

FREEDOMS CONTACTS PAGE

WE WELCOME news, articles, reviews, letters.
Copy deadline for next issue (no. 18) is
MONDAY 11 September

Next DESPATCHING date is THURSDAY 14
September. Come and help from 5 pm. (Help
will also be welcomed the previous Thursday
for folding Review).

Groups

ABERYSTWYTH. Mike Sheehan, 2 South St.
Aberystwyth

BRISTOL. Awaiting info.

CAMBRIDGE. Raphael Salkie, Queen's
College, Cambridge

Cardiff Anarchist Group: Write c/o 108
Bookshop, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

CORBY. Terry Phillips, 7 Cresswell Walk,
Corby, Northants.

COVENTRY. John England, 48 Spencer Av,
Earlsdon, Coventry

DERBY (and environs) Anarchists/Libertarians.
All two of us welcome collaborators. Contact
Andrew Huckerby, 49 Westleigh Av, Derby
DE3 3BY, tel: 368678

EAST ANGLIAN Libertarians, Martyn Everett,
11 Gibson Gardens, Saffron Walden, Essex

EXETER Anarchist Society, Univ. of Exeter,
Devonshire House, Stocker Road, Exeter

HASTINGS. Steve, 18a Markwick Terrace,
St Leonards-on-sea, Sussex

HIGH BENTHAM. Ask at The Dragonfly on
Market Day (Wednesday)

HUDDERSFIELD anarchist group: meetings every
two weeks. For details phone 0484-38156 (Poly-
technic students' union).

LEAMINGTON & Warwick, c/o 42 Bath
St. Leamington Spa

LEEDS. Box 101 'Leeds Other Paper', 30
Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2

MALVERN & Worcester area. Jock Spence,
Birchwood Hall, Storrage, Malvern, Worcs.

MANCHESTER. See NW Federation

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE. Black Jake,
c/o 115 Westgate Road, Newcastle NE1 4AG

NORWICH Anarchist Group, c/o Mushroom,
10 Heathcote St (tel: 582506) or 15 Scotholme
Av, Hyson Green (tel: 708302)

OXFORD - suspended during vacation

PORTSMOUTH - change of address pending

READING University anarchists, c/o Students
Union, Univ. of Reading, Whiteknights,
Reading, Berks.

SHEFFIELD - information awaited

SWANSEA. Don Williams, 24 Derlwyn,
Dunvant, Swansea

THAMES VALLEY Adele Dawson, Maymeade,
6 Congress Rd, Maidenhead (tel: 062 2974)

WESTON-super-Mare. Martyn Redman, Flat
5, 23 Milton Rd, Weston-super-Mare, Som.

WILTSHIRE. Comrades in Swindon wish to
start an anarchist group (as well as existing
Community Arts Group). Get in touch with
Mike, Groundswell Farm, Upper Stratton,
Swindon, Wilts.

FEDERATIONS

LONDON

Anarchist Communist Assn, c/o 182 Upper St,
Islington N.1.

Anarchy Collective, 37a Grosvenor Av.
Tel: 359-4794 before 7 pm.

Freedom Collective, 84b Whitechapel High St
(Angel Alley), E1 (tel: 247-9249)

Hackney Anarchists. Contact Dave on 249-7042
Kingston Anarchists, 13 Den mark Road, King-
ston upon Thames (tel: 549-2564)

London Workers' Group, Box W, 182 Upper St.
N.1. (Tel: 249-7042)

Love v. Power, Box 779, Peace News (London
office: 5 Caledonian Road

West London Anarchists, 7 Pennard Road, W12
KENT

Ramsgate: Peter Ford, 22 Royal Road
Sevenoaks: Jim Endesby, 70 Bradbourne Road

MIDLANDS

Secretariat: c/o Andrew Huckersby, 49 West-
leigh Av, Derby DE3 3BY, tel: 0332-3686 678

Groups in the Federation include Corby, Cov-
entry, Derby, Leamington/Warwick, Nottingham,
Oxford, Sheffield (all separately listed), Birm-
ingham. Also:

LEICESTER. Contact: Lyn Hurst, 41 Briarfield
Drive, Leicester, tel: 0533-21250 (days) or
0533-414060 (nights).

Any group that wishes to add or transfer contact
address etc. here, please write to FREEDOM.

Newly formed

NORTH-EASTERN ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Secretariat: Leeds Anarchists, Box 101,
30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2. Publishes mthly
bulletin. Next conference will be held in
Sheffield, 23 September. Groups in Leeds,
Sheffield, Huddersfield, Sunderland and New-
castle

NORTH-WEST ANARCHIST FEDERATION

c/o Grass Roots, 109 Oxford Rd, Manchester M1

Groups in the Federation are:

Bolton Anarchist Group, c/o Grass Roots (tel:
387516)

Burnley Anarchist Group, 5 Hollin Hill,
Burnley, Lancs

Lancaster Anarchist Group, 41 Main Rd,
Galgate, Lancaster

Manchester Anarchist Group, c/o Grass Roots
Manchester Anarchist Organisation, c/o Jill
or Jack, 21 Holmfirth St, Manchester M13

Manchester Syndicalist Workers' Federation,
c/o Grass Roots

Newsletter & quarterly meetings. Contacts in
other areas.

MANCHESTER SOLIDARITY group has also
recently reformed and now holds regular monthly
meetings. Our members are involved in a num-
ber of local groups and activities which takes
up much of our time but we intend to arrange
some occasional 'readers meetings' to discuss
specific 'Solidarity' politics. For further infor-
mation write to: SOLIDARITY (Manchester),
c/o 109 Oxford Rd, Manchester 13.

SCOTTISH LIBERTARIAN FEDERATION

Secretary: Nina Woodcock, 17 Cheviot Cres.,
Flintry, Dundee.

Aberdeen: c/o A.P.P., 163 King Street
Glasgow: c/o Box G.P.P., 146 Holland Street,
Glasgow G2 4NG

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WRONG DATE ON REVIEW SECTION! (PRINTER'S MISTAKE)

Meetings

LONDON AND SOUTH-EAST. The ABC
trial starts on Tuesday, 5 September. To coin-
cide with this the Campaign has organised
three major events: Sunday, 3 September, at
Brighton Poly Art Faculty, 7.00 p.m. Meeting
chaired by member of Brighton Trades Council.
Monday, 4 September, at Conway Hall, Red
Lion Square, London, 7.30 p.m. Pre-trial rally
chaired by Pat Arrowsmith with film 'Home
Soldier Home' about soldiers disillusioned with
their role, esp. in N. Ireland and on their
right to free speech. Tuesday, 5 September,
picket at Old Bailey and every subsequent
Tuesday from 12.30 pm. to 2.30 pm.

Thursday, 7 September Discussion of proposals
for the British end of a world-wide uranium
movements monitoring scheme. At the London
Greenpeace Group meeting; 8 pm. (Group's
normal planning meeting, 7 pm). Contact
London Greenpeace Group, 6 Endsleigh St, WCI
Tel: 01-387 5370

SHEFFIELD Sept. 8-10. HOUSING ACTION
CONVENTION. Squatters, licensees, short-
life housing groups, housing co-ops, builder
co-ops, empty property and housing action
groups etc., etc., coming together to exchange
information and skills, to set up a contact net-
work and aim to produce policy proposals and a
campaign to back them up. Bookings should be
made now. Cost to groups with paid workers
and individuals earning average or over wages,
£ 15, to poorer groups and individuals £ 5 per
person. Fees include main meals and accom-
modation. A coach will go from London, mini-
buses and/or lifts from elsewhere. Enquiries and
bookings to SELF HELP HOUSING RESOURCE
LIBRARY, Ladbroke House, Highbury Grove,
London N.5. (tel: 01-607 2789, ext. 5027)

MANCHESTER. All future joint public meetings
between SWF and MAO have been cancelled
because we have been thrown out of the venue.
This included the August meeting on sexism
advertised in the last issue.

MANCHESTER. Manchester University Libert-
arian Society, c/o 178 Waterloo Place, Man-
chester 13 9QQ are organising a libertarian
festival for the w/e 14-15 October. If you have
any suggestions/ideas please write to above
address

LIVERPOOL. BENEFIT FOR THE 6 in Brixton
Prison, September 15, Stanley House, Upper
Parliament Street, L8. Charges Disco, plus
some readings, singers and perhaps theatre
CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ARMS TRADE.
National meeting in Oxford, 15-17 September
Early September arms exhibitions: 3-10 Farn-
borough International '78. 5-7 Electronics
displays at Mount Royal Hotel, London W.1.
Programme details from CAAT, 5 Caledonian
Road, London N1 9DX (tel: 01-278 1976).

September 15-17 Heysham anti-nuke demo.

Transport from London area to demo organised
by London Greenpeace Group. Contact 6
Endsleigh St, London WCI (tel: 01-387 5370)
as soon as possible.

MORE ON PAGE 7

Part 2 (see Review Section for Part 1). Oh, dear, it seems that your printer has put his feet into an enormous hole, which is in grave danger of swallowing him up! Trying to write
about sexual politics is a veritable minefield, especially late at night when one should be printing your paper, or preferably sleeping. Men should try to control and eliminate as far
as is humanly possible their socially conditioned sexism, as an end in itself. They should not do this just to try to keep women as sexual partners or as members of work or political
collectives. If women decide to become Lesbians or Separatists that is their decision and in no way dependant on whether "the chauvinist male leopard tries to change his spots." The

anarchist fortnightly

Freedom

2 September/78
Vol 39 No 17

20p

WELL, THAT'S AGREED THEN—
WE CON THEM INTO
VOTING FOR US,
BUT WE DON'T
TELL THEM
WHY!



STATES NEED SECRETS

SINCE knowledge is power, it follows quite logically
that any group seeking to maintain power over another
will try to withhold information. Not only will this
apply obviously to groups locked in struggle - like
states in conflict - but to any relationship where there
is no equality or freedom. Many wives don't know
what their husbands earn!

One of many corruptions of power is this withholding
of information, which is what makes such phrases as
'Open Government' such a load of nonsense. No government
can be open with its people since the purpose of govern-
ment is to govern. The excuse for secrecy will perhaps
be that 'national security' demands it, because of that
other state beyond the frontier, which will take away
our freedoms if we don't voluntarily surrender them (!)
but fundamentally the struggle that matters to any
government is the struggle with its own people - the
permanent struggle that goes on all the time and is in

fact at its weakest when there is an overt struggle
going on with an external enemy. ('War is the health of
the State').

We can conveniently call the internal struggle 'the
class struggle' if we like - but we should be careful to
dissociate our analysis from that of those who base a
political theory upon the stages of the class struggle,
leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat through a
leadership siezing or being elected to power - for that
leadership, having read its Marx itself, will know pre-
cisely what to do to prevent itself withering away - it
will withhold knowledge, the better to govern.

This is what makes faintly ridiculous complaints
against state secrecy from any who think in terms of any
kind of government bringing about a better world.

The only kind of open society possible is one where
there are no organs of power, economic or political -
a society without government. An anarchist society.

BUSTED! HUNTLEY STREET

Well, they did it. As we mentioned in the last issue of Freedom events at Huntley Street have been moving towards a climax. Camden Council continued to negotiate until Tuesday night (August 15) and the evictors arrived at 6 a.m. on Wednesday morning. And the people who behave with such calculating cynicism have the gall to advertise their miserable little bureaucracy as "Camden Cares".

The eviction itself was quite heavy. It is the first major one since the Criminal Trespass Act, involving about 160 people. Several hundred police were used, including members of the Special Patrol Group, and they apparently felt the need to have protective clothing and riot shields. Perhaps they expected hordes of armed terrorists, no doubt drug crazed? Anyway, they broke down the barricades with heavy moving equipment and threw everybody into the street. There were 17 arrests, the police had a list of "organisers", all of whom ended up in custody. At the moment the families have been found temporary accommodation ("Camden Cares") while the single people are coping as best as possible.

INVITATION

THE SLOW BURNING FUSE

The Lost History of
the British Anarchists

JOHN
QUAIL

IT'S STAR TIME!!!
On Saturday, September 9th 12.00-2.00
JOHN QUAIL
will give a LIVE, IN PERSON appearance
at FREEDOM BOOKSHOP,
where he will sign copies of his book
"The Slow Burning Fuse"...
... which comrades are invited to
purchase.
(Sherry will be served)



DREAM COMES TRUE

LAST WEEKEND a little grey-haired Italian priest's lifelong dream finally came true. No, he didn't scoop the pool in the State lottery - the prize was far more impressive.

