to their particular organisation and to demobilise and defuse unrest. Internationally, the false idea

of 'national interest' should be rejected. We as anarchists have to continue to argue that those effected most by the cuts, those who resist them, must be in charge of their own struggles. Mass assemblies have to be developed with mandated and revocable delegates and committees where necessary, in both neighbourhood and workplace, outside the control of the union apparatuses. We have to argue for the involvement of not just those in the workplace, but all of those affected by the austerity packages, from the young to the old. Instead of "We're All in It Together" and the "National Interest" we have to point out that the working class has no country and no common interest with those who rule us.

Stig Dagerman: Anarchist Writer

Stig Dagerman was born in Sweden in 1923. He was the son of working class parents, his mother a telegraphist and his father an itinerant worker and train rail layer. They had not lived together and Stig was raised by his grandparents, of whom he had fond memories. His father then brought him to Stockholm.

The transition from country to city was a shock to his system. He was a brilliant pupil at school, if silent and reserved, and he found school and high school to be a prison. Life on the street and the solaces of cinema were some consolation for his nervous and anguished temperament.

In 1941 he joined the youth organisation of the syndicalist union Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (SAC), the Circle of Syndicalist Youth, where anarchist ideas were widespread. He wrote regularly for its paper *Storm*. He then worked for *Arbetaren* (*The Worker*), the daily paper of the SAC, from 1943. Journalists for the paper were not allowed to earn more than the wage of a skilled worker.

In August 1943 he married Annemarie Goetze, the daughter of the German anarchosyndicalists Ferdinand and Elly Goetze. All

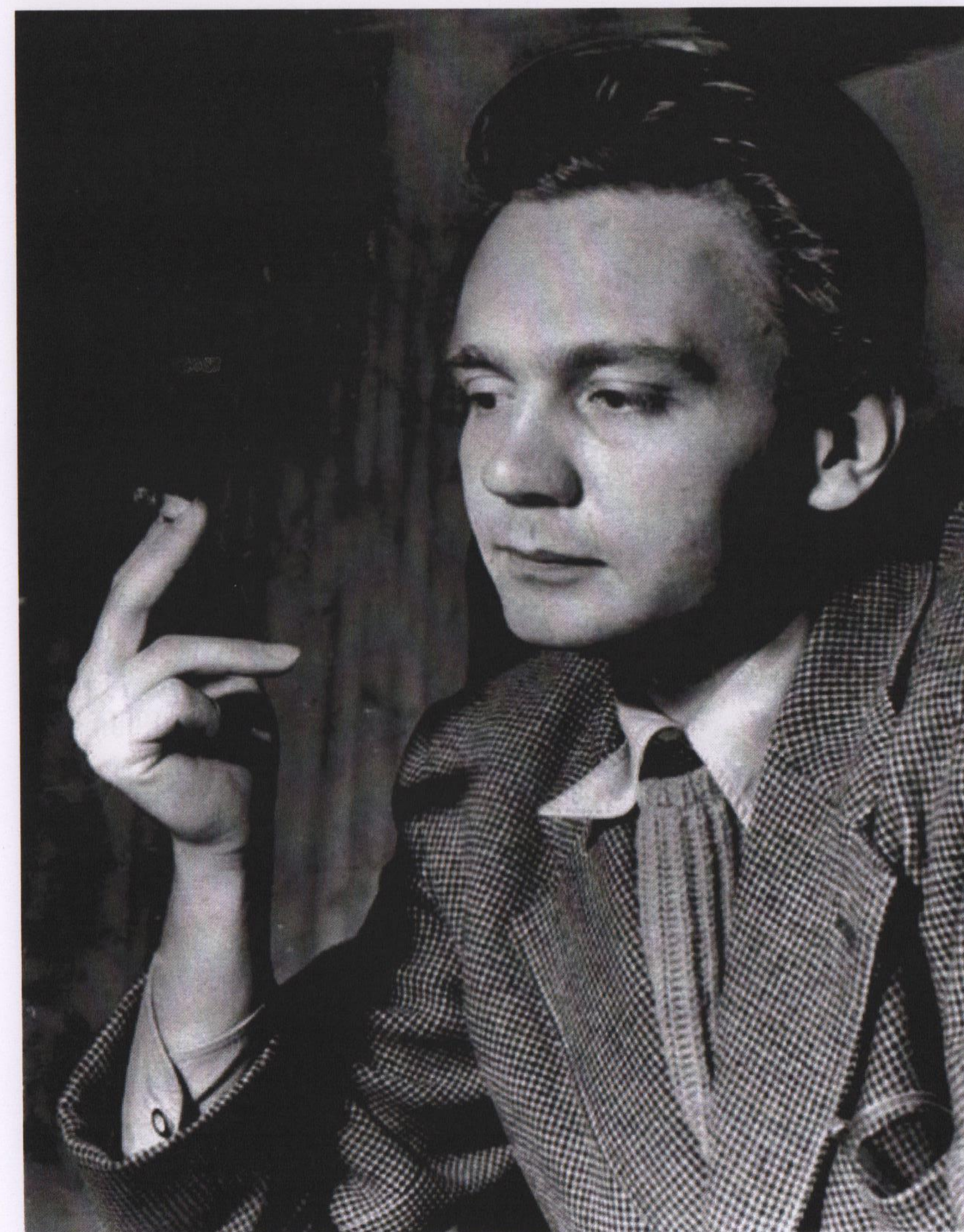
three had fled from Nazi Germany, then taking part in the struggle in Spain in 1936, before having then to flee once more to Sweden with the victory of Franco. The marriage enabled Annemarie to obtain Swedish citizenship. In an interview with Annemarie in Paris in January 1960 she said that the myth that Stig's father was an anarchist was false. He was a syndicalist, another thing altogether, whereas it was Ferdinand who had introduced anarchism to him. She and her father had discussed the ideas of anarchism with Stig over several years of their life together. This important influence on him led him to write in praise of anarchism in the article 'Anarchism and Me'.

