

- Setting up housing co-operatives to house people and projects with the above aims;
- Setting up worker co-operatives with the above aims;
- Promoting and organising participatory education through skills and knowledge sharing, through Taking Control events, distributing informative material and through work shops;
- Raising finance to allow control over resources (property, technology and land) through co-operation and the economic interlocking of the co-operatives;
- Providing a mutual aid network;
- Supporting like-minded projects.

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## LETTERS



Dear Editor  
Hey, thanks for the TLs (Vol.4, 2 & 3)! In Vol.4 No.2, I greatly enjoyed Jim Thornton's "Return the Streets" and Stephen Booth's "Responsibility". In Volume 4, Number 3 the book review of "The Party's Over" by Richard Alexander and Peter Good's "Education" were the most thought provoking for me. And the letters section is a jewel! I'd write more if I wasn't knocked out with the flu right now. Thanks again and take care.  
All the best  
Kris & Lola  
Spain

Dear Editor  
Please find enclosed £10.00 which I hope covers the next four issues of Total Liberty. I would also like to take this occasion to thank for your efforts in publishing a much-loved and much needed periodical (at least in this house).  
Please send the issues to the above address.  
Best regards  
Craig Menzies  
London

Dear Total Liberty  
I picked up your journal at a bookshop in London, and for the life of me I can't understand you at all. Why do you Anarchists keep banging on about the evils

of the state and government? Isn't it time that you realised that you have lost the argument and the battle against them. You should accept that the state, government and capitalism are here to stay. Get a life. Go do something else.

Yours truly  
Peter Ford  
Islington.

### Editorial reply:

Peter could perhaps read a few back issues of TL and perhaps even a few other anarchist texts such as the likes of Colin Ward's *Anarchy in Action* before he consigns us all to the dustbin of history or implicitly accuses us of irrelevance. I would think most anarchists have no illusions that we can quickly overturn this monster, this leviathan which has grown to its present size over numerous centuries. To destroy it in a single generation, let alone within our own lifetimes, is beyond our ability. However, the anarchist project these days is more about resisting the processes of state expansion, and the ongoing expansion of the global, corporate capitalist system than about achieving an overnight revolution. It is also about educating people that there are alternatives to what exists at present no matter how bleak the prospects may appear now. And finally, though we are indeed *anarchist* in opinion, most anarchists I know do indeed have a life and are actively involved in a host of other interests, ideas, movements, community projects and life enhancing activities.

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# TOTAL LIBERTY

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## EDITORIAL

Kropotkin's vision of *Mutual Aid* has reappeared in the wake of the Asian Tsunami of 2004. Once more the spontaneous help and assistance offered from bystanders, and the gifts of money and material aid sent by others from across the globe shows the capacity of ordinary people to provide generous help to their fellows in a time of natural disaster. The actions of governments seem slow and mean in comparison. Huge as this natural disaster was, man-made disasters, or rather *government-made* disasters have dwarfed such horrors in the past and are likely to in the future. If the history books are consulted it is easy to see numerous examples: the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the famines in Africa, genocidal massacres in Europe, Africa and Cambodia. And looking to the future it is hard to see any sign of improvement. Death and suffering continues to accrue from the ongoing effects of wars, the bloodshed in Iraq, the impacts of corporate capitalism and the environmental effects of global warming. Such events are very likely to dwarf such horrors as the Asian Tsunami in the future.

If there is hope, it is with ordinary people, who when left to use their abilities without the deadening hand of the State and the greed of corporate capitalism, have the imagination, the means and the ability to meet their own needs, wants and aspirations. However, given the present stranglehold of

the American dominated military industrial complex and the corporate capitalist economy on the globe, both politically and economically, it will take great efforts and perseverance by individuals, communities and movements committed to change to have any positive effect.

Here in the British Isles, the leaders of the gangs of criminals competing to control the State and government are gearing themselves up for the four yearly battle to convince the populace that the government rules with the consent of the governed. In other words a general election is likely in Spring this year. That the effort of these criminals to achieve this aim is greeted by ever-greater disbelief by the electorate is a good sign. The ever smaller number of people who vote does not mean *apathy* and *disinterest* in politics. The 2 million people protesting on the streets of London before the second Gulf War was a clear indication that interest in political issues is alive and well. What it does mean is that fewer people fall for such lies and self-serving propaganda. Maybe this time around the words of the song will be proved true and *we won't get fooled again*. So the pro-voting adverts of the Electoral Commission appearing in their television advertising campaign should be seen for what they are, more dishonest propaganda by a system desperate to convince its victims that they should participate in the charade that disempowers, defrauds and robs them.