A group of friends known as the "cardinals" elected him to be God's representative on earth.

Albino Luciani hails from Venice, the city of canals, gondoliers and chemical plants, and is said by those who know him to "wear glasses" and have his hair "cropped".

LETTERS AMNESTY?

Dear Companions,

This information needs to be published in Great Britain, if it has not already been. 17 libertarians, who had previously been amnestied, had their amnesty withdrawn on the 26th July 1978. The amnesty had been granted on the 27th October 1977, and the 17 had originally been arrested Jan/Feb 1977.

These companions were arrested because of a meeting held in a bar to discuss the restructuring of the FAI. No other reason is given and I leave it to you to draw your own conclusions regarding the extent of the vaunted democracy in Spain.

The names of the companions: Juan Garcia Mieto, Antonio Marfil, Joaquin Gambin, Alfonso Garcia, Jose Antonio Caravaca, Roque Cano, Jose Lozano, Jose Hernandez, Jose Miguel Maluquer and Carlos Egido, Jose Antonio Lopez, Javier Jariot, Luis Folch, Jose Cuevas and Carlos Jaen. Juan Manuel Clavero and Isabel Notivali have been declared outlaw with a warrant out, the others are at the moment out of prison on bail.

love and peace
"Jaybird"

P.S. There is a solidarity campaign here ongoing. Contact address: CNT-Artes Graficas, Calle Rieta 20, Barcelona 7

We hope that you will muster what support you are able.

THANKS!

Dear Comrades,

I wish to thank you for printing the article on my case in the June 24/78 issue of Freedom

I also want to commend you on your article on the Australian Aborigines, who are indeed natural Anarchists. Since I am in contact with Aborigines by mail, I sent the article to the BLACK RESOURCE CENTRE for republication in their newsletter, which covers all of Black Australia and New Zealand.

The future is Anarchy
Lorenzo Komboa Ervin
no. 18759-175
P.O. Box 1000
Marion, IL 62959

He told a reporter recently: "I am a little man accustomed to little things."

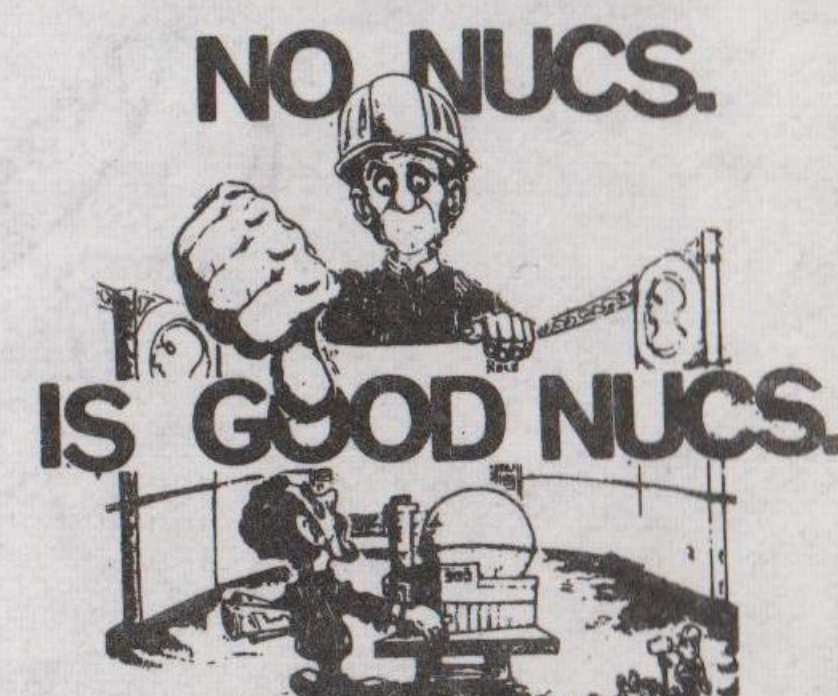
Already Albino's life has started to change - his first act was to change his name to John Paul and plans are being made for a grand party to which political and religious celebrities will be invited. Traditionally this is known as a "coronation".

His predecessor in the job, Paul, was unable (due to other commitments) to offer him any advice on what exactly being Pope - the official title - involves.

But from the public's point of view it seems mainly to hold marriages together and encourage the birth of children. This he does by standing on a balcony and speaking in Latin, which few people understand.

Behind the scenes, in the magnificent Vatican, it is thought he talks to God. As far as we know, no-one has ever seen God.

Albino used to enjoy cycling and is described by friends as "friendly".



'JUST BOCKS', the anarchist bookshop at 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast (tel: Bel. 25426) have produced a number of badges, dealing with factory occupation, prison abolition, the RUC, women, broadcasting, nuclear power. Our comrades need to sell them quickly to help finance their centre. They cost 25p each + postage, or 20p for bulk orders. (Unfortunately, as most of them are black and red they will not reproduce in FREEDOM! But here is one sample)



"Genuine Collectors Item, Sir. Only known copy of a Ted Heath book not signed by the Author"

PLUTONIUM!

Should we do this work?

THE WINDSCALE inquiry showed clearly the emptiness of the democratic processes and when the rules are used to impede the official decisions, as in the case of Mr. Tymes' objections to roadway inquiries, the rules are altered or the odds stacked against the objectors.

The experts assure people that there is no danger -- their precautions are foolproof. But supposing a Tarragona like disaster in Spain was to occur involving radioactive material? As has been said before, when we are dealing with dangerous substances like plutonium the technology has to be infallible and there is no such technology.

Moreover, any society operating with such technologies must be able to understand them and control whether or not they are used in the long and short term interests of humanity. Societies such as now exist, which are wasteful, greedy and in the short term materially and socially irresponsible, are quite unable to do this. The irrationality of power is observable in the complete and growing disorder that exists today.

Aldermaston is part of our social history. The movement round it left its seeds of grassroots direct action and exposure of the cynicism of the Labour political leadership.

Today the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment plant at Aldermaston is once again in the news. It appears to be established that some workers there have suffered plutonium contamination.

The argument is whether such levels of contamination are safe. Some believe that any increase in the background level of radiation is dangerous. As it is proposed to increase the numbers of plants to produce more power we can expect a continual increase in radiation levels.

Unlike the proposed plants Aldermaston does not even have the doubtful justification that it is for peaceful purposes. One could ask whether those who are engaged in the production of genocidal weapons, whether they be scientists, administrators or workers, can complain about the dangers to themselves of such activities.

No doubt work is going on there beyond the knowledge and control of the people of this country - the neutron bomb, for example, which carries the concept that things are more important than people to its logical conclusion.

It is the business of Anarchists to develop a sense of responsibility about society and what we do. The dangers facing humanity are produced by a society that is suicidal in its squandering of resources. The dangers are not confined to the continual increase in the background level of radiation imposed by peaceful (sic) and warlike uses of nuclear energy. The replacement of fission by fusion will also have its dangers for sun like temperatures on earth are likely to have great biological consequences.

Apart from the resources wasted by Western society the weapons programme consumes massive amounts of resources and, as predicted by a group of scientists and reported in the *Guardian* (15 September 1968):

"Within the next two decades life on our planet will be showing the first signs of succumbing to industrial pollution. The atmos-

phere will become unbreathable for men and animals; all life will cease in rivers and lakes; plants will wither from poisoning."

There has been little action on any scale other than cosmetic activities to combat this. This isn't surprising, given the current attitudes of society combined with the vast and powerful vested interests producing pollutants. All resources, human and material, are treated as fair game for profit and power. Little can be done until there is widespread social pressure for it.

The big question for the Aldermaston workers is: "Should we be doing this work at all?" And it is a question, on a more local level, that building workers on the huge Nat West block - the huge monument to financial disorder presiding over decaying East London - should also be asking themselves.

ALAN ALBON

Urenco

URENCO is a Dutch/British/German uranium enrichment consortium and one particularly objectionable thing it's up to at the moment is attempting to market enriched uranium to Brazil. Brazil is importing the various stages of the uranium cycle so that it will soon have the capability to produce atomic weapons.

There is a transnational campaign against URENCO - in the Netherlands it has mobilised tens of thousands of people. In Britain, the one major demonstration so far (at the URENCO plant at Capenhurst, Cheshire, in June) was much smaller, but hopeful in that it attempted a different style of organising. There is no hierarchy in the campaign, it is an alliance of local autonomous anti-nuke groups; and the structure of the Capenhurst demo itself was more libertarian - there were no 'outside' speakers, MPs and the like. Also, there is a definite commitment within the alliance that there must be moves towards nonviolent direct action to stop the nuclear industry.

However, there are attempts to co-opt the campaign by the more 'establishment' end of the environmental movement. Two people from the Friends of the Earth headquarters in London were at the Capenhurst demo, but they wandered round looking at what was going on rather than deigning to join in. They approached one of the participants, Pieter Lammers of the Dutch Stop URENCO campaign, and (in his view) made definite approaches to him to get together and launch a new-style anti-URENCO

campaign. In fact, the style is ages old, a leadership-to-people link up. Pieter told the FOE men that the Stop URENCO campaign had already started - couldn't they see the evidence with their own eyes?

Roger Moody, one of the initiators of the British Stop URENCO alliance, wrote a piece on the Capenhurst demonstration for *Vole* (a magazine launched last year by Richard Boston as a monthly for the better-off, real ale end of the environmental movement). In the article he was critical of FOE (but scathing of BNFL). FOE took exception to what Roger wrote, and the critical parts were excised by *Vole*. (It seems that there's a real or imagined symbiotic relationship between FOE and *Vole* - the former see the latter as an important platform for their views, the latter see the former as providing a lot of their not insubstantial readership).

Justifying the rewrite, Jeremy Bugler of *Vole* said he'd been assured that FOE was now definitely against URENCO - they were just trying to work out the grounds on which they're opposed! Jeremy Bugler also promised that *Vole* would imminently carry a full critique of FOE. If FOE is now (publicly) opposed to URENCO, then it's news (and pleasant news) to the Stop URENCO Alliance. Unfortunately, no FOE representative turned up at the London planning meeting of the alliance a month or so back. As for *Vole*'s major expose, we'll wait and see.

Further details of the Stop URENCO Alliance from: c/o London Greenpeace Group, 6 Endsleigh St, London WC1.

LEN PINE



A.B.C. Time of Trial

Before you read this the trial of Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell will have begun at the Old Bailey. It is difficult to know where to start in describing the significance of this case. It is only equalled in importance by the 'Persons Unknown' case. To sum it up, Crispin Aubrey and Duncan Campbell are journalists, working mainly for *Time Out* and *New Scientist*. They have specialised in reporting the kind of affairs that the State finds sensitive, for example military matters. In February 1977 they interviewed John Berry, who is a former soldier. He had worked in Military Intelligence, in particular with 'SIGNINT' (Signals Intelligence). This is an organisation which gathers information on political and economic intelligence throughout the world, mainly by monitoring communications. From a libertarian viewpoint, this sort of thing is dubious, to say the least. However, even better, it is actually illegal, according to an international treaty or two. Of course, that doesn't worry the British state (or any others, no doubt) which carries on regardless. Law and order is only for the masses. In fact they have a large building in Cheltenham to organise these activities. We're not supposed to know this sort of thing, so following the interview the three quickly found themselves faced with charges under the Official Secrets Acts.

We have had cause to mention various pieces of 'catch all' legislation, that is laws which are deliberately made as vague as possible, so that they mean whatever the prosecution want them to. The conspiracy laws are a case in point (see *Freedom* Vol. 39 no. 14). The Official Secrets Acts are also particularly useful. The present Acts were produced in 1911, ostensibly for protection against German spies. There has been a bit of patching up since then, but the basic position is that there are two sections, Section 1 mainly for coping with foreigners and Section 2, mainly for us. This Section 2 is a masterpiece, full of phrases like "deemed to be prejudicial to the interests of the State". The final arbiter is of course the State itself. There have been various well meaning liberal promises to tidy up this Act, notably by our present Government. However, their proposals a few weeks ago were not inspiring in any meaningful sense (shouts of "we told you so" from the sidelines). The cynical and disaffected might form the opinion that the state is aware of the value to them of this type of law and has no real intention of relinquishing any part of it.

In the ABC case the basic objection seems to be that John Berry was a government employee and he talked about it. Remember that a DHSS clerk who revealed how much tea was drunk would

be technically liable under the OSA. So is anybody who buys a postcard of the Post Office Tower (a 'restricted building'). Crispin Aubrey and Duncan Campbell seem to be guilty of being journalists. They were told that to collect files on sensitive matters, even from open sources made them liable to proceedings.