Between the age of twenty one and twenty six he wrote four novels, four plays, a collection of short stories, a collection of reportage and many articles, essays and poems. *The Snake* was a novel published in 1945 which depicted the lives of a group of young people during the Second World War, describing their anguish and their fears and their vain attempts to overcome them. The novel received great critical acclaim. In 1946 Stig became co-

editor of the literary review *40-tal*, around which a new generation of Swedish writers grouped.

Stig continued his literary output with *The Island of the Doomed*, an allegorical novel on fascism and the struggle with authority. The same year, in the autumn, he journeyed through a Germany of ruined cities. These experiences were written up in his *German Autumn* published in 1947. This proved to be his first real literary success in terms of bookshop sales. Next to appear was his collection of short stories, *Games of Night*, followed by his third novel *A Burnt Child*. This was written in Brittany, France ('in great solitude', according to Stig) appearing in 1948. It describes an anguished adolescence where the hero writes a suicide letter showing his detestation for a world of 'little dogs,...with small feelings, small pleasures and small thoughts.' This was followed by his first play 'The Man Condemned to Death', performed in 1949 in Stockholm. That year Stig published his last novel, *Wedding Worries*.

In 1948, between March and May, he had visited France and was to realise his writings whilst there in *French Spring*. Here he describes the hardship of the



times, the increase in attempts at suicide, newspapers reduced to one page, hotel rooms only warmed for fifteen minutes of the day, a striker's wife turning to prostitution to survive. Stig mixed journalistic reportage with literature and social comment, writing on impoverished and starving workers that they did not need to drink an aperitif to be hungry, not that they could afford one: 'Their existence is furnished by an infernal tension in which every period of crisis plunges the poor.' The dream of 1944 and the reality of 1948 highlight the disillusion of the period. The Liberation was not followed by social revolution but by social peace and grave hardship for the working class.

These writings taken collectively describe brilliantly the world immediately after World War Two and the establishment of order. In one article, 'The Dictatorship of Sadness' Stig fulminates against the national day of mourning decreed for the death of the Swedish king Gustav V and the lies and deceit generated on a national basis. The next five years were hard for the writer, with four novels started but not finished. At the age of 31, on 4th November 1954, he locked himself in his garage, turned on the engine of his car and killed himself. The evening before he had sent his last piece 'Beware of the Dog' to *Arbetaren*. Writer's block may have contributed to the reasons he killed himself, as well

"I believe that man's natural enemy is the mega-organization because it robs him of the vital necessity to feel responsible for his fellow-man, restricting his possibilities to show solidarity and love and instead turns him into an agent of power, that for the moment may be directed against others, but ultimately is directed against himself."

as an awareness of an impossibility for politicised writers to radically change the world.

Three of Stig Dagerman's novels were adapted for film in the 1960s and he was soon translated into English, French and German after his death. He was hailed as a great existential writer and continues to attract attention and acclaim on the Continent, if little known in Britain despite translation of his work into English (all of which is currently out of print). As Graham Greene wrote, 'Dagerman wrote with beautiful objectivity. Instead of emotive phrases, he uses a choice of facts, like bricks, to construct an emotion.'

'Life expects of you duties which appear repugnant to you. You must now know that the most important thing is not duties but what permits you to be someone good and just. There are many who will say to you that this is a piece of asocial advice, but you only have to reply to them: When the forms of society are so hard and hostile to life, it is more important to be asocial than inhuman' (Stig Dagerman).

Miguel Garcia, an anarchist hero and a biographer of heroes.

Looking Back After Twenty Years of Jail: Questions and Answers on the Spanish Anarchist Resistance. By Miguel Garcia. Kate Sharpley Library, 2002. 14 pages. £1.50; **Unknown Heroes: Biographies of Anarchist Resistance Fighters.** Miguel Garcia. Kate Sharpley Library, 2005. 18 pages. £2.00.

Miguel Garcia (1908-1981) was a Spanish anarchist who served a full twenty years in Franco's prisons. On his release he came to London where he spent many years before returning to Barcelona, where he died. This reviewer knew Miguel Garcia well. He was a typical example of the classic working class Spanish anarchist. He could be warm and generous, always modest about his past, at other times cantankerous and exasperating. This little pamphlet is an account of his life as a revolutionary anarchist militant, prefaced with a warm tribute from the KSL. As they say 'Miguel Garcia... was in some ways, perhaps every way, the reason why the Kate Sharpley Library exists...Anarchism for Miguel was what you did.'