JPS



## New Ideas on the Liberation of Learning?

Over the years the *Libertarian Education Collective* have published several excellent books on the liberation of learning. John Shute's *No Master High or Low* demonstrated that libertarian education not only works in theory but has worked in practice in many schools throughout Britain. David Gribble's *Real Education, Varieties of Freedom* extended Shute's account abroad and included descriptions of free schools in Ecuador, Switzerland, India, Japan, Israel, New Zealand and the USA.

Two new *Lib Ed* books by Joanna Stephanie Gore and David Gribble, *Leave Me Alone* and *Lifelines*, respectively tackle "power,

control and resistance in a primary school" and "non-authoritarian" schools for children facing severe social problems. Gore "spent three months in a school experiencing what the children experience on a day to day level" whilst Gribble continued his worldwide quest chronicling varieties of educational freedom.

Gore's book originated as a M.Sc. thesis but according to the introduction, "The book is intended to be accessible to the non-specialist". In that respect it has failed. Consider this typical excerpt; *Gal argues in a hard hitting criticism of "Domination and the Arts of Resistance" that Scott reduces many different power relations into a simplistic opposition of dominant and subordinate, and argues that such a*

*broad generalisation of forms of power cannot capture cultural differences (Gal, 1995). I agree with Gal that such power relations are not a simple case of subordinates versus dominants but a fluid movement of power and resistance, in which the power held by some groups is greater than others.* This sort of writing might impress academia but it butters no parsnips for me. I've spent most of my life teaching in primary schools but half the time I didn't know what she was on about.

### Power, Control and Resistance

Ms Gore's task of analysing power, control and resistance in primary education is vital but the published result is seriously flawed. The main body of the work gets bogged down in a mire of abstract anthropological

theorising and tedious detailing of "field notes". In a belated attempt to sex-up the ending the author's "Afterword" throws academic caution to the wind and boldly asserts that western society's schooling of children parallels its treatment of those deemed mentally ill. Gore baldly asserts "Schools are institutions of social control" (page 65) and "children are not encouraged to use their imaginations because their flexible, creative thinking could possibly lead to new ideas which might threaten capitalist society" (page 73).

Gore's revolutionary conclusions contrast sharply with her earlier detached observations. In devoting the main body of the book to academic "field notes" Gore satisfies nobody, for academic readers will be alienated by the author's overtly political concluding remarks. Readers seeking political inspiration are unlikely to get that far before boredom sets in.

Having concluded her M.Sc. Gore should have ditched the structure of the thesis. Joanna would have produced a more stimulating, coherent book if she had put her libertarian ideas up-front and quoted sparingly from field notes only to pinpoint control mechanisms employed by the school and to illustrate the creative responses of the children to their oppression. Gore's book contains some real gems, but you have to dig deep to find them.

### Four More Varieties of Freedom

In his new book David Gribble explains that his previous writings and experience had failed to show that non-authoritarian education can effectively meet the needs of working class children and so he visited and describes four schools for kids from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds. The *Barns Hostel* was a wartime school run by David Wills in Peebles, Scotland to educate "unschoolable" evacuees. The *Doctor Pedro Albizu Campos* school serves the Puerto Rican community of Chicago. *Moo Baan Dek* means "children's village" and this Thai community raises and educates some of that country's poorest abandoned, orphaned and abused children. The *Butterflies* organisation in India offers informal education to Delhi's street children.

Gribble is even less up-front about his politics than Gore. In his introduction to *Lifelines* he commends, "progressive", "free", "child-centred", "democratic", "liberal" and "non-authoritarian" education but avoids any mention of the term "libertarian".

### "Non-Authoritarian" Education in Action

Gribble stresses that his selected initiatives all arose as responses to practical problems confronting real children. He suggests that their "non-authoritarian" (his preferred term) methodology evolved as the most suitable and effective way of meeting the kids' needs. Whilst it's good to emphasise the intensely practical value of free schooling Gribble pushes this approach too far. He seriously underplays the importance of theory yet reading between the lines it is clear from Gribble's case studies that the

philosophies of the founders of each scheme were crucial.