The development of the case since the committal proceedings has also had its moments of drama and farce. For example, the arrest of Duncan's filing cabinet (with its serious side of course, loss of files effectively cripples a working journalist), the mass police swoop on Lancaster University, because a student had written to Duncan, and, last but not least, the now-infamous Hugh Johnstone. (It will be interesting to see what they do for an expert witness during the trial. Will he be produced as Col. B, will they admit that everybody knows his name now or will they bring forward another piece of anonymity and repeat the whole farce?)

Conviction of these three would be a major victory for the state. Over the last few years there has been a noticeable tightening up. This is not an evil plot, it is in the nature of the system. Anarchists have recognised this all along. Now, even liberals are beginning to see that their precious civil liberties are fragile indeed. Foreign observers are amazed by the restrictions on information on Britain. Americans would never stand for what is accepted here. And Britain still likes to think of itself as the ultimate in free

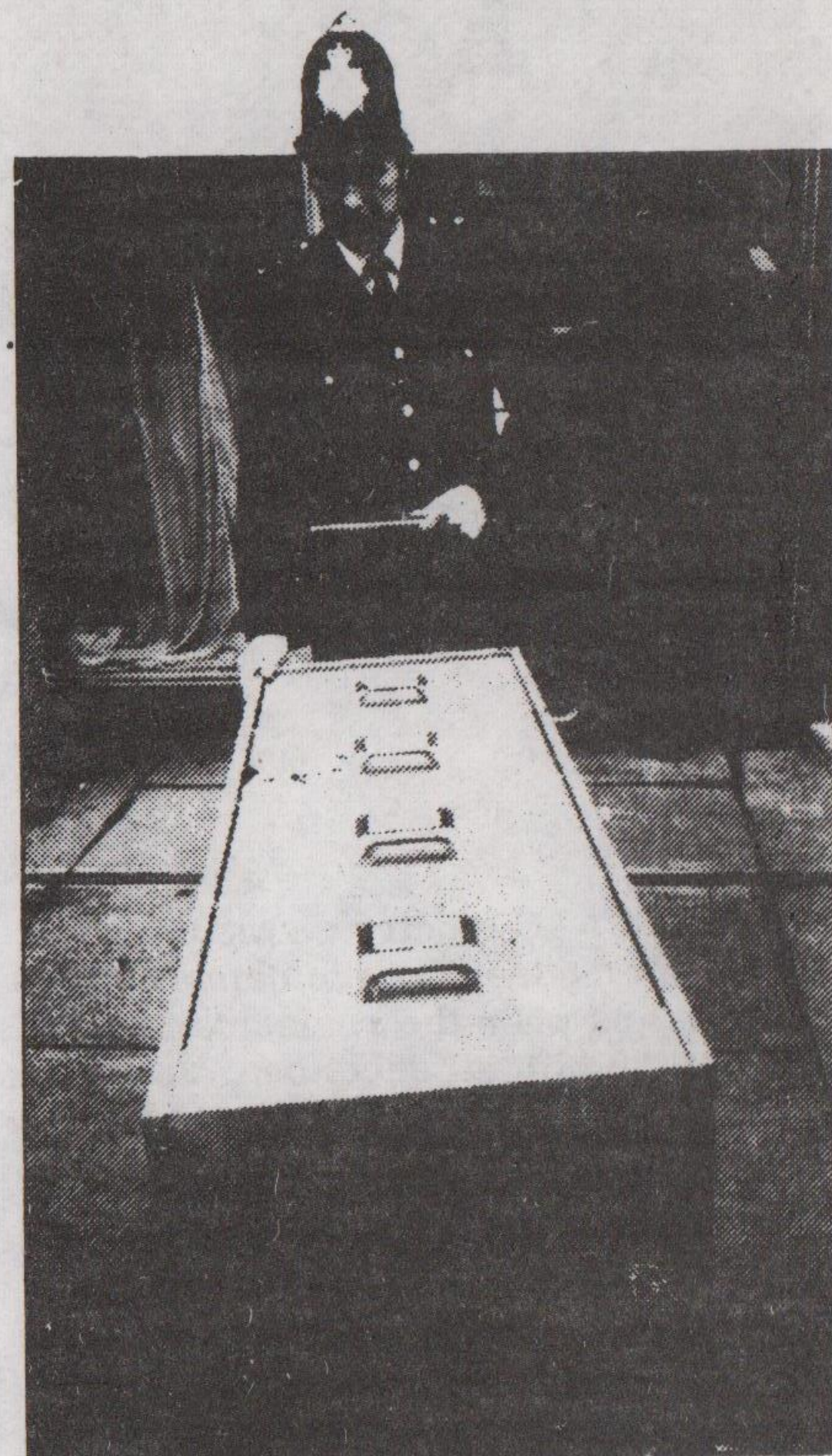
POLICE NEWS

The Director of Public Prosecutions must be relieved. The House of Commons Committee of Privileges has formally acquitted him of contempt of the House for his intervention when a number of MPs named Hugh Johnstone during a debate.

Lord Shackleton has carried out a review of the workings of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. He is a little worried about its effects on civil liberties and does not think that such legislation should become a permanent feature. However, he recognises its current value and only proposes a bit of tidying up. Merlyn Rees, Home Secretary, gives the report a "broad welcome" but doesn't seem interested in even these mild cosmetic measures.

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Six months £ 3.00 (\$ 3.00)
Five issues £ 1.25 (\$ 2.50)



'This filing cabinet is under arrest'

countries. In fact they have a battery of legislation which can be wheeled out as needed. And they are beginning to think that the time has come. Conviction of John Berry would effectively intimidate any government employee from discussing his/her work. Conviction of Crispin Aubrey and Duncan Campbell would mean that no journalist could carry out their job. And three more people would find themselves in prison for daring to resist the encroachment of the state. D

Metropolitan Police Commissioner David McNee (yes, him again) has repeated his bare faced demand for legitimisation of standard practises. He appeared on TV and said that he did not know how many of his officers "bend" the rules, and asserted "If I knew I would be doing something about it." The Commissioner is of the opinion that his proposed changes would be making it "better" for the suspect. I'll have to think about that one.

Even within the police there are divisions. (No, it's not meant to be a pun.) To us they might all seem the same, but there are sectional rivalries. One upset at the moment is over proposals to extend the powers of the Ministry of Defence police (apparently known, with touching whimsicality, they have their sense of humour, you know, as "Modplod"). The Police Federation is worried by the idea that these individuals have theoretical authority in any Crown property within 15 miles of a defence establishment. That covers just about everything, there's plenty of defence establishments. And now it's suggested that this should become "in the vicinity". It might seem like a minor demarcation dispute to us but... Z

PRISON NOTES



Write to:

Ronan Bennett (B 19617), Stewart Carr (B 20185), Trevor Dawton (B 20620), Dafydd Ladd (B 19792), Iris Mills (DO 20693), Vincent Stevenson (B 20621)

HMF Brixton, Jebb Avenue, London SW 2.

THE PERSECUTION and harassment of dissidents goes on, as it will, in these benighted isles, according to a bizarre formula of chicanery.

The first example over the past fortnight was the case of the Phantom Gun in Brixton prison. According to the official account the existence of a gun was reported by an inmate early on Tuesday, whereas it has since come to our attention that at least some guards already knew of the matter the previous day and were kindly warning visitors not to return on the morrow! In fact no gun did ever materialise and the authorities were unworried enough to allow the resumption of social visits the next day. The affair should not, however, be allowed to slip by without mention of three important consequences:

1) Apart from the cancellation of all visits on the Tuesday and the strip-searching and day-long incarceration in their cells of a large proportion of the inmates, the authorities cut down both on the amount and kind of food that could subsequently be brought into the prison. No tinned goods were allowed except alcohol (!), nor were milk and yoghurt, and there were sudden inextinguishable bans on fresh cheese and cartons of orange juice - at least as strange as the refusal to allow in to Ronan the biography of Cromwell by Lady Antonia Frazer on an earlier occasion! Things are now more or less back to 'normal.' But:-

2) The reduction in rations considerably upset both the prisoners and their relatives and friends, and this deterioration of conditions led to a protest in the prison, as a result of which some of the inmates were punished and others transferred. It also posed the danger of creating resentment against the political prisoners in Brixton. For:-

3) The press widely reported that in the prison at the time of the phantom gun affair were various Arabs and a 'gang of anarchists'. The *Guardian* report, for instance, mentioned them in one line only to dissociate them from the whole thing in another, while still contriving to leave the association in readers' minds. This was not only as ridiculous as it would have been to state that Joe Bloggs was in the prison at the time; it was also potentially prejudicial to the case, as Taff's lawyer lost no time in pointing out in court that Thursday when requesting a reprimand of the press from the magistrate. (This, when it came, was predictably feeble and heavily hedged around by ifs and buts). Perhaps, incidentally, a similar reprimand should be made of the Rt Hon Home Secretary who, when confronted the other day with picketing comrades from Manchester and other parts of the North West, (see last issue), angrily poked one of them in the chest and shouted, "I don't want to talk about that because it's going through the due process of law - you ought to see what these people are doing in Northern Ireland!" !!

In court the chicanery or, if you like, the sheer bloody-mindedness is made manifest in several ways. There is the Terror of London Town - the Brixton prison van - which, screeching past red traffic lights with our comrades and the

Killing No Murder



"NO man is an island entire of itself", wrote the poet John Donne. "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

This quotation concludes the pamphlet *Killing No Murder* (another good 17th century

quotation) which the Liddle Towers Action Committee has re-published following the recent agreement of the attorney general to a fresh inquest into his death. As readers may remember, Liddle Towers died in February 1976 at a Durham hospital from injuries sustained after the police had beaten him up outside a night club, and again at the police station. Not the least horrifying aspect of the affair was the verdict of 'justifiable homicide' returned by the jury at the inquest in October that year.

The new inquest comes as a result of considerable public pressure. The Committee has supported the move for one while remaining sceptical of its likely effectiveness in dealing

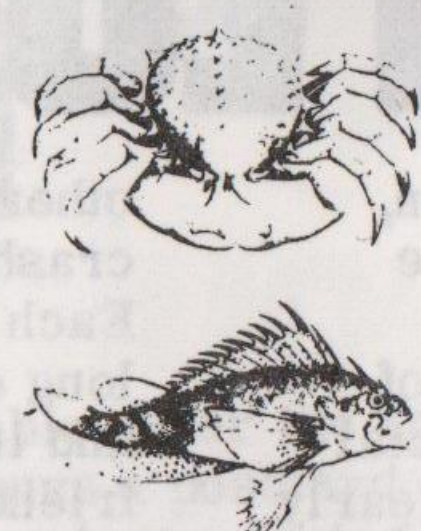
with the disturbing questions involved in the Towers case, and is reiterating its opinion that there should be a full public inquiry. Though the use of such procedures as public inquiries is also likely to cause a few raised eyebrows nowadays, no-one could disagree with the pamphlet's view that the truth must be established and that "everybody should ponder over whether there is not something seriously wrong with a system that requires such pressure before it reluctantly permits the full facts to come out."

Copies of *Killing No Murder* can be obtained from 42 Cherryburn Gardens, Fenham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4, price 22p, post free, five copies for £ 1.

GAIA

LETTERS

MORDAUNT = DUFF?



Dear Comrades

I always read NW's articles with considerable interest, pleasure and profit, while regretting that he dissipates his energies in journalism and - to put it bluntly - pedantry instead of producing his own books on anarchist history and practice, which we need so badly and which his verve, erudition and theoretical grasp equip him so manifestly to write.

It is rarely I notice a slip in pieces signed by NW, let alone a significant error, so I feel it especially necessary to insist that his speculation in FREEDOM (8 July) that Myles Mordaunt was a pseudonym of Charles Duff's is groundless, particularly as this is a misapprehension common amongst those - admittedly few in number - who know of The Benefits Moral and Secular of Assassination.

The anarchist bookseller Charles Lahr published work by D H Lawrence, Liam O'Flaherty, T F Powys, H E Bates and other important literary figures in the inter-war years but remarkably little of a political nature. Yet he was indeed responsible for the appearance in 1932 of the 153-page book (by no means a pamphlet) The Benefits Moral and Secular of Assassination, whose authorship was attributed to, merely, 'MM'. The initials did stand for Myles Mordaunt, who although having much in common with Charles Duff - they were both Irish, widely read, satirists and friends of Charles Lahr - was undoubtedly a separate person.