And Miguel did it alright. He fought as a young man in the working class fightback against the generals' coup in Barcelona in 1936. He fought on the Aragon front and outside Madrid in an anarchist militia. He forged documents to get refugees over the border from France during World War Two.

As part of the anarchist underground resistance he was arrested in 1949 and sentenced to twenty



years. Released in 1969 he was invited to Britain by Stuart Christie, who had been a prisoner alongside him. He became International Secretary of the newly formed Anarchist Black Cross. With Albert Meltzer he set up the Centro Iberico, an anarchist club in North London. I remember many evenings or weekend afternoons spent there, with Miguel presiding over his tapas and glasses of rough red wine, occasionally blasting out the old inspiring anarchist songs 'A Las Barricadas' and 'Hijos del Pueblo' on an old Dansette record player. As the preface says, 'His arrival in London confirmed what some of us had been instinctively sensing

anarchism could be and was. His very presence epitomised for us the necessary unity of anarchist practice and theory. Irascible, spiky, possessed of a ferocious temper that could leave as quickly as it came, certainly not given to suffer fools gladly, he carried with him a dignity and remarkable lack of arrogance.'

In *Looking Back After Twenty Years* Miguel reminisces about his past, recalling the hundreds of anarchists who fought in the underground, people like the guerrillas Sabater and Facerias. He also recalls the anarchist collectives set up during the Spanish Revolution. As his old comrade the Italian anarchist Goliardo Fiaschi, who had been himself imprisoned for many years after fighting with the Spanish resistance remarked, 'When Anarchy comes the new generations must be told what the anarchists endured in order to liberate humanity from injustice, and the name of Miguel Garcia must be written in the annals of the future'.

But Miguel Garcia wanted to commemorate the brave comrades who fell in the war.

'I was among the guilty. I fought. I fell. I survived. The last is the most unusual'

'I was among the guilty. I fought. I fell. I survived. The last is the most unusual', he says in *Unknown Heroes*. The pamphlet describes militants like Manuel Lecha, a Valencian docker who on his own, in 1936, pulled an enormous cannon from the Barcelona docks to the middle of town, where it blew out a Francoist machine gun nest. And Lorenzo Lopez Noguero, active in the underground, was sentenced to be garrotted when captured but escaped, finally to be gunned down by the Guardia Civil in 1950. Then there is 'El Negret', who escaped at least seventeen times from jail, and 'El Valencia, who escaped at least seven times. Santiago Garcia Gasco, died at Belchite on the Aragon Front in 1937. Francisco Denis 'El Catala' was captured by the Francoists and tortured for four days in 1949, but managed to take cyanide. And of course there is Ramon Capdevila, or Caraquemada (Burnt Face), who alongside Sabater and Facerias was one of the great anarchist guerrillas who fell in a Guardia Civil ambush. Perhaps most poignant of all, the five militants who had worked with Miguel in the Tallion Group and had been imprisoned with him, who were executed by the Francoist butchers on 13th March 1952; Miguel being one of the four who were reprieved.

Miguel, dear old comrade, I raise a glass of rough red wine in remembrance of you and your example of what anarchism was and should be.

Anarchism in Bristol and the West Country to 1950. By Steve Hunt. Bristol Radical Pamphlets. £ 2.50 From www.brh.org.uk

This new pamphlet is one product of the developing anarchist

scene in Bristol (a recent Anarchist Bookfair attracted over 600 people). Steve Hunt attempted to find out whether, historically, there was a local tradition in Bristol and the West Country.

In some ways he has succeeded. He has relied mainly on books on the area and on radicalism as well as some research on the Internet. Unfortunately, he appears not to have consulted either the archives of the local press or of the radical, socialist and anarchist press of the time. So there are some gaps that need filling in as we learn from this interesting little pamphlet that there was indeed anarchist activity in the city.

After London, Bristol was the second city of England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chartism became a notable force in Bristol, and Steve spends some time looking at the prehistory of the emerging radical movement here.

He discusses the influence of the libertarian socialist Edward Carpenter (not himself a resident of Bristol) and the development of socialist circles in the city. He describes the Russian anarchist Kropotkin's lectures in Bristol and tells us that one particular socialist discussion circle, the Bristol Sunday Society, had attendances of up to 1,700 by the 1890s.

We then get in to the subject of Helen Born and Miriam Daniell who moved from liberalism towards the Bristol Socialist Society and support for striking cotton operatives. Later both emigrated to the United States where they seemed to have moved in an individualist anarchist direction.

Another Bristolian woman of importance was the novelist Gertrude Dix who describes the local socialist and anarchist movement in her book *The Image Breakers*. Dix also had a reputation as a pub-

lic speaker and appears to have been actually involved within the anarchist movement. More research needs to be done on her and the Bristol anarchist movement of the time.

We then finally move on to the important figure of George Barrett who developed anarchist ideas within the Bristol Socialist Society and then moved on to London and then Glasgow.

This pamphlet is an interesting first shot at investigation into the anarchist movement in Bristol, but as I said above, more research in the press of the time would have given far more body to what in the end is a pamphlet fairly light on the subject of its own title.

Delusions of Gender: How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference.

By Cordelia Fine, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2010. 338 pages. £14.99.