David Wills, who initiated the *Barns Hostel*, was a Quaker. The Chicago school was started by Puerto Rican students determined to defend and nurture their own cultural identity. Moo Baan Dek was set-up by Rajani and Pibhop Dhongchai to be a "Buddhist version of Summerhill" whilst *Butterflies* was begun by Rita Panicker who told Gribble, "One needs to know very clearly in one's mind what is the goal and objectives of having an organisation, and what should be the philosophy and the principles on which this organisation should be based."

### Is Goodness Enough?

David's concluding chapter springs far more naturally from his evidence than does Joanna's but unlike her he is too politically inhibited. His conclusion, like his general approach to education, is heart warming and positive. He concludes that non-authoritarian education is not only possible with socially disadvantaged and emotionally damaged youngsters but that we owe them nothing less. "For the rich, such education is suitable; for the poor, it is essential". How dare we tread heavily upon the fragile and exposed lives of our most vulnerable children?

Gribble's approach is inspiring and a welcome relief from the Gradgrind curriculum and competitive league tables favoured by New Labour and its educational lackeys. The downside is that by neglecting the political dimension he doesn't prepare those he inspires for the reaction to be expected from establishment enemies. Summerhill was in recent years almost destroyed by Ofsted, Countesthorpe was emasculated and William Tyndale Primary was destroyed by Old Labour. I was involved in an attempt to save the White Lion Free School and am convinced that it could have survived if the staff had shared a clear, common educational and political philosophy.

### Liberal or Libertarian?

Radical ventures require two things, inspired founders and a coherent philosophy. All institutions embody and exemplify political philosophies. The head of your local comprehensive might not acknowledge their role in reproducing inequalities, competition and other capitalist modes of thought and behaviour but that hardly means their school is non-political. All schools are intensely political institutions and teachers in conventional schools can only ignore their political role as long as they teach with the grain of the wider society. Eton was founded in 1440 and prospers today because it is keyed into the taken-for-granted, dominant values of English society yet none of the thirty or so urban free-schools that operated in Britain between 1960 and 1990 survived. Gribble's book inspires but is insufficiently critical.

Ultimately Gribble seems to view the struggle for the liberation of learning as moral rather than political. Underlying his work is a notion that if we show people there is a nicer way of educating kids they will go

for it. Yet liberated learning has previously been far more widespread in Britain but has been crushed. *Lifelines* is an attractive, inspiring book on education from a radical liberal viewpoint but it is not distinctly libertarian.

Both of these books from *Lib Ed* contain much valuable material and are well worth a read by anyone interested in children, education or libertarian ideas in general. Yet both could have been much improved if they had been subjected to critical debate before publication. As the authors of *What a Way to Run a Railroad* (Comedia, 1985) emphasise, this is something radical collectives prefer to avoid. But if we refrain from rigorous criticism for fear of upsetting our friends we can be sure our enemies will be much less restrained and when reality eventually kicks in our initiatives will continue to collapse.

Christopher Draper

*"Leave Me Alone; power, control and resistance in a primary school"* - Joanna Stephanie Gore (Pb. 86 pages, £6.95, *Libertarian Education*, ISBN 0951399780) *"Lifelines"* - David Gribble (Pb. 144 pages, illustrated, £8.95, *Libertarian Education*, ISBN 0951399799)

### Biographical Note

Christopher Draper was born in Warrington in 1952 and now lives between the mountains and the sea in Llandudno. A schoolboy socialist Chris first came out of the closet in the early 1970's and publicly professed to anarchism under the inspiring influence of the *York Free Press* collective. After 22 years of subversive school teaching Chris finally cast aside his gown and mortar board, a conscientious objector to the National(ist) Curriculum. His anarchist career includes involvement in *Libertarian Education*, *Friends of the Earth*, *London Anarchist Forum* and writing for *Freedom* and *Northern Voices*. Chris now teaches independently organised adult education classes and writes commercially published guidebooks about North Wales. He is particularly keen to promote anarchist ideas to a wider audience.



### Anarchist Walking Group

Fancy going out walking with a bunch of anarchists? You may think that an anarchist walking group would be a disorganised rabble (which we may well be), but we can't be doing too bad as we've just hit our 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary and are still going strong.

We go for monthly walks, mostly on Sundays, usually in the countryside surrounding London, sometimes further afield. We go for some and maybe all of these reasons: exercise, pleasure, discussions, politics, trespassing, seeing a bit of nature every now and then - that type of thing. If you want to know about future walks email us at [mudlark@macunlimited.net](mailto:mudlark@macunlimited.net) or call on 07952 926186.