F A Ridley, well known to Freedom Press comrades and a member with the two men of Lahr's Red Lion Street clientele, goes so far as to call Mordaunt an 'Irish anarchist', commenting that 'he had a wit 'as mordant as his name.' Mordaunt actually had the reputation in the 1930s of being one of London's most dazzling conversationalists. My limited knowledge of him comes principally from the printer Herbert Jones, in the early thirties secretary to the Libertarian Association. Mordaunt told him that his real, full name was Myles Francis Mordaunt Plunkett; and as Francis Plunkett he wrote some articles and just one other book: As the Fool, a novel published in 1935. Mordaunt/Plunkett had been hurried out of Ireland by friends following the Civil War of 1922-23, then roamed France and England and by the 1930s had established himself in London.

What became of him I have no idea. I would welcome further information concerning this Mystery Man - and, for that matter, reminiscences of the Libertarian Association (with which, however, there is no suggestion he was connected) - though Herbert Jones warns he was 'a great romancer mixing fact and fiction inextricably and you took your choice.'

DAVID GOODWAY

SEPARATISM

Friends

It would seem to me that Eric in his letter (19 August) in reply to my article has missed the point. I was not arguing for separate groups only or for total separation. I was defending the freedom of people to choose to work with whom they want, be this in separate groups, mixed groups or both.

In the specific context of the conference this was a defence of some women and men who chose to work in separate groups. Despite the fact that there was a mixed group scheduled (at the Lancaster conference - eds.) there was still some resentment against the separate groups which I thought was unjustified. I didn't mention the mixed group in the article because everyone agreed that there should be one and hence there was no hassle about it. It was the differences about the separate groups to which I wanted to draw attention.

I am in agreement with Eric when he speaks against what he calls 'pure separatism' as I find it necessarily elitist and vanguardist not to mention it serving to reproduce and concretise one of the divisions of the spectacle, that is, artificial sex divisions. At the same time I find that one-sex groups in autonomously created situations - be they ad hoc groups at conferences or continuing groups in a friendship network such as consciousness raising groups - to be of help in the understanding of our ruinous sexual/social conditioning. (So too are mixed groups, I hastily add). But these groups themselves are not unproblematical. For example, are not such groups part of Everyday Life and therefore also perpetuating false divisions? In theory this might appear to be the case, but I have found in practice that such groups can (not always by any means) use the spectacular division of the sexes and subvert it to revolutionary ends, e.g. discovering that sexuality is not static and that the terms 'hetero' and 'homo' are merely prefixes which denote specific points in the continuum of sexuality and that they are not two opposing sexualities. (When this is related to prevailing socio-sexual norms it becomes apparent what a challenging discovery it is).

It was within the specific context of the conference that I found the comment 'separatism is next to fascism' to be defensive. Everyone was aware that there was to be a mixed group so, using what Eric calls 'patronising cheap psychology', I considered the resentment against the separate groups, of which the quoted comment was part, to be defensive. I still think it a justifiable conclusion.

No, I don't think the female mind is sacred.

To use a cliché, nothing is sacred. (By the by, the way Eric expressed this part of his letter was, to me, anti-feminist. But excuse me, this is more patronising cheap psychology). Moreover, the idea of separate groups at the conference came from both women and men.

I do not 'idolise' any group. When Eric supposes that I 'idolise' women and asks why don't I 'idolise' the working classes he is mistaken on the former point and on the latter he is implying, it seems to me, that not only am I bourgeois, but sexual politics too are bourgeois. This assertion has been debated for weeks now by N.W. and Mark Hendy and their debate has shown that no-one seems to have any clear understanding of when oppression is specifically sexual, when it is specifically of a class nature or when it is both (or neither, etc). A clearer understanding of these vital points will be arrived at by open and honest debate and not by, Eric please note, trying to marginalise sexual politics as bourgeois. To imply that sexual politics are bourgeois is to deny that we, the working classes, think about our sexuality.

Ⓐ Liberation Ⓐ
K.W. (L.A.G.)

Lancaster

TOWARDS FASCISM

Comrades

To make a last comment on John Bradbrook's criticism of my use of the phrase 'social-fascist tendencies' in relation to Labour - left-wing fascist tendencies if you like; I did not say we lived under a fascist regime. I did, however, in all seriousness suggest that there is a drift to corporatism and to acceptance, however unconscious it may remain, of the idea of an 'ethical state', and that this is the core of fascist ideology as expounded by Gentile and friends. I did not go into this in the article in question, but for the broad outlines would refer John Bradbrook back to something I wrote in FREEDOM's Review of 17.4.76 called 'Anarchism versus Corporatism'. Also to two excellent articles under the general heading 'Fasci-Bashing', one by Ray Cowper and Terry Phillips, the other by Bob Potter, in the issue of 17.9.77. (Among the points made very clearly here is that "The major threat is IN POWER.")

On what the drift to fascism/corporatism actually consists of, I hope (as I pointed out at the time) that there will be much more analysis and discussion of it in these pages, and that I shall be able to contribute. . . On the question why there isn't more stress on the "cooperation, self help and free association that is already happening", surely at least as much responsibility for the inadequate coverage there no doubt is, lies with people like John Bradbrook (who should report on it where they find it or are involved with it), as with the small band of night-time editors in Whitechapel. So, for a start, let's hear more on the subject from him!

GF

MANSON

Dear comrades

This may be a somewhat belated reply, but I feel that the letter of Wendy in your June 10 edition deserves some sort of comment. The 'natural conservatism of age', as an explanation for the end of the 'hippies', may not be a total explanation, but it does contain a lot more truth than Wendy is willing to admit. This 'conservative' effect of ageing is merely a short-hand manner of describing the effects of a whole bundle of 'encounters with reality'. It is a lot harder to "be a good hippy" once one is out of college, supporting two kids and trapped into a series of debts. Also, after a few years on welfare (the dole in England I believe) the sleaziness of a run down room begins to get to one. Etc., etc, etc . . .

As to Wendy's attempt to deny that Manson was part and parcel of the 'hippy' movement, I believe that her wishes have really become her reality. It is a simple fact that the 'counter-culture' was not one movement but several. Some of these movements were not so nice and loving as the one Wendy chooses to define as the flower movement. A whole lot of things were happening in the sixties, not all of them good. As to Manson's role in this movement, I think that it should be obvious that there is a direct line of descent from the mystic guru of hippy occultism to the Statan/Christ figure of Manson. All the basic elements in Manson are already present in Timothy Leary. What does it matter what sort of bullshit they are spouting at a particular moment? Leary did an incredible number of about faces in his career, and his follower went right along with him. The important thing is not the content of the snake oil; it is the figure of the snake oil salesman himself.

The point is not whether the 'hippies' are good or bad. They were both. One of the weak points of the hippies (and of their new left brothers) was simple minded and dogmatic moral judgements that could be passed on at the drop of a hat. One of the things that we should have learned from the experience of the sixties is to be a bit more critical and open minded. There was a lot lacking in the hippy movement. Their 'love' was mostly empty rhetoric, without any firm commitment. Their

STIRNER

Dear Editors

In "Every Man His Own Football" (August 19), BSB suggests that Max Stirner owes much to the Marquis de Sade. There is no evidence that Stirner knew anything about de Sade, although certain writers - eg. Simone de Beauvoir in her Must We Burn Sade - have suggested affinities between the two.

Had Stirner known of de Sade it is likely he would have relished the latter's iconoclasm. It is equally likely, however, that he would have regarded de Sade's prolix, repetitive and ultimately boring descriptions of sexual cruelty as yet one more example of possession by a 'spook'. After all de Sade was an im-moralist ('evil be thou my good'), whereas Stirner was an a-moralist ('beyond good and evil').

Sincerely
S.E. Parker

London W2.

espousal of each and every half baked mystic idea was not just silly and simple minded but also objectively ugly. Their dependence on gurus, their reinforcement of traditional sex roles, their crass consumerism (yes they were quite gross consumers. Tell me the difference between a 'straight' buying a car and a 'hippy' buying a stereo) are all in direct opposition to the spirit of anarchism.

The hippies certainly did introduce certain values that were decent. Yet, they were not the only people to do this at the time. The point of the hippies is to go beyond them not to worship them.

In Solidarity,
P. Murtagh.

1631 Retallack St.,
Regina, Sask.

EH?

AFTER the first extraordinary outburst of press publicity over the charges against ex-Larebil leader the Ex. Hon Yemert Eproht and his trusty colleagues, a most scandalous injustice has been passed over in total silence. In case any of our readers have missed the full significance of this affair, we offer no apologies for describing it again.

It was, after all dammit, not so long ago that the great isle of Langden looked upon blood sports as a highly honourable and civilised sport for gentlemen, and was indeed renowned throughout the world for its prowess in this field. Yet now, by some mysterious and shocking reversal of the natural order of things - still to be adequately explained but due at least in part to an infiltration of dangerous and ruthless murderers into the ranks of the police, judiciary and armed forces, not to mention the unions, such sport is regarded as tantamount to MURDER and, moreover, on the basis of pure speculation it is even possible to imprison these gentlemen for Conspiracy to Take Part in Blood Sports and refuse them bail! And as if this were not enough all on its own, at the same time it transpires that a gang of alleged persons of uncertain identity, not even listed in Who's Who and said to have been plotting to explode the very foundations of society with a strange concoction of weedkiller and sugar and the handling of airguns in a dishonest manner, are at this very same moment, far from having to relinquish their passports, living la dolce vita in the snowy mountains of Witzerland! Not only this but they have been allowed to continue their former activities quite openly - the first thing being to return to their gardens and their weedkilling and to stock up their pantries with more sugar. While Eproht and the rest have been denied all chance of continuing to shoot dogs or even the occasional biped!

This is indeed an ironic twist of fate; but upon further reflection, it is really surprising under the present anarchy? Looking as we do through a glass darkly, nothing but nothing should strike us as anything but different from usual.

Nevertheless, we appeal to all good men and women who have some remembrance of the old order. Do not for one minute of the day forget our gentle and eminently respectable friends in that prison of Nobtrix which makes the Bastille 'itself compare favourably with the Hilton Hotel! Remember, it is our responsibility to restore the ancien regime and the return to normality!

Extract from Through the Looking Glass of August 1978 (an extremist periodical for restorationists of the ancien regime).

Press Fund

27 July - 9 August 1978

IN SHOP: Anon. 44p; A.J.C. 40p; P.H. £ 2.00; J.M.C. £ 0.50; B. 15; J. 30p; WOLVERHAMPTON: J.L. £ 1.00; J.K.W. £ 0.10; LOS GATOS, CALIF: Proceeds from Picnic held by Italian comrades, per L.M. £ 37.50; P.A. £ 1.00; EDINBURGH: D.B. £ 2.00; PAISLEY: A.S.C. £ 1.00; NEEDHAM: Mass, USA: Libertarian Group, £ 25.64; IN SHOP: Anon. £ 10.00; WOLVERHAMPTON: J.L. £ 1.00; J.K.W. £ 0.10; CHESTER: J.P.S. £ 1.68.

TOTAL £ 84.81
PREVIOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED £ 705.54
TOTAL TO DATE £ 790.35

10 - 23 August 1978

LONDON N.I. S.B. £ 4.00; STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN: O.H. £ 1.00; WOLVERHAMPTON: J.L. £ 1.00; J.K.W. £ 0.10; NEWCASTLE: F.W.K. £ 1.90; DUBLIN: P.D. £ 1.19; WOLVERHAMPTON: J.L. £ 3.00; J.K.W. £ 0.30; SAN JOSE, CALIF, USA: E.U. £ 5.00; LONDON SW16: D.B.P. £ 2.00; GENEVA, SWITZERLAND: P.C. £ 2.00; VANCOUVER, CANADA: P.B. £ 3.00; NEW YORK, USA: W.T.S. £ 12.00; LONDON SW11: J.M. £ 0.10.

TOTAL £ 36.59
PREVIOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED £ 790.35
TOTAL TO DATE £ 796.94

Desires

TYPEWRITER FUND

10 - 23 August 1978

HUDDERSFIELD: B.H. £ 1.40; NEWCASTLE: M.S. £ 1.00; ST. LOUIS, Ms, USA: L.T.S. £ 5.00; NEWCASTLE: F.W.K. £ 1.90; WOLVERHAMPTON: J.L. £ 1.00; COVENTRY: J.E. £ 5.00.

TOTAL £ 15.30.

I am seeking info etc on anarchism in Britain during the 1930s. Am especially interested in activity in the provinces. Please write: S.J. Ruffle, 45E East Slope, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex.