We introduced the concept of Neurosexism in *Organise!* 72.

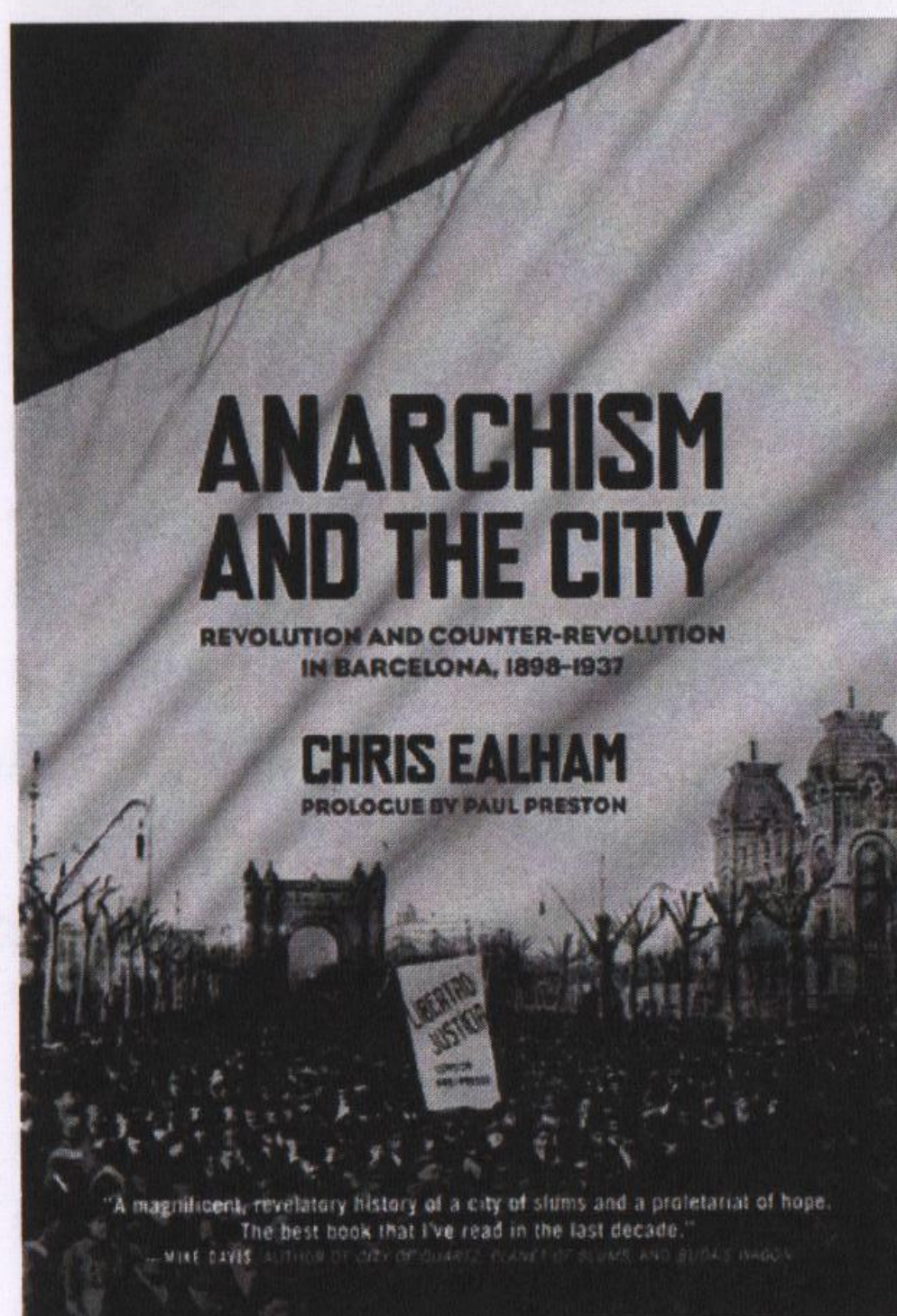
This is a term coined by the author Cordelia Fine who is currently a Senior Research Associate at the Centre for Agency, Values & Ethics at Macquarie University in Sydney, and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Department of Psychological Sciences at the University of Melbourne. In this excellent book, the author has collected a convincing body of evidence to show that there are no major neurological differences between the sexes, so the idea that 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus' is completely debunked from a biological perspective. She shows that there are almost no areas of performance that are not touched by

cultural stereotypes. The idea of hard-wired difference that is supposedly backed up by the neurosciences is shown to be nothing more than a modern variant of the sort of sexist attitudes that used to be presented as science fact. In other words, they are an update of historical justifications for the inferiority of women 'proven' by differences in average skull size or other physiological measures that are no longer taken seriously at all by anyone.

The first part of the book provides ample evidence from psychological experiments which have been used to examine supposed difference in men and women's capabilities, but can be shown to be strongly biased through 'stereotype threat'. The meaning of this 'threat' is such that if a woman has internalised that women inherently do worse on a test, she will do worse, without realising it, and in this way it is the mind that creates difference. The same threat does not apply to men who are already conditioned with their superiority. Crucially if the same test is presented in such a way as to mitigate against this bias, women perform at least as well as men. For example, slipping in a statement that women do as well or better than men drastically affects the result. If such a marked difference can be found in the context of doing one test, Fine asks, imagine a lifetime of being unconsciously undermined? The second half of the book concentrates on Neurosexism which examines the neurology of brains and the effect of hormones, and the way the results of experiments that have been set up to study sexual difference in the brain have been used and extrapolated in the popular press.

