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PHOENIX PRESS

Some thoughts on anarchist publishing in general and one anarchist publisher in particular, by the founder of Phoenix Press.

One of the many inadequacies of the British libertarian movement is its book publishing. What we should have is at least half a dozen publishers, each with 20 or 30 books in print, each publishing half a dozen titles every year. The reality falls way short of this. Only Freedom Press meets the necessary criteria. This is a quick account of one of the smaller publishers, Phoenix Press, which has been going about six years and aims, in another six, to have 20 books in print, and to be able to publish half a dozen books a year.

After the revolution, money will either have been abolished or will grow on trees, I forget which. In the present decadent pre-revolutionary phase we still have money and printers have to be paid for their work. Obviously the money for anarchist publishing has to be put down by anarchists, that is, is (and if we're not prepared to put our money where our mouths are, who is going to take us seriously?). The full cost of getting a book printed, at least £2000 for even a small book, is beyond most people's reach but if the cost is broken down into 100 lots of £20 then many people can afford that amount. When enough money has been raised the book is published and when enough copies have been sold the people who lent the money are offered it back (but of course they are asked to continue the loan for the latest book). This is the idea that launched Phoenix Press.

Phoenix has now published seven books using its loan system, the most recent being Out of the Ghetto by Joe Jacobs (£3.00), a 320-page autobiographical account of anti-fascism in the East End of London in the 1930s. (The book ends with Joe being kicked out of the Communist Party for being more strongly anti-fascist than the party line.) The resurgence of fascism in Europe makes Joe's book, a unique mix of the personal and the political, particularly important at the moment.

Phoenix also publishes pamphlets. The best of these is Valerie Solanas' Scum Manifesto (£1.50) surely the most astonishing political tract ever written. Phoenix also publishes the Anarchist Yearbook (£1.50) and this guide to anarchism in Britain is now on its second year. Also of note are Fredy Perlman's The Reproduction of Daily Life (£0.75) and The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism (£0.99). These essays and others are going to appear in Phoenix's next book, an as yet untitled collection of Fredy's shorter writings, to be ready at the 1992 Anarchist Bookfair in October.

Fredy was the author of, among other titles, Against His-Story, Against Leviathan, The Strait, the spool Manual for Revolutionary Leaders, and his party death in 1985 robbed the libertarian movement of one of its most important contemporary thinkers. The book will chart the course of Fredy's intellectual development, from the view of capital accumulation in Reproduction to the strongly pro-ecology, anti-nationalist and anti-imperialist Continuing Appeal. Your loan of £20 can get this important book into print.

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BY MARTIN BAXENDALE

Published by SPD PUBLICATIONS, 4 St Catherine's Close, Stroud, Glos.
Available to the trade from A Distribution, and mail order from Freedom Press: 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1.
Leo Baxendale

On Comedy
The Beano and Ideology

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On Comedy: The Beano and Ideology (and The Encroachment Part I — a study of accumulating power and control, and dominant ideologies, also by Leo Baxendale and likewise published by Reaper Books) are distributed by A Distribution and are also available from Freedom Press.
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