LETTERS

Our comrades in prison would love to get letters. This contact is very important in maintaining morale, so please write. However, you should be aware that if you do, your name will go on a list. Don't be too discouraged by this, it's probably on a list already.

Contact. Stop Press

Manchester Anarchist Organization
21a Homfirth Street, Longsight,
Manchester 13. Tel: 061 224 3028
MAO do badges and silk screen posters.
10p per badge, minimum order 1 badge,
Payment within 7 days of delivery.
No discount for quantity.

London Workers' Group meeting,
4 September, 8 pm. on the 'Impact of
Technology on the Working Class'.
Earl Russell Pub, Pancras Road, NW1
(King's Cross station).

BOOKSHOP NOTES

NOTES this week devotes itself mainly to a far from complete run-down on some of the many mags and journals stocked by Freedom Bookshop and currently available - apart from FREEDOM itself, of course.

The latest issue of Interrogations (no. 14) is available at £1.00 (15p post), including Nino Staffa on "Technobureaucracy and City Life" (in English) as well as articles in Italian, Spanish and French.

Red and Black 7 (spring 1977), the latest issue of that fine, if infrequent, Australian anarchist journal is available at £0.40p (plus 10p post) - this mag is now being more widely distributed in the UK and an increase in sales might encourage out Australian comrades to produce it more frequently. The current issue includes Paul Avrich on anarchism in Russia and articles on Johann Most, Czechoslovakia 1968, Anarchism, Regionalism and the Fourth World, Ayn Rand and much more.

The Ecologist Quarterly, £1.00 (plus 19p post) is a new venture, an offshoot of The Ecologist (now New Ecologist) magazine. No. 1 is in stock and includes Orío Giarini on the Internal Limits to Growth and Edward Goldsmith on Unemployment, amongst other things.

Dave Cunliffe's excellent Global Tapestry has now reached no. 6 (£0.25p plus 15p postage); much fine poetry and articles, illustrations and info, put together in Dave's inimitable way.



Cenit (£0.30p plus 12p post) is a Spanish language journal published in France by the CNT; it is subtitled 'Magazine of Sociology, Science and Literature' and is the theoretical journal of the CNT; we have a number of issues in stock, the latest to hand, May/June 1978, includes articles on Spain 1936, workers' control in industry, collectives, both agrarian and industrial.

Alternative Sources of Energy* (£1.00 plus 15p post) is an American journal devoting itself to the propagation of just that - the latest one available (no. 32, June 1978) has articles and features, letters etc., on every aspect of alternative energy, solar, water, windpower, methane, as well as many useful and practical tips.

Open Road* (£0.40p plus 12p post) is becoming so well-known over here that little need be said to encourage you to invest in issue no. 7 (summer '78) except to say that it is up to the very high standard set in previous issues and includes features on anarchist science fiction, anarchist prisoners, an excellent centre-fold poster (a regular feature, this) and much much more, a really fine journal

The latest Black Flag is available (£0.20p plus 10p post) and although Albert and Stuart would probably regard a recommendation from me as slightly less useful to them than a 'slamming crit', I must say I always find it a lively, informative read. Vol. 5 no. 5 includes an assessment of the Black Cross after 10 years of activity, information on 'Persons Unknown', on computer ip-offs and news from Sweden and all around the anarchist world.

OTHER BOOKS FROM FREEDOM BOOKSHOP

* Robert W Kern: Red Years, Black Years: A Political History of Spanish Anarchism. £7.95p (66p)

* David Boadella: Wilhelm Reich: The Evaluation of his Work. £2.95p (54p)

* Richard Taylor: Freedom, Anarchy and the Law: An Introduction to Political Philosophy. £4.25p (22p)

* Regina Anarchist Federation: Anarchy: Doctrinal Basis. £0.10p (7p)

* Sam Dolgoff: The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society £0.20p (10p)

* Sam Dolgoff (ed): The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' Self-Management in the Spanish Revolution 1936-1939. £2.95p (33p).

Isaiah Berlin: Russian Thinkers (on Bakunin, Herzen and Tolstoy), £6.95p (54p)

Finally - BE PREPARED for the forthcoming General Election (sic) and get your "Don't Vote, it only Encourages Them" badges from Freedom Bookshop, £0.20p each (plus 7p postage) or £2.00 per dozen (plus 12p postage); why not make it into the centre button of a red and black anarchist, anti-election, home-made rosette ideal for anti-election leafletting and picketing?

(Please note: Items marked * are published in the USA and Canada. Please convert \$ at £1 = \$2.00 and add postage as in brackets).

JH

Open Road, Summer 1978

OPENERS

The magazine devoted to total anarchy

HEALTH NUTS TORCH DONUTS

Tired of fending off Big Mac Attacks? Fight back. They did in Ocean Beach, Calif., recently, and won. Ocean Beach is a mixed class, hip working outside San community's resolve, however, the donut-pushers were forced to back down. The combination of legal and illegal

DYLAN DIDDLED

As if the sale of "flesh-colored Christs that glow in the dark" wasn't bad enough; now they're selling Bob Dylan at \$10.50 a hit.

An Australian group called the Sydney Sewer Rats isn't buying. They distributed 2,000 counter-fitted tickets to Dylan's recent Sydney concert, explaining: "It's time we stopped looking to politicians, bosses, union bureaucrats, priests, and

Just a brief note to all followers of these margin notes to let you know that your printer is still alive but has been experiencing increasing problems with his old machine on which FREEDOM is printed. Nothing is constant these days. You would think that having got the product "right" manufacturers would leave well alone and just concentrate on "quality control". No way, if it's not the paper, it's the ink or the font or the blanket or maybe the operator: Trying to make sure that every copy of FREEDOM is well printed is the ultimate "quality control". Does it matter though? Should one even try when we seem to live in a world where old fashioned values such as "pride in one's job" are mocked by a new generation of "angries" and an older generation of "couldn't care less'es"? Don't rush your replies as you will only add to the back-log of mail held up by the Post Office engineers and their "go-slow". What a world we live in. The poor and by poor I mean the people in the Third World get poorer whilst people in the West all try to increase their take-home pay/dole/supplementary benefit and yet instead of the quality of our lives improving it just gets worse and worse. And now even cyclists are getting in on the act - oh, Mary how could you! It seems that pedestrians are now fair game for lorries, cars, motor bikes and bicycles! Which reminds me of the time when a small child locally nearly

Anarchist Review Freedom

AUGUST 23, '78

COMMUNITY AND COMMITMENT

TELLING IT
LIKE IT WAS

John Quail: The Slow Burning Fuse. Paladin, £1.95

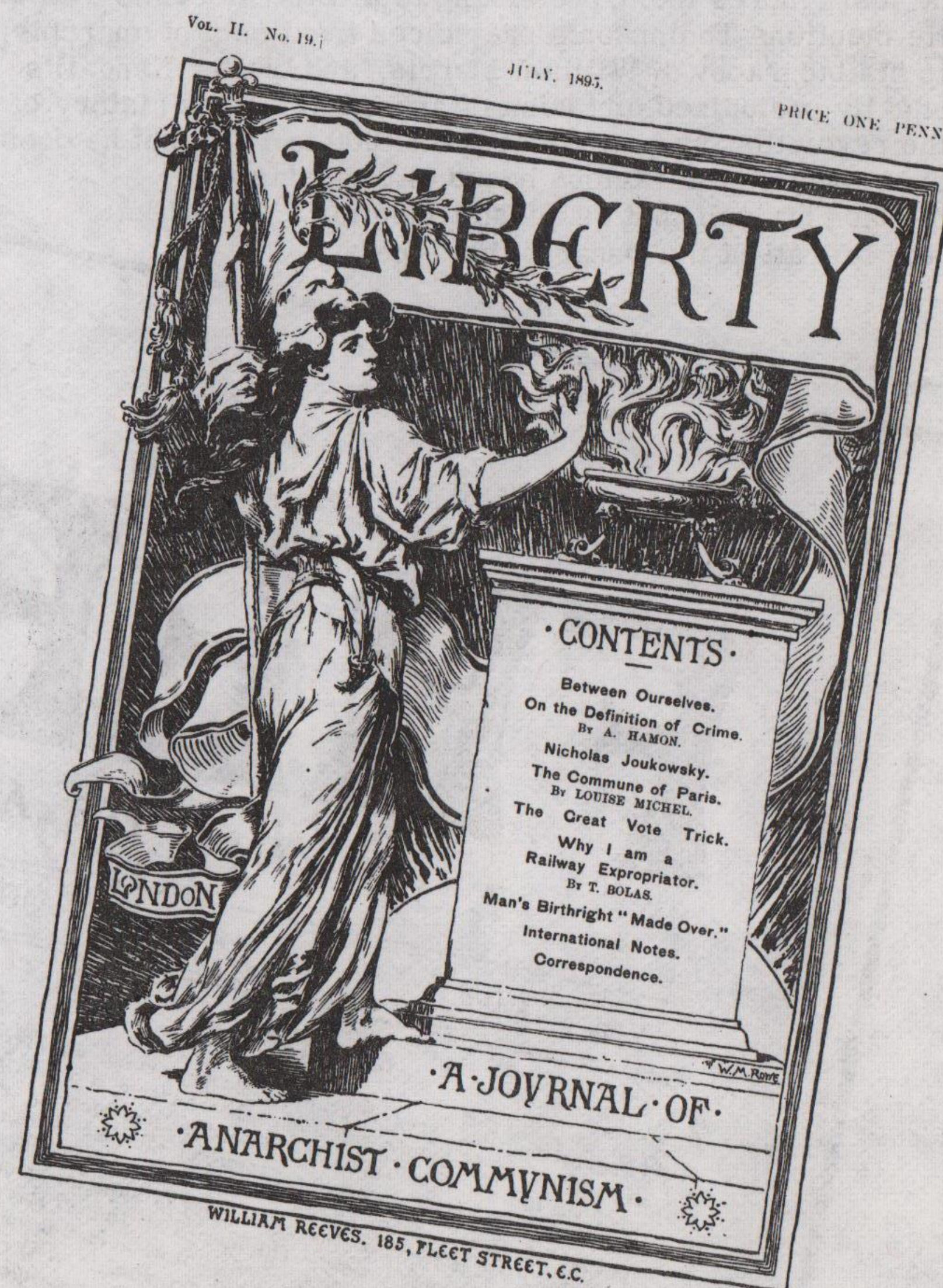
THIS 376-page paperback, subtitled "The Lost History of the British Anarchists", should at once be bought and read by everyone who buys and reads FREEDOM, and indeed by everyone in this country who is interested in anarchism. It is, quite simply, the first acceptable account of our movement during its first half-century, from its emergence around 1880 to its eclipse around 1930. John Quail, who is well known as a libertarian activist in Leeds and London, wrote it during the early 1970s, and it appears after a publishing delay of several years, a century after the beginning of the process he describes. It should soon appear in a cloth edition, so that it can become permanently available in public and academic libraries; but we should be glad that it has first appeared in a paperback edition, so that it is immediately available to ordinary readers at a relatively low price.

The historiography of the British anarchist movement has until now been little more than a bad joke. Historians of the left tend to ignore anarchism, and historians of the British left are worse than most. In the many books on the rise of socialism in general or on the various organisations in particular, there are normally at most some passing references to anarchists in the Socialist League or the Fabian Society, to Freedom or the Anarchist, to the Walsall bomb plot or the Greenwich Park bomb explosion, to the Tottenham outrage or the siege of Sidney Street. Until quite recently, the only serious exception was Edward Thompson's biography of William Morris (first published in 1955 and republished in 1977), which includes a great deal of information about the anarchists during the late 1880s and early 1890s, but which is bitterly prejudiced - having been written when Thompson was still in the Communist Party. More recent work has brought several books which illuminate various aspects of British anarchism - Andrew R. Carlson's Anarchism in Germany (1972) describes the German-speaking movement in West London; W. J. Fishman's East End Jewish Radicals (1975) describes the Yiddish-speaking movement in East London; Bob Holton's British Syndicalism (1976) describes the anarchist participation in the Syndicalist movement. But there has not yet been a proper book on the whole British anarchist movement.