Delusions of Gender is written in an accessible way that clearly

explains the science alongside a good dose of humour aimed at examples of historical and contemporary attempts to denigrate women's abilities. The result is to reiterate that sexism and disadvantage to women is pervasive in society in spite of the gains made by feminism, and that popularisers of such differences are merely picking up on bad science whether for ideological reasons or to sell books. It encourages us that a more equal society is possible in spite of physiological manifestations of our sexual diversity. It should also appeal to men who don't like being told they cannot empathise, although with the disadvantage of knowing they are no less likely capable of getting bored doing the ironing.



Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898-1937. By Chris Ealham. AK Press. 263 pages. £17.00

This book attempts to describe and understand the development of working class anarchist culture in Barcelona from the end of the nineteenth century

to the defeat of the movement in the late 1930s. Barcelona was the capital, if you like, of one of the largest anarchist movements the World has seen and as such this study should be welcomed. Ealham admits in the foreword that he is inspired by the concepts of the historian E. P. Thompson who developed the concept of 'history from below'. He has written a very well-researched account of the period in question, using many varied sources. He is an academic who specialises in anarchist history at a Madrid university. As such his discourse is sometimes marred by an 'academicese' that on occasion gets in the way of what should be, and often is, an exciting account of a vibrant anarchist culture.

The first part of the book deals with the economic, political and urban development of Barcelona and then goes on to examine the growth of a working class city based on the neighbourhoods (barris). Thus we are able to see why the largest anarcho-sindicalist union in Europe, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) was able to develop, responding to the needs and aspirations of the working class. The book deals not just with workplace struggles as one could possibly imagine, but also with anarchist organisation of social life outside the workplace. The anarchist movement involved itself in rent strikes and unemployed struggles as well as supporting actions when the unemployed moved into action to feed themselves by taking food from shopkeepers.

The narrow view that the Spanish anarchist movement only involved itself in workplace organisation is thus challenged, as we have a vision of anarchists organised not just in the workplace but among the unemployed and at a cultural



level. Ealham refers to this rather oddly as 'community-based trade unionism' when the conceptions of the CNT and Spanish anarcho-sindicalism in general were very far from the concepts of unions organised around trades, and much the better for it.

The fact that CNT organisers recognised the strength of solidarity in the neighbourhood communities and deliberately organised around them points to why the CNT was so successful for such a long time. The CNT organised a tenants union to mobilise around rents. It changed its structures so that district committees were located in new centres in the working class neighbourhoods. It specifically looked towards what Ealham calls 'the united front of the dispossessed within a common revolutionary project.' Thus it organised among the despised workers who had migrated from

Andalusia and Murcia to Catalonia, and it organised among the ambulant street vendors.

Libraries

Alongside this was the creation of the athenaeums (ateneos in Spanish, ateneus in Catalan). These were social and cultural centres which fulfilled a real need in the working class neighbourhoods. The larger ones housed a cooperative shop with food at lower prices. They organised theatre, musical and choral groups at a time when it was difficult to find affordable forms of leisure. There was an anti-capitalist content in these activities, particularly with the plays that were put on at the ateneus. There were also the hiking, rambling and camping activities organised by various clubs. At the same time these excursions into the countryside contributed to workers' health and fitness and

provided them with opportunities to discuss ideas and writings away from State surveillance.

Each ateneo prided itself on its lending library, filled with all sorts of progressive books. In addition, there were reading rooms, rooms for discussions and talks, as well as cafes. There were day schools for working class children and evening classes for workers. Alongside these educational ventures in the ateneus was the creation of rationalist schools, based on the principles of the libertarian educationalist Francisco Ferrer. These inspired equality and spontaneity of expression within the classroom. Both the ateneus and the schools were based solidly in the neighbourhoods. Crèche facilities were provided in the ateneus, as well as specific youth sections. As Ealham notes: 'Nor was the CNT weakened by generational divisions or by a ri-

val youth culture... The unions drew life from the kinship networks in the barris, successfully incorporating young workers into their ranks, many of whom were frequently attracted to the unions by family members, principally fathers and brothers and other powerful male role models, such as uncles.'

Women

Here Ealham correctly points out one of the flaws in CNT strategy. As he says the 'dissident potential' of women workers was 'not always maximised.' Women tended to play a secondary and supportive role within the CNT, even within the textile unions where many women were employed. This was also seen in the ateneus where 'patterns of gender discrimination ...were replicated in the more ideological and politicised spaces of the ateneus and the anarchist groups that operated within them. Signalling the failure of alternative culture to break completely with official culture, women were frequently restricted to offering moral and material support for the masculine group, finding meeting places and offering logistical support; on excursions, women were predominantly involved in tasks of food preparation!'