# MOVE OVER KARL, ANARCHISM IS BACK!

Anarchists tend to look embarrassed when the subject of economics comes up. Or we mumble something about Proudhon and then sheepishly borrow ideas from Karl Marx. It has always struck me as ironic that anarchism began largely as an economic theory, think only of Josiah Warren, Proudhon and Tucker, but then abandoned the field to the Marxists. A specifically anarchistic approach to economic analysis has lain dormant for the last 130 years. However, with the publication of Kevin A. Carson's *STUDIES IN MUTUALIST POLITICAL ECONOMY* this period of dormancy has finally come to an end.

Carson starts off by critiquing post-classical economists such as the Marginalists, Marxists, and Austrians. But his critique is not a simple dismissal of these views, but is dialectical in form. What stands up after analysis, no matter what the school of economics, is incorporated into his anarchist synthesis. Without too much exaggeration, Carson has produced *our Das Capital*.

He begins his analysis with an examination of Adam Smith and David Ricardo's Labour Theory of Value (hereafter LTV) and what was done to it by later economists. Early 19C economics was based upon the LTV resulting in a "revolutionary assault on entrenched power". However, by mid-century the LTV was rejected by the new schools of Marginalist and Austrian economists. As a result economics degenerated into "an apology for... the large corporations." The reason for this change of direction is fairly well known. The LTV shows that only labour can produce value, and thus exposes the capitalist and landlord as parasites. In order to intellectually defend the exploiting classes, the LTV had to be marginalised. (Sorry I couldn't resist).

The chief critic of the LTV was the Austrian, Bohm-Bawerk, who built a straw man version of the theory to knock down. According to BB, the LTV didn't hold in many instances - such as the value of antiques or rare paintings, and never exactly in other situations. Furthermore, the capitalist too created value by investing the capital which had accrued through his 'abstinence'. Landlords produced value through the use of their land. But Classical economists like Ricardo and Smith admitted the issue of scarcity of certain goods. The LTV only applied to items that could be freely reproduced. Due to the fluctuations in the supply and demand of these goods, there could never be an exact correlation between price and value. For Carson, the complaint about inexactitude

"made as much sense as saying the law of gravity was invalidated... by air resistance..."

Carson then re-establishes the LTV not only through its Smithian-Ricardian base but also, with the irony of the dialectic, by using certain Marginalist and Austrian concepts. For Smith, labour was plainly a 'hardship'. As such, the LTV has a "subjective basis" rooted in "common sense" and "the same *a priori* understanding of human behavior from which BB's disciple Von Mises derived his 'praxeology'." In essence, human beings maximize utility and minimize disutility. "The expenditure of labour is an absolute cost regardless of the quantity... the opportunity cost of labour... is non-labour." "It is the disutility of labour and the need to persuade the worker to bring his services to the production process, unique among all the 'factors of production', that creates value."



There is a major difference between the situation of the labourer and the landlord-capitalist. Labour requires a "positive expenditure of effort", 'abstinence' and rent have to do with setting charges for access to something. Labour is an *absolute* sacrifice, abstinence, is at best, a *relative* one. The worker *must* work, someone with capital has a choice whether to not work or to invest. "The 'value' created by capitalists and landlords is simply a monopoly price paid to their owners." Furthermore, the Marginalist and Austrian critics of the LTV treated property relations as given. How did that pool of investment capital *really* come about? How indeed, did the landlord get the land he rents? The lack of property and capital that forces the worker to sell himself to a capitalist is best explained not through economic theory, but through history.

The facts of history are clear, the peasants were dispossessed through coercion and state intervention, transforming them into

landless labourers and enforcing a situation of unequal exchange on the labour market. Carson goes into great detail about this process in the succeeding chapter, but first he turns his critical eye to the Marxist version of the development of capitalism. Marx was ambiguous on the role of coercion as a factor. Engels, on the other hand, was a market absolutist. Wage labour was "purely economic" and there was "no robbery or force or state involved" in the primitive accumulation of capital.

Marxist refusal to admit the statist origins of capitalism are political in origin. Engels was attempting to defeat Eugene Duhring's version of socialism. Earlier on, the project was to trash Proudhon and the Ricardian socialist Hodgskin. All three of these thinkers saw capitalism as rooted in, and perpetuated by, statism and violence. The one aspect the Marxist and non-Marxist socialists did agree on, is that for capitalism to exist, workers must be separated from the means of production. Carson's recipe for a Free Market? (1) Steal the producing classes land (2) Terrorize the former owners so they won't organize any opposition (3) Convince them this situation is a natural result of the Free Market.