Even British books on anarchism have failed to give a satisfactory account of British anarchism. The English translation of E. V. Zenker's Anarchism (1898) mentions William Godwin, Auberon Herbert and Herbert Spencer, Johann Most's Freiheit, the 1881 London Congress, and the London exiles, but states that there is no native movement in Britain. E. A. Vitezelly's The Anarchists (1911) mentions the Peasants' Revolt, Godwin, Most's Freiheit, the Walsall affair, the Commonweal, the Greenwich Park affair, the Tottenham affair, the Houndsditch affair and the siege of Sidney Street. The many historical and bibliographical works of Max Nettlau give more serious consideration to British activities and publications

but they are more available only in foreign publications and obscure libraries, and are therefore hardly relevant.

George Woodcock's Anarchism (1962, 1963, 1975) mentions the Peasants' Revolt, the Diggers, Swift, Paine, and Shelley, discusses Godwin at length, and devotes fourteen pages to Britain in the chapter on "Various Traditions", concentrating on William Morris and Oscar Wilde, but also summarising the historical anarchist movement. James Joll's The Anarchists (1964), though written by an Englishman in England, completely ignores the movement in England, and mentions no native libertarians between Shelley and Herbert Read apart from William Morris and Oscar Wilde. Irving Louis Horowitz's anthology The Anarchists (1964) includes extracts from Godwin and Read; but the only passage relating to the historical



movement in this country is a chapter from Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. Leonard I. Krimmerman's and Lewis Perry's *Patterns of Anarchy* (1966) includes extracts from Godwin and Read again, and also from Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, George Woodcock, Alex Comfort, Tony Gibson and Colin Ward; but again the only passage relating to the historical movement in this country is a chapter from Mackay's *The Anarchists*. Roderick Kedward's *The Anarchists* (1970) mentions only Oscar Wilde.

It is not surprising that many people have relied on openly fictional depictions of British anarchism, in such well-known novels as Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima* (1885) or Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), or in such little-known ones as John Henry Mackay's *The Anarchists* (1891) or "Isobel Meredith's" *A Girl Among the Anarchists* (1903). Few of the ostensibly factual descriptions have been much closer to reality, and one has sometimes despaired of ever seeing an acceptable account of our movement.

As a result of this unsatisfactory situation, our overwhelming reaction to *The Slow Burning Fuse* must be one of gratitude and appreciation. It is appropriate that Quail does not come to anarchism as a historian, but comes to history as an anarchist. He begins by pointing out that he is "an 'unofficial' historian" who "was not supported by grants or by any academic institution". He is more than an "unofficial" historian - he is an anti-official historian. He describes how he became an anarchist by arguing with Marxists at Leeds University, and how he became interested in the history of the British anarchist movement as an aspect of the history of the British labour movement. He explicitly rejects any detailed discussion of anarchist ideas, and insists that he has "written a book about the Anarchist movement", in which he has found "a sense of community, of emotional commitment" rather than "a history of theoretical development". He describes his own process of adopting anarchism from this perspective, and it is from this perspective that he sees British anarchism above all "as a movement in relation to the ebb and flow of popular revolt".

It is also appropriate that Quail feels no need to criticise the previous attempts to tell the story of British anarchism - he just ignores them, preferring to tell the story his own way. He mentions Thompson's prejudiced treatment of anarchism in his biography of William Morris, and Walter Kendall's equally prejudiced omission of anarchism in his history of the revolutionary movement from 1900 to 1920; but he doesn't even mention the various books on anarchism. He says himself that he doesn't mention "the literati of the Oscar Wilde type

who have connected themselves or have been gratuitously connected with the movement". He mentions Kropotkin as a member of the *Freedom* group rather than as the international propagandist, and Malatesta as a member of the Socialist League rather than as the international agitator. He writes as an ordinary anarchist about ordinary anarchists, concentrating on the "unsung demi-heroes" and "unreviled villains", rescuing from obscurity the little-known people who made the movement rather than repeating old stories about well-known people who didn't have much to do with it.

The result, he says "is a large ragged jigsaw with lots of pieces missing, most convincingly lifelike in its confusion", though he adds that "selections have to be made, loose ends ignored or chopped off short to present some semblance of a rounded-out story". This story is told in fifteen short chapters, as follows.

"Radicals, Exiles and Socialist Beginnings" describes two of the significant converging tendencies in the late 1870s and early 1880s - native radicals on the left of the Liberal Party, in trade unions and workers' clubs, who preserved and revived the socialist and libertarian traditions which had been strong in previous mass movements (such as Frank Kitz); and foreign refugees on the left of the socialist movement in emigre circles and workers' clubs, who imported more extreme attitudes and more militant methods from the harsher atmosphere of Continental Europe (such as Johann Most). The most important activity centered on the Social Democratic Club in Rose Street, West London, from 1878; and the most dramatic event was the prosecution and imprisonment of Most in 1881 for welcoming the assassination of the Tsar in his German-language paper *Die Freiheit* (Freedom), which in 1880 became the first anarchist paper in Britain, and which in 1881 appeared in a short-lived English version edited by Kitz.

"The Labour Emancipation League" describes the further development of such convergence, leading to the formation in 1880 and 1881 of new independent organisations such as the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club (on the initiative of Ambrose Barker) and the Labour Emancipation League (on the initiative of Joseph Lane), and a change of direction from private to public agitation. Interest in Most's *Freiheit* was followed by interest in Benjamin Tucker's American paper

Liberty, which began in 1881. But it was some time before the appearance of a specifically anarchist organisation or periodical.

"The Democratic Federation and the Socialist League" tells the well-known story of the formation of the Democratic Federation in 1881, its transformation into the Social Democratic Federation in 1884, and the secession of the Socialist League at the end of 1884 - but this time the story is told from the point of view not of H. M. Hyndman, who dominated the SDF, or of William Morris, who dominated the SL, but of the libertarian activists from the Rose Street Club and the Labour Emancipation League, who transferred their efforts to the Socialist League and pushed it in an anarchist direction.

"The Anarchist and Freedom... and Dan Chatterton" describes the appearance during the mid-1880s of the first periodicals which were produced in Britain, were written in English, were unequivocally anarchist, and were reasonably viable - *The Anarchist*, produced by Henry Seymour from 1885, and *Freedom*, produced by a group around Charlotte Wilson and Peter Kropotkin from 1886. At this point comes the first of the series of episodes involving political violence and police espionage which have so often crippled the anarchist movement in this as in so many countries - and which is indeed the main thing the movement is known for by most non-anarchists. The Most affair had occurred before there was a real movement, though it had already helped to fix the stereotyped image of anarchism in the public mind. In 1886, however, Seymour first welcomed the Haymarket bomb in Chicago and then entered a quarrel among the German exiles about one of their number called Reuss; he attacked the Socialist League for expelling Reuss as a police spy, but Reuss was soon exposed beyond question, and *The Anarchist* lost its influence in the socialist movement. *Freedom* tried to avoid taking sides in such quarrels, providing a forum for discussion rather than a focus of agitation, and gradually gained influence in the socialist movement. There was at the same time what Quail calls the "one-man Anarchist response to the social situation" made by Dan Chatterton, a veteran of the class struggle who produced an occasional do-it-yourself paper called *Chatterton's Commune: the Atheist Communist Scorchers* from 1884. As Quail says, "he deserves to be rescued from oblivion".

"Anarchism Develops in the Socialist League" tells the well-known story of how the Socialist League, which had been formed by a coalition of people united by little more than their opposition to Hyndman's leadership of the SDP, whose mechanistic and opportunistic line was eventually inherited by the Communist Party, first resisted then succumbed to fission into its constituent parts during the late 1880s. First the parliamentarist right seceded in 1888, then the anti-parliamentarist but non-anarchist centre seceded in 1890, and finally the Socialist League became anarchist. But again, this time the story is told from the point of view not of the Marxists (Marx's daughter Eleanor was a leading member of the parliamentarist fraction) or of Morris (who was the leading member of the centre), but of the libertarian activists on the left. These were led at first by Kitz and Lane, but they later included several people who played a long and important part in the anarchist movement - Tom Cantwell, George Cores, John Creaghe, Fred Henderson, Ted Leggatt, Sam Mainwaring, Alfred Marsh, Charles Mowbray, David Nicoll, H. B. Samuels, James Tochatti, John Turner, and so on.

What is really needed is a full history of the Socialist League from beginning to end, as it shifted over a period of ten years from radical socialism to anarchist communism, and created a whole generation of militant activists. The story has always been told in sorrow or in anger; yet, although decline set in soon after Morris's departure in 1890, Quail shows that the Socialist League continued to take an important part in the rising socialist activity of the early 1890s as of the late 1880s - as indeed did the *Freedom* group. He also mentions anarchist groups in Sheffield and other provincial centres. Nevertheless, ten years after the emergence of anarchism within the socialist movement, anarchism was being separated from other forms of socialism and was becoming an increasingly isolated sect. It is symbolic that, on the occasion of the first international celebration of May

Day in 1890, the anarchists chose May 1 and attracted only a fraction of the numbers attracted by the other socialists on the first Sunday in May.

"The Walsall Anarchists" describes how in 1892 police agents provocateurs took the opportunity of this situation to manufacture a plot in which six anarchists were tried for making bombs in Walsall, and four were imprisoned. It was the time of the anarchist bombs in France and Spain, and the case simultaneously fed, and fed from, public hysteria. Two anarchists were also tried for publishing extreme protests about the case, and one was imprisoned. This was Nicoll, Morris's successor as editor of the Socialist League paper *The Commonweal*. As Quail says, "Nicoll takes his place among those immoderate heroes and martyrs in the cause of a free press; a modest place it is true, but a place nevertheless." After coming out of prison in 1893, he devoted himself to campaigning for his comrades and against the spies so obsessively that he did more harm than good; yet his activities must provoke admiration, and his publications also provide much information about this stage in the movement.

"H. B. Samuels and the Commonweal" describes one of the two best-known anarchists who were involved with the police (the other, Auguste Coulon, who incited the Walsall affair, is a much more mysterious figure). Samuels took over the *Commonweal* in Nicoll's absence and prevented his return, and Quail shows how he led the "terrorism of the word" which infected the Socialist League in 1893-1894 and which aroused a reaction among the anarchists around *Freedom* and also around *Liberty*, which was produced by Tochatti from 1894.

"The Greenwich Park Explosion" describes the most famous anarchist bomb in this country, which killed the man carrying it in 1894. He was Martial Bourdin, the brother-in-law of Samuels, and the case not only provided the plot of *The Secret Agent* but also provoked the rejection of this type of activity in the movement. Samuels relapsed into the orthodox socialism of the ILP and the SDF.

"The Collapse of the Commonweal" described the final stages of the disintegration of the Socialist League in 1894. Quail shows how the police and the press exploited the situation to arouse public opposition to anarchism - opposition which sometimes took violent form, when demonstrations and even funerals were attacked by hostile mobs. The militant movement was thoroughly infiltrated by agents of various kinds, and its activity became desperate in both senses.

"The Movement in 1894" describes the simultaneous fall of organised anarchism and rise of parliamentary socialism in the mid-1890s, when the British left turned decisively towards the constitutional politics of trade unions and labour parties. The *Commonweal* was succeeded by the *Anarchist*, produced by Nicoll on his own, and the *Torch* produced by the Rossetti sisters, but anarchism was driven to the periphery of the social movement.

"The Movement in Decline" describes the first nadir of British anarchism, from 1895 to 1902. A new paper, the *Alarm*, appeared but soon disappeared, and so did all the papers except *Freedom*, which survived a crisis in 1895. From 1897 the *Freedom Press* stood alone, producing its monthly paper and pamphlets for the whole movement, though Nicoll battled on with his paper until 1901.

"Cooperative Colonies" describes some of the libertarian co-operatives and communities in the 1880s, especially Clousden Hill near Newcastle upon Tyne and Whiteways near Stroud.

"Anarchism and the Origins of the Syndicalist Revolt" describes the part played by the anarchists in the growing syndicalist movement during the 1890s and 1900s. As well as acting as a medium for French syndicalism, the British anarchists drew on their own experience in the labour movement. They produced short-lived syndicalist papers - the *General Strike* in 1903-1904 and the *Voice of Labour* in 1904 - and a more permanent *Voice of Labour* began in 1907 as the first anarchist weekly for more than twelve years. One of them, Turner, who had begun his political career in the Socialist League, even became a trade union leader - as president of the Shop Assistants Union from 1912 - showing at the same time that anarchists were as liable to compromise

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FREEDOM

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST SOCIALISM.

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FREEDOM.

OCTOBER, 1886.

MONTHLY; ONE PENNY.