Importantly, the radical wing of the anarchist movement is investigated in some detail. This wing is best symbolised in the figures of the legendary Durruti and Ascaso, and it engaged in deeds of direct action, including attacks on particularly repressive representatives of the ruling class, as well as acts of expropriation to finance the movement, including bank robbery. This wing itself had a radicalising effect on the CNT and the entirety of the libertarian movement. This led on to the insurrections of 1932-33 and splits within the CNT as the radical wing sought to silence or neutralise other militants who disagreed with these tac-



tics. As state repression increased, the groups of the radical wing of the movement organised within and outside the Federacion Anarquista Iberica (Iberian Anarchist Federation, or FAI) became bolder in their

attacks on the State. At the same time those moderates within the CNT opposed to the tactics of the radicals accused the FAI of being responsible for the street violence, rather than criticise the Republic of 1930-33 for failing to deliver its promised package of reforms.

Repression

Repression showed that the moderates were naïve in thinking that these reforms were at all possible and that the CNT could expand freely in this period. This undermined the moderates and strengthened the hand of the radicals. The moderates failed to develop a strategy for the unemployed, sometimes moving towards advocating measures like excluding women from the workplace and immigration controls on workers from Andalucía and Murcia!

At the same time, repression meant that the struggles lost their mass form and moved to small-group resistance in the streets. The FAI, for all its daring actions, would rather see the unemployed unorganised than fall under the influence of other currents within the CNT, and so meetings disrupted by armed anarchists. Not only did the radicals not look to broad unity within the working class, they increasingly believed they could make the revolution themselves. This attitude eventually led to the 'cycle of insurrections' which revealed what Ealham calls an 'absence of a coherent spatial dimension'. This appears to mean that the FAI was not sufficiently prepared with enough arms and ammunition to successfully carry out insurrections, and could not go beyond local actions to more offensive actions at a regional and State level. They failed to use the strength of the neighbourhoods, and failed to link their armed actions with general strikes and mass mobilisations. The actions led to increased repression and the closing down of ateneus, schools and CNT centres. This suited the FAI which believed that the worse the situation became, the quicker the social revolution would arrive. But moral pan-

Not only did the radicals not look to broad unity within the working class, they increasingly believed they could make the revolution themselves.

ics were launched by the press against the last bastions of libertarian organisation, the hiking clubs! The Catalan socialists saw the most 'pressing problem' as the elimination of the FAI using 'all means possible, without hesitation, without pity and without reservations.'

Within the FAI itself criticism of the insurrectionary strategy came to the surface after the abortive January 1933 rising. The argument was made instead for education and mass revolution. The final section ends with the achieve-

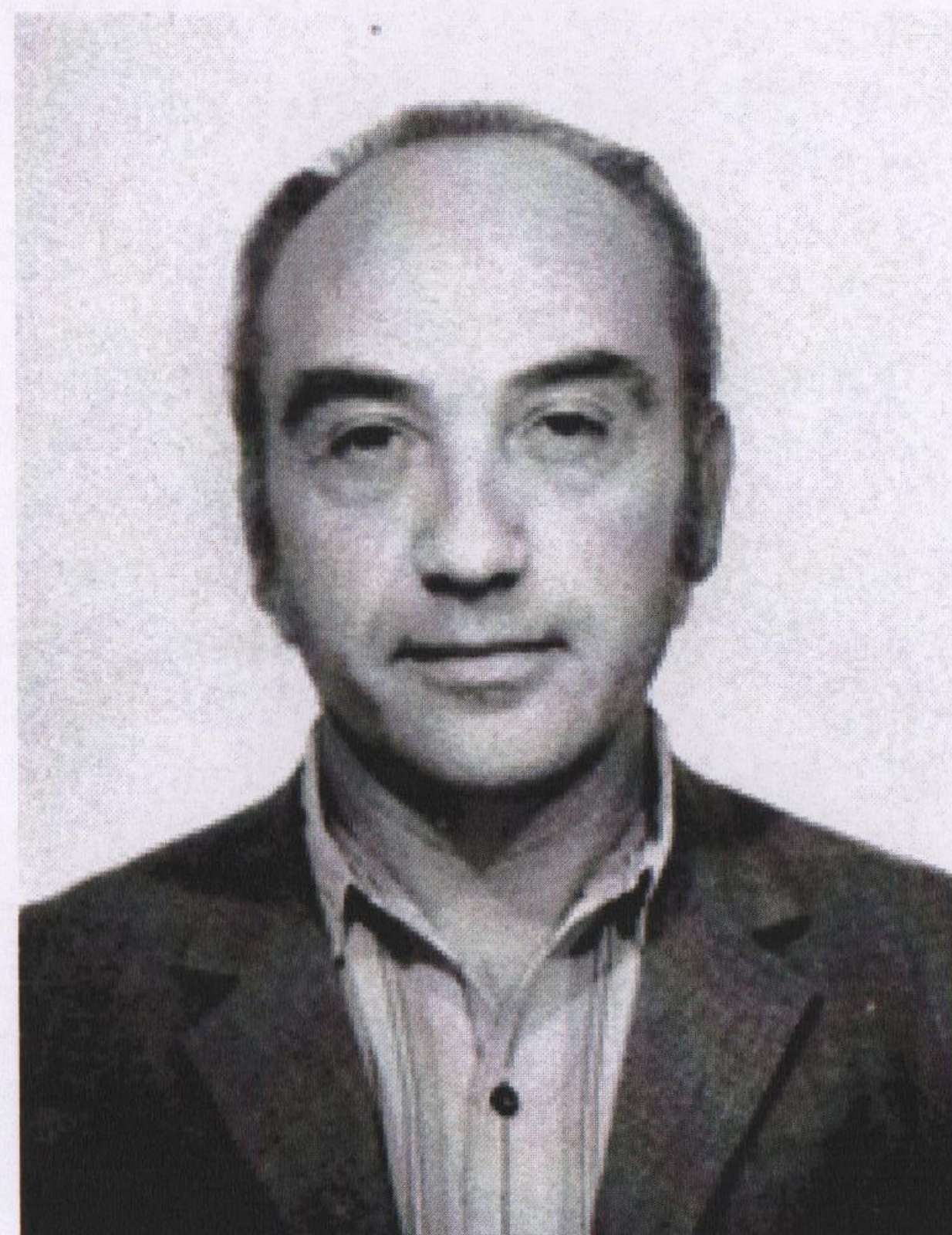
ments of the libertarian revolution in Barcelona, its limitations, including the old problems of the marginalisation of women, and its undermining by the bourgeois republicans and their Stalinist allies. The May Days of 1937 when Barcelona workers resisted Republican-Stalinist provocation and were defeated was a serious blow for the libertarian workers movement, As Ealham says, 'the power of the barris, like the revolution, was at an end.'