Through the long ages of grinding slavery behind us, Freedom, that unknown goal of human pilgrimage, has hovered, a veiled splendour, upon the horizon of men's hopes. Veiled of all that revealed itself as mankind, their misty unreasoning terror of all that revealed itself as power, whether it were an apparently incomprehensible and uncontrollable natural force, or the ascendancy of superior strength, ability in human society. The inward attitude of slavish adoration cunning in human society. Freedom from the eyes of men, what imposes itself from without as a fact beyond our understanding, the blind fear of a savage of his "mediocrity," the veil which hides Freedom from the eyes of men, the semblance of con-

by man in any shape and under any pretext. The human freedom to which our eyes are raised is no negative abstraction of licence for individual egoism, whether it be massed collectively as majority rule or isolated as personal tyranny. We dream of the positive Freedom which is essentially one with social feeling; of free scope for the social impulses, now distorted and compressed by property, and its guardian the Law; of free scope for that individual sense of responsibility, of respect for self and for others, which is vitiated by the hanging of criminals; of free scope for the spontaneity and individuality of each human being, such as is impossible when one hard and fast line is fitted to all conduct. Science is teaching mankind that such system, can only be manufacture of our vile economic and legal system, can only be rationally as well as humanely treated by fraternal medical care, for results from deformity or disease, and a hard and fast rule of conduct enforced by a perennial source of injustice amongst men. But a sane adult human being, of guiding his own life, believes that the

ANN BONNEY and MARY READ—

THE WOMEN PIRATES

STEVE GOOCH tells us that he got the idea for *Women Pirates* when, at breakfast one morning, a tiny booklet on 'famous outlaws' fell out of the shredded wheat packet. It was a brief account of the lives of Ann Bonney and Mary Read and, says Gooch, their story was "so rich in the variety of levels at which it exposed the superficiality of the legal system, particularly towards women in an even more patriarchal society than today's, that it seemed a good vehicle for the play."

As it developed other factors emerged - in particular the theme of British imperialism. For as he traced Ann and Mary through their respective lives towards the point where they meet he found that everywhere they went "the European empire-builders of the age were clashing: Ireland, Flanders, Carolina, the Caribbean. The geographical span of their lives reproduced the economic links and political hot-spots of their age. It was as if these two women were fleeing not only their sex-role stereotypes and the law, but the developments of British imperialism itself. Furthermore, what brought them together was a small 'alternative society' of anti-colonial rebels - the pirate community in what are now the Bahamas. Sort of eighteenth century Yuppies."

I question Gooch's rather simplistic approach in the two main areas he mentions here - that of the relation between feminism and capitalism and the nature of the pirate community. Gooch has described his play as "a doubly complex critique of emerging capitalism because of what the women's movement has taught us about male dominance being a pre-requisite of capitalism." (Time Out, 21-27 July). This is a statement which, in fact, tells us nothing. For if male dominance bred capitalism, you can also say it bred feudalism and so on, and even if you end by saying that Patriarchy is the Root of all Oppression, you have come no nearer to examining its origins and have really only replaced the uni-dimensional Marxist view of power with a uni-dimensional feminist one.

Imperialist pirates

Gooch's attitude to the pirates is also questionable. It would certainly seem to clash head on with at least one eye-witness (of whom I am reminded by NW's article on parliament and horse in FREEDOM of July 22) Jonathan Swift implicates pirates in the whole process of British imperialism.

"For instance," writes that very untypical Tory churchman, "a Crew of Pyrates are driven by a Storm they know not whither; at length a Boy discovers Land from the Top-mast; they go on Shore to rob and plunder; they see an harmless People, are entertained with kindness, they give the Country a new name, they take formal Possession of it for the king, they set up a rotten Plank or a Stone for a Memorial, they murder two or three Dozen of the Natives, bring away a Couple more by Force for a Sample, return home, and get their Pardon. Here commences a new Dominion acquired with the first Opportunity; the Natives driven out or destroyed, the Princes tortured to discover their Gold; a free Licence given to all Acts of Inhumanity and Lust; the Earth reeking with the blood of its Inhabitants; and this execrable Crew of Butchers emp-



'WOMEN PIRATES ANN BONNEY AND MARY READ' has been appearing at the Aldwych Theatre, London; performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The script is published by Pluto Press, London, who have also published Gooch's other plays, including 'Female Transport' and a translation of *Poems and Ballads* by the East German dissident, Wolf Biermann.

loyed in so pious an Expedition, is a modern Colony sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous People." (Gulliver's Travels).

Swift's Pyrates may not have been in the same league as Gooch's 'sea-artists', fighting a desperate rearguard action against the "British Empire's spreadin' arse"; but Gooch himself is set upon showing how sexism exists in and weakens alternative structures, then as today, and I wonder whether it would not have been more effective to go the whole way and show in the pirates not "sort of eighteenth century Yuppies" but, on the contrary, a reflection of the ruling class itself, as Gay did with Peachum and his highwaymen in the *Beggar's Opera*.

Gooch refers to the women's flight from their sexual stereotypes. Mary, in particular, seems only to have flown from it under force of circumstance. Her husband is sliced up like liver by some Dutch soldiers for having married an English-woman (Marlboro's English army had become somewhat unpopular abroad) and she looks back on her years as housewife as the best of her life. Similarly, as she sees her chance of hooking a second husband slip away she remarks to Ann that settling down has been in her head for years. "Timber walls, smoke out the chimney. By a river where I could do the washin'. Red hands. Apron..." Hardly the remark of someone who is fleeing her sexual role or the law, or for that matter the development of British imperialism! But in the solo she sings immediately afterwards Mary seems to have realised it, and here, surely, we have the most important message of the play:

We turn away, look for a new world,
And turn our back upon the old.
But all the time it's there behind us,
It pulls us back into the fold...

Instead of run away
We should've stayed and done away
Kept the old enemy in view
Know where we're going's really new.

Might these words, incidentally, not also apply to the portrayal of the relation between Mary and Ann, or does this finally come down to the fact that it is after all a play about women written by a man? For although there is much - rather didactic - insistence on the solidarity which develops between these two pirates in the face of a male chauvinism which ultimately destroyed their 'alternative', 'anti-colonial' community, we have to take it on faith rather than actually sense it.

Anarchic spirit

A varied selection of quotations about the story of Ann and Mary is contained in the programme; interestingly, it is only the quote from a pamphlet by a woman - Susan Baker - which points to the improbability that in seducing Mark Ann did not already know s/he was Mary. Baker's point would have added a genuinely liberating dimension to the play which Gooch does not, however, use - except perhaps the rather timidly ambiguous ambiguity of their wrestling match. (At least Ann does not show the 'great disappointment' which is described in Cptn Johnson's contemporary account, *Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, as Mary's sex is revealed!)

These are only quibbles and I would recommend the play. Although I question the depth of Gooch's historical analysis, he amply justifies his intention to restore history to political theatre as a method of showing problems that are still relevant. And although the script is too didactic, for my taste, at least, and the majority of songs not particularly inspiring, the rowdy and irreverent scenes in Pierre's cafe - the House of Lords - are most enjoyable, as are the general depiction of life spent at war with government colours and the court scene at the end. It is, perhaps, in his attack on the law that Gooch comes closest to the anarchic spirit of the *Beggar's Opera*, and indeed to anarchism itself:

But it takes two to tell what's right and wrong
You can draw or cross the line.
And if morals make for sinners
It's laws that make for crime.

GIULIA



A consistently good new journal

Welcome to *Authority* No 2! While the influence of No 1 can still be seen - particularly in the Yellow Pages non-pull-out centre section - No 2 is definitely more solid and satisfying. Not only are we straightened out still further on the myths of our own history and geography, but, in this issue, on discography as well. So that's why you-know-what happened to Keith Nathan! But is it really true that the PM is really AM? But which AM? The argument seems a little obscure here.

Particularly informative however was Reg Gutter's second excursion into trenchant investigative journalism with

his telling investigation of Conspicuous Consumption as projected into the 1980s, when this new strain of virulent TB will reach our shores if the DHSS's own prognostications prove correct - and his convincing analysis, which showed without fear of contradiction that the true basis - and greatest chance for success - of anarchism lies in enforced nudity. ('Only when we rid ourselves of all personal property...' etc)

Being an economy- (and ecology-) minded gourmet myself, I was greatly appreciative of the technological crossover from ESN's scatological analysis of the anarcho-isolationist currant into cheap cooking with his recipe for fried mouse droppings ('Quite as good as ants-in-chocolate from Harrods' says 'Epicure').

We should indeed be grateful that the dynamic young comrades of *Authority* have not forgotten the culinary needs of the founders of the present-day movement.

If I have any criticism to make, and I haven't really, it is to protest most vehemently against the thoughtless and hurtful use of terms derogatory to 51 per cent of the human race. Must we really still now at this moment in time have to put up with once again the sexist drivel about 'lay persons' which marred No 1? No doubt the eagle-nosed editors of *Zero* will have something to say about that if it ever comes out again in readable form.

And talking about form - while it might have been better if the *Authority* Collective had called on Cliff Harper to 'do the graphics' (sic) it is good to see that the presentation and printing, and indeed the typography and layout are all quite up to the present-day standards of production demanded by yer actual proletarian literature and maintained by the movement's most cogent journals.* But at least this proves conclusively that this is one anarchist initiative owing absolutely nothing to the ubiquitous Dave Morris.

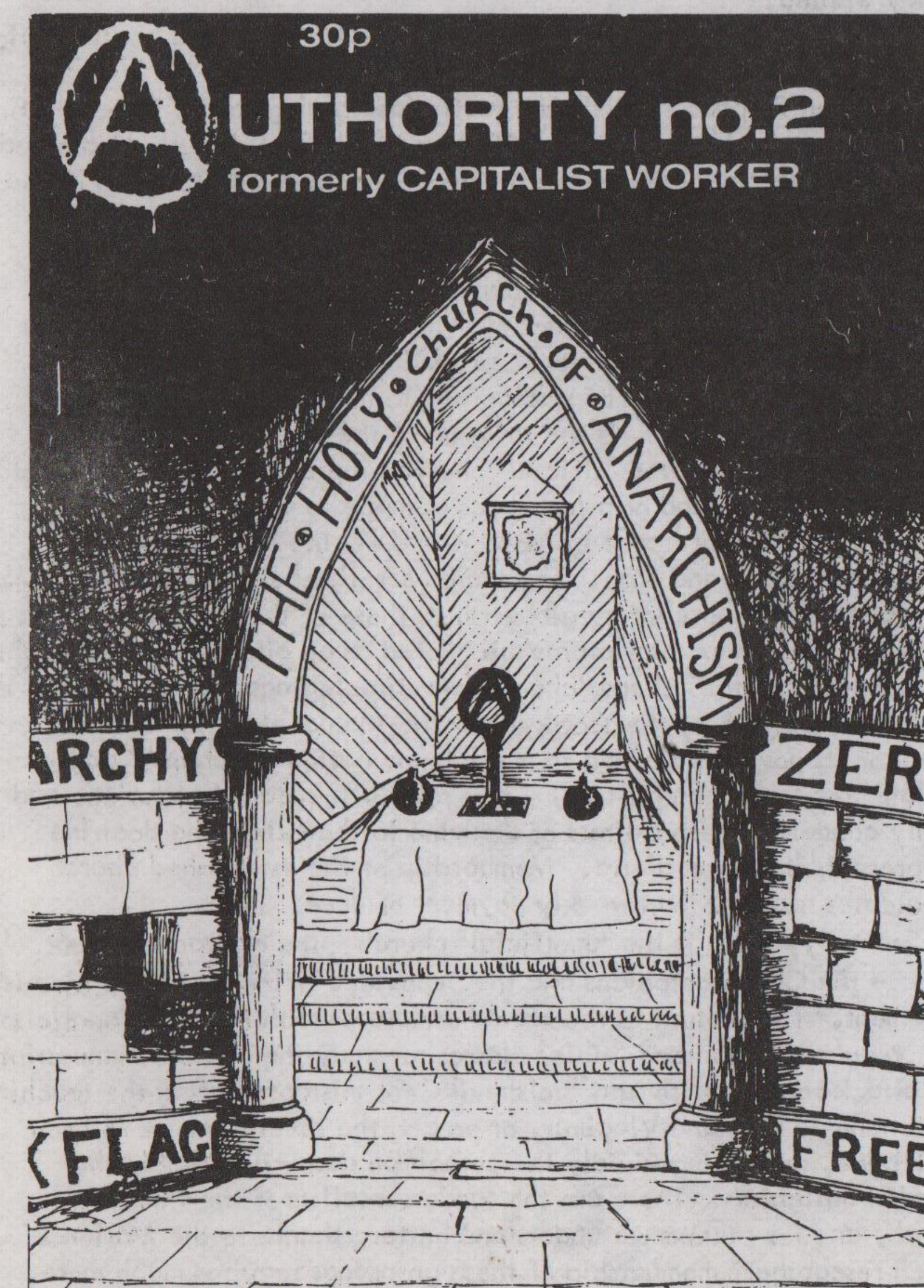
In conclusion I can state without hesitation that this brilliant and ikonoklastick journal has come like a breath of fresh air into the anarchist movement just at the right historical moment - clearing up once and for all the problem of who will clean the sewers come the revolution. There is certainly room for this - and you can guess which room.

We are glad to publicise subscription details which pre-

Continued on page 31.

*But errors still creep in - or was ESN truly referring to a 'pubic meeting' on p17?

Owing to distribution difficulties this issue of *Authority* is not being stocked by Freedom Bookshop. All enquiries direct please to 'Authority' c/o ATS who will forward all correspondence.



The Power of Prophecies that don't come true

SINCE THE DEATH of Marx, 'Marxists' have regularly foretold the imminent collapse of capitalist society. Again and again the numerous prophets of the self-styled proletarian elite tell of the "ever increasing, ever deepening 'crisis' of bourgeois society", staved off momentarily by intensified arms drives and/or the outbreak of a new war. In fact often the only 'difference' between the conflicting Marxist cults is the differing theory offered as to how great is the crisis, and how long can the ruling class manage to prop up the system cracking apart beneath them.

In 1951, the year I joined the Young Communist League, it was predicted by the theoreticians of the national executive that the total collapse of the old system, and the 'revolution', bringing in the new system, were definitely on the agenda of the next five-year period. 'Socialism in Britain in the Next Decade' (and by 'socialism' was meant the peculiarly Stalinist form of state structure) was the theme of all pre-Congress YCL meetings.

Anyone who has had any experience of Gerry Healy and his ilk, 'the group', the Socialist Labour League or the Workers' Revolutionary Party will know that the imminent end of capitalism due to the falling rate of profit etc. etc. is a constant theme of every national congress.

Yet time and time again these prophecies are falsified by future events. The collapse doesn't come, capitalism in fact gets stronger, more stable. Profit rates don't fall, and the workers far from being pauperized actually become better off in terms of hard cash.

Strangely these hard facts do not seem to undermine the group's hold on its hard-core membership. Indeed the smaller the sect and the less actual influence it has over the working class (or middle class for that matter!), the more insistent that 'the end is nigh', and the more fanatically dedicated to the doctrine of impending doom does it remain. If some members leave in disillusionment, the fanaticism of those remaining increases proportionately.

In retrospect the 'prophecies' are 're-examined' along with the writings on which they were based. The underlying doctrine has not been disproved, it is just that its interpreters had over-emphasised some aspects, and not taken other aspects sufficiently into account. In fact, far from disproving the original hypothesis, the failure of the prophecy to come true is interpreted as yet further proof of the validity of the original Marxist thesis!

There is a striking behavioural similarity between the various Marxist cults and the equally numerous religious 'adventists', 'Jesus Freaks' etc. The question of interest is what are the factors that lead to these groupings' increased fervour proportionate to their doctrines' failure to measure up to reality?

A book which goes a long way to answering this problem is "When Prophecy Fails" by Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, published by Harper Torchbooks in 1956.

In the early '50s a local American newspaper reported that a Mrs Marian Keech was receiving communications from outer space which she recorded in automatic writing. She had been warned there was to be a great flood on the following 21st December, but that she and other 'chosen ones' would be whisked to safety by flying saucer. A group of five psychologists based at the University of Minnesota decided to infiltrate the group and observe its progress. "When Prophecy Fails" is their report of what happened.

About twenty persons gathered about Mrs Keech, most of whom had been immersed in 'spiritual' matters, and belonged to Flying Saucer Clubs etc., for a number of years. At first the group was very non-communicative - reporters were sent away empty-handed and would be new members kept at bay and treated with great suspicion. No-one made any further public reference to the coming great flood.

On 17th December Marian Keech received a call telling her a flying saucer would land in her backyard at 4.00pm that day. The contents of the message were not divulged to outsiders, and group members spent the rest of the day in Mrs Keech's living room, frantically preparing themselves - removing any metal from their clothing because it would cause burns in the saucer. A few minutes before 4.00pm all were in their coats and waiting in the kitchen, taking it in turns to scan the sky. But the saucer didn't come, and at 5.30pm the watch was called off.

That night they had 25 local inhabitants visit them, and contrary to what might be expected their attitude to their visitors changed

completely. No longer were they aloof and secretive - instead they talked enthusiastically about their beliefs and made positive efforts to convert their audience, although the newspapers were still not invited in.

At 11.30pm the same night Marian received another message. A saucer was en route to her backyard to pick up the 'chosen' at midnight. It would be in a hurry and would wait for no-one who was not ready. There was a sudden flurry, on with their coats, and out into the backyard where it was snowing and was bitterly cold. They gave up the vigil at 3.30pm.

The following morning Marian received yet another call, this time asking her to call all her supporters together from all over the country. While waiting the arrival of their distant friends, Marian Keech instructed her immediate followers to step up their conversion activities and to stop turning away any enquirers from the front door. Note that each unfulfilled prophecy demanded an increase in proselyting behaviour. Although obviously demoralized, the group members refused to question their basic beliefs. Perhaps the space men had come, but in a form not recognized by the earthlings? Perhaps it had all been a 'trial run' to perfect take-off procedure?

Finally, in the morning of 20th December, Marian received another call. She and her disciples would be collected by saucer at midnight - and a few hours later the flood would engulf the land. For the third time the faithful waited, and for the third time the saucer didn't come. And neither did the flood.

For a few hours extreme despondency - then at 4.45pm Mrs Keech announced a new message. Because of the faith of their little band of believers, God had changed his mind and spared the world. From that instant the group went all out to convert the rest of humanity. Marian Keech, who had herself always adamantly refused to talk to a newspaper, personally called the main press agencies. Press photographers, never before admitted, were encouraged to take as many exposures as they wanted.

A check on group members six months later indicated no diminution in proselyting fervour.

"When Prophecy Fails" is a really fascinating study, demonstrating that, given an ideological social group, failure of a prediction based on a believed ideology, leads not to disillusionment but to an increased demand to win further recruits, to win increased social support to compensate for the 'humiliations' inflicted by reality.

Is not the pattern of behaviour similar to that found in the tiny Trotsky factions? Are they not ever more tightly closing their ranks with an accompanying conversion fanaticism as each predicted 'collapse' of the capitalist system fails to materialise?

'Marxism', in fact, is the religion of the Twentieth Century.

Firstly, there is the 'official' church, representing those who hold state power. Instead of pilgrimages to Rome to visit the bones of the saints, the faithful travel to Moscow and Peking to see the stuffed corpses of Lenin and Mao. The sacred scrolls of Marx, Lenin and Mao are as full of contradictory gibberish as those of the Christian fathers - and like the Hebrew scriptures are quoted as an alternative to thought. The main activities of the 'church' are directed against, not the devil, but the heretic i.e. the Trotskyist or the Maoist etc. Like its medieval mentor its power is derived from the combination of 'church' and 'state' (or 'party' and 'state') - it is part of the state institution, and is only concerned with matters of doctrine to the extent the doctrine represents its *raison d'être*. Membership of the established church indicates no more than weekly payment of dues.

Secondly, there is the 'unofficial' church - the aspirants to state power - the Christadelphians and the Jehovah's Witnesses of the Marxist movement. They return to the sacred scriptures with renewed fanaticism, their regularly organized 'bible' classes re-study the ancient manuscripts and attack the establishment 'bolsheviks' for misrepresenting the teachings of archangels Karl and Vladimir, or preach the revelations of St Leon the Divine, describing vividly the cataclysm that will precede the socialist millennium. These are the fundamentalists of the Marxist church, and for reasons we understand better, thanks to the Marian Keech researches, membership of these groupings requires much more than nominal card holding and payment of party dues.

Their emphasis on fanatical evangelism is based on the failure of their ideology before the tests posed by the real world.

BOB POTTER

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as anyone else and that anarchism was correct in criticising the system rather than the personnel of the trade union movement. One of the new recruits to the movement was Guy Aldred, who began his half-century of militant activity in 1906, passed through orthodox anarchism was rapidly as he had already passed through Christianity, secularism and socialism, published several pamphlets, and began the first of his series of papers in 1910.

"The Insurgent Virus" describes the part played by the anarchists in the industrial crisis of the early 1910s. Previous studies of British syndicalism have tended to ignore the anarchist contribution, and Quail shows - as Bob Holton did in his book a couple of years ago - that some of the most important agitators in it were actually anarchists, especially Ted Leggatt, E.J.B. Allen, and Guy Bowman. He also describes the Tottenham outrage of 1909 and the Houndsditch robbery and Sidney Street siege of 1910-11, though it is now clear that the foreign refugees who were responsible for these dramatic episodes not only had little to do with British politics but were not even anarchists. He mentions the new militants, such as George Barrett and John McAra, A.J. Cook and Will Lawther (who became well-known trade union leaders), and Willie Gallagher (who became a well-known Communist MP). In 1912-1913 Barrett produced a new Anarchist; in 1913 the syndicalist paper *Solidarity* was edited by the anarchist Jack Tanner; and in 1914 a new *Voice of Labour* was started by Fred Dunn. But the crisis, and the anarchist movement, were utterly transformed by the coming war.

"World War 1 - and After" describes the anarchist participation in the resistance to the First World War - in opposition both to the repression by the authorities and to the betrayal by the small group round Kropotkin which supported the war - and then the anarchist reaction to the Russian Revolution. Many anarchists suffered for anti-war activity, including Tom Keell, who had taken *Freedom* over from Alfred Marsh, and his companion Lilian Wolfe. After the war the initial excitement caused by the destruction of the Tsarist regime was followed by the rapid disappointment caused by the establishment of the Bolshevik regime. But anarchism in Britain, as in other countries, lost mass support to Communism. This chapter ends with a description of the second nadir of British anarchism, culminating in the closure of *Freedom* by Tom Keell in 1927 and the production of a revived *Freedom* by a group round Barker from 1930, though it finishes with a reference to the isolated veterans who continued their work outside London.

A short conclusion mentions the later revivals of British anarchism as a result of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War in the 1930s and in the nuclear disarmament and student movements in the 1960s, and then summarises the nature of the movement throughout the past century. This is followed by a chronology from 1880 to 1930, a brief bibliography, and the notes and index.

Quail deliberately refrains from telling the story of the second half-century of British anarchism, not because of lack of time or space, but because of a crucial change in circumstances. He says of the 1930s: "The younger militants of that time, or at least some of them, are still active in the movement, and the events of that time and the years since then are still live issues and matters of polemic." And he adds: "It would be a brave historian who tried to argue too much with the living, particularly since that tone of voice of history is one which implies that the events it describes are past and done with." But he does point out that "the Anarchists have since shown the same astonishing ability to suddenly come from nowhere when everybody had assumed that they were finished", and he goes on to his 'general thesis': "that the Anarchist movement grows in times of popular self-activity, feeds it and feeds off it, and declines when that self-activity declines".

As he says, the paradox is that such periods of decline are caused because anarchists have no strong institutional structure which could ensure permanent survival on its own, but if they had such a structure they would cease to be anarchist. Even so, he suggests that this situation could be changed by conscious effort on the part of the anarchist movement. He complains that anarchist interventions in recent political developments, such as the squatters movement and local community struggles, "are an advance upon sporadic one-off actions but they do not begin to develop a wider strategy and rely too much on the vulnerable activity of a few people". In our alienated and hierarchical society this is not good enough: "It is only when Anarchist strategies develop that move from pin-prick defiance and piecemeal defence to confront and change all this that the Anarchist movement will make history instead of being dependent on it... Only if the British Anarchist movement goes beyond the involvement with the immediate it has been so good at will it escape the fate its history seems to have determined for it."

It should be clear by now that Quail has produced a clear and distinct narrative. His style is simple and straightforward, his method is to rely largely on primary sources (periodicals and pamphlets published at the time, and documents preserved or memoirs produced later), and his approach distinguishes sharply between facts and comments. Anyone, however familiar or unfamiliar with the subject, will learn from *The Slow-Burning Fuse*. It can be recommended not only as the first proper book on British anarchism but as the best one likely to be produced for some time. But it is not perfect, and in the next issue I shall move from facts to comments, from exposition to criticism.

N.W.