George Fontenis: 1921-2010

With the death of Georges Fontenis one of the last important figures of the French anarchist movement of the 1940s and 1950s has disappeared. He was one of its most controversial, who even today inspires either hatred or respect. He was born on 27th April 19th 1921 in the Lilas quarter of Paris, into a working class family, the son and grandson of militant socialists. He made contact with the anarchist movement through Spanish solidarity work in 1936, joining a group of young militants. In 1944, he joined the underground CGT (the main French union central), became the secretary of the Jeunesses Anarchistes (Anarchist Youth) and took part in the commissions to root out Vichyists in national education in 1945 as member of a teachers' union. He took part in the reconstruction of the anarchist movement in 1945 and the founding of the Fédération Anarchiste, and was general secretary in 1946- 1948 and 1950-1953 and director of the FA weekly *Le Libertaire*.

In 1950 he founded of the Organisation Pensée Bataille (OPB), a secret group within the FA, which gained control over some regions and many leading posts. In 1953 the OPB forced the expulsion of the individualist anarchists and turned the FA into the Fédération Communiste Libertaire (FCL), adopting the *Manifesto of Libertarian Communism*, written by Fontenis. Members of other tendencies were excluded or left, and these included class struggle anarchists like Maurice Fayolle and Maurice Joyeux (among the militants to found, or rather re-found,



of the individualists.

After serving his sentence he gained employment in national education, moving on to become a schools inspector of the rural zone between 1962-67 and then a teacher of psychopedagogy at L'école Nationale d'Instituteurs at Tours. In 1968-1969, Fontenis, together with Daniel Guérin, founded the Mouvement Communiste Libertaire and was a member of its successor the first Organisation Communiste Libertaire. Unfortunately spontaneist and anti-organisational tendencies under the influence of a particular current of council communism emerged within the first OCL and it collapsed in November 1976, much to the dismay of Fontenis.

During the 1968 events he had a leading role in the Committee of Revolutionary Action in Tours. This was active at the universities, at the factory gates, and in

the Fédération Anarchiste which still exists). In 1951 he took part in an assassination attempt on Franco, the unsuccessful 'airborne attentat' involving a light aircraft, alongside Spanish anarchist exiles.

The FCL was also involved in support for the anti-colonialist struggle in Algeria, resulting in fines, raids and jailings, Fontenis himself being imprisoned in July 1957 for almost two years. The same year the FCL took part in a disastrous election campaign, anathema to most anarchists, leading to the departure of some of its militants. The results were derisory and the main aim seemed to have been to attract rank and file members of the Communist Party whilst drawing a line between the FCL and traditional anarchism. These events together led to the collapse of the FCL. Other factors at play were what other militants saw as the continuation of the OPB, in their eyes unjustified after the exclusion

several workplaces. In 1979, he joined the Union des Travailleurs Communistes Libertaires (UTCL) and was a member of its successor, Alternative Libertaire. Within the UTCL he made criticisms of its 'super-activism'. He wrote *L'Autre communisme*, his view of the events of the 1950s in 1990 and an important booklet on the Friends of Durruti and the May Day events in Spain in 1937. He was one of the militants who appeared on an UTCL broadcast on French national television in 1982.

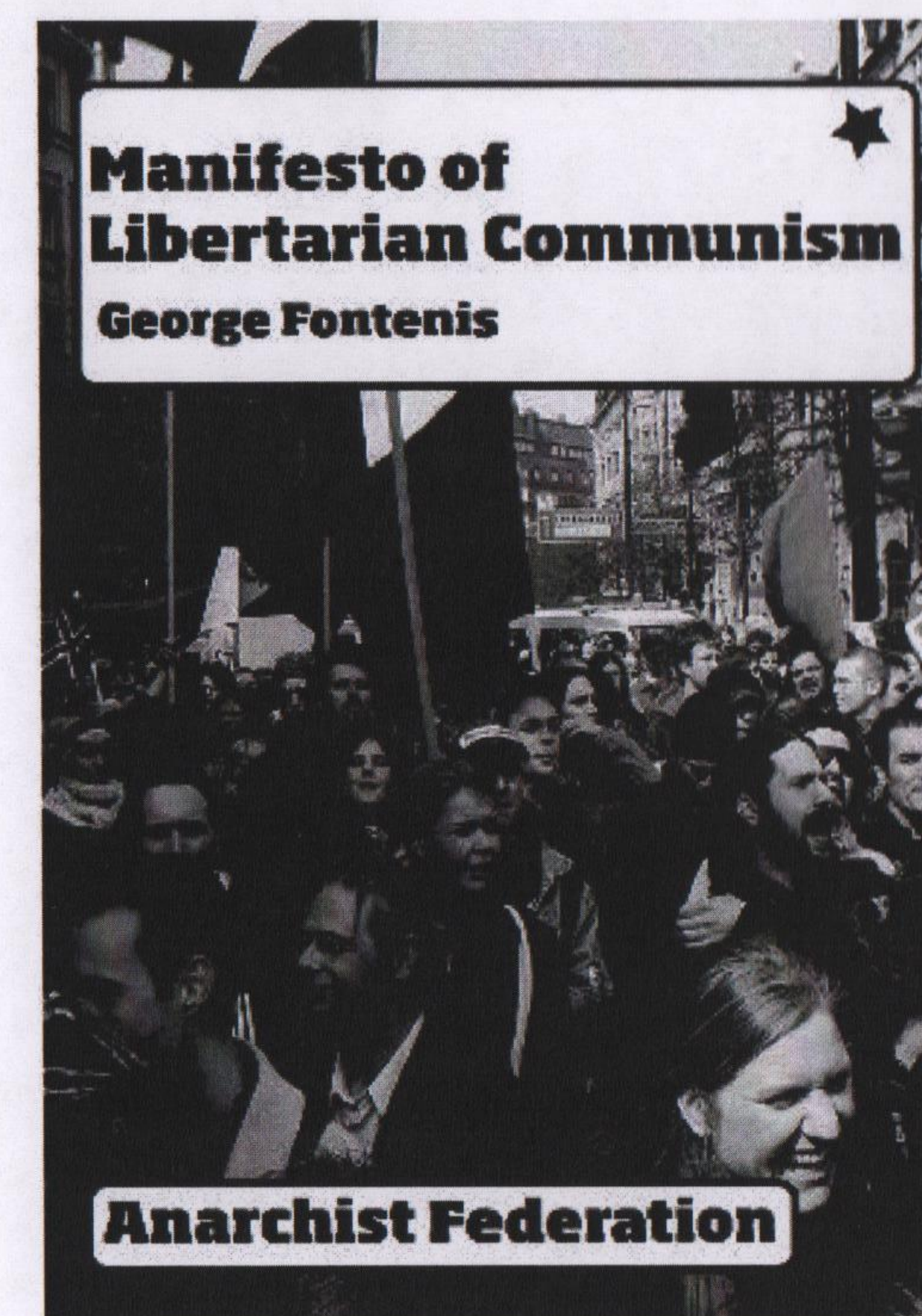
In the early 1980s I was living in France for several years and joined the UTCL. I made the acquaintance of Fontenis at several of its conferences. He had always been involved in the working class keep-fit movement, working out on a daily basis and he still kept his trim appearance, as well as always dressing extremely smartly. He had established contact with a group of British anarchists around Ken Hawkes in the 50s and was disappointed when I informed

him that Hawkes had disappeared from view.

The creation and methods of the OPB have unfortunately given Fontenis a controversial reputation which persists up to this day. In his book *Facing the Enemy* Alexandre Skirda, himself favourable to specific anarchist communist organisation, has taken Fontenis to task for these methods and he still brings forth outbursts of condemnation and disgust in certain parts of the French anarchist movement. Set against this are the warm memories that his old comrades of the groups he was involved in still have. One such memory is that of some young anarchist railway workers who turned up on a demonstration in May 1968 with a red and black flag. The Communist Party stewards in their usual thuggish way attempted to seize the flag. Suddenly a man in his fifties appeared and demanded what right they had to do this. This brought out sympathetic responses within

the demonstration and the thugs were forced to beat a retreat. The railway workers quickly learnt that this man was Fontenis and some of them carried on successive collaboration with him in the MCL/OCL and then the UTCL. A convinced atheist, Fontenis had no time for any religion and when the Pope John Paul II prepared to visit Tours in 1996 he was one of the chief activists in the setting up of an anti-visit collective. The collective was finally to mobilise several thousand people on a demonstration at Tours and it was Fontenis, dressed in papal robes, who rode at the head of the demo on a 'condom-mobile' spoof of the 'Pope-mobile', with a plastic casing and four wooden wheels, carrying a broom in stead of a papal cross.

He died on 9th August 2010 at Reignac sur Indre, near Tours. In the last few years his declining health made him gradually relinquish militant activity. He leaves a wife and daughter.



"It is not enough to have a goal you also need a way of getting there."

- G. Fontenis