Let's now look at those facts of history. Proudhon was right, "property is theft". The so-called right to peasant land was a feudal legal fiction established by the Norman Conquest. However, the first real mass expropriation and eviction of peasants did not occur until the seizure of Church lands by Henry VIII. More than 10% of the peasantry were reduced to landless labourers by this action and were terrorized by the brutal Poor Laws enacted about the same time. Legal changes in the 17th Century converted the limited feudal right into private property right, and the remaining peasants became tenants, pure and simple. These were then dispossessed over the next two centuries by a series of Enclosure Acts.

The newfound capitalist landowners loved the Enclosure Acts, and not just for the property it gave them. The workers, lacking land, were no longer independent. Independence was a situation their masters considered "one of the greatest of evils." Peasant communal land ownership (the traditional form) was considered "a dangerous centre of indiscipline."

This evil system was imposed overseas and in this manner the so-called world market came about. Ireland was the dress rehearsal for the robbery, enslavement and genocidal murder of native people everywhere. The first slaves were the Celtic peoples, shipped out to die like flies in the cane fields of Barbados. Indeed, "America

was built on slave labour." The world market was established by the European navies who protected the slavers, forced weaker countries to buy European goods and crushed any competition. State intervention shut out foreign competition, even going so far as in the case of Indian textiles, to destroy an entire industry and impoverish this populous nation. Force was used wherever the European conqueror went. The method was always the same; convert free peasants into cheap labourers who were then usually worked to death. As for hunters and gatherers? Extermination. After you read this chapter, you come away thinking that these people had nothing on Hitler, Stalin or Pol Pot.

Capitalism was brought into existence by a land-owning aristocracy, which transformed itself into a capitalist class when the old medieval system broke up. From the centuries of looting and pillage by this class, came the investment capital of the Industrial Revolution. In the United States, long held up as a pillar of Free Enterprise, capitalist industrial development began as a result of mercantilism, slavery and the investments of landlords, who got their land from the government, who in turn stole it from the Native People. As Carson says, "capitalism has never been established by a free market" and "free market capitalism is an oxymoron."

One major failing of Marxism, most especially vulgar Marxism, has been the failure to recognize the political causes of capitalism, and to reduce the social and the political to mere out-growths of economic forces. Marxism thus becomes an apologist for tyranny. "Parasitism was not necessary for progress." State socialists and capitalist apologists (such as most so-called free market libertarians) alike, "for nearly identical reasons" have a common interest in maintaining the myth of 19th Century laissez faire.

The vast and cruel "subsidy of history" is what lay the groundwork for Monopoly Capitalism as it developed in the late 19th Century. At this point Carson introduces Benjamin Tucker's analysis of monopoly. Patents, tariffs, the currency and banking monopolies all were forms of state-sponsored parasitism that gave rise to the giant corporations. Tucker's "Four Monopolies" have to be coupled with land-grants, cheap loans and gifts, eminent domain (by which the state could steal your land for its corporate buddies) and a hundred and one other forms of subsidy and corporate welfare.

The problem for corporate monopoly capitalism is its fragility, its tendency to go into crisis. One root cause of crisis is the tendency to produce more than can be profitably sold. This is exacerbated by state subsidies which create a more capital-intensive form of economy than would exist in a genuine market. In order to maintain demand and profitability, the state steps in with even more subsidy and also the welfare state to keep underclass docile. There is

"snowballing irrationality as the state's intervention further destabilizes the system, requiring yet further state intervention." The snowballing eventually leads to the fiscal crisis of the state, which began in the 1960s.

State monopoly capitalism introduces technologies and methods, which deeply harm society, replacing older more appropriate methods and technologies. Think of urban sprawl, over-dependence on petroleum and the auto, bureaucratisation and so-called professionalism, as but a few examples. By pushing for ever greater size, ever greater inefficiency results. Corporations have all the problems of a Stalinist planned economy - a fundamental irrationalism. The only reason things work at all is that workers ignore the directions from above.

The fiscal crisis of the state combined with the resulting social breakdown due to capitalist irrationality gave rise to the neo-liberal reaction. Over the last 25 years the state has worked to shift wealth from consumption to investment as a prop for the corporate system. This action brings with it a contradiction, as the system depends on mass consumption at a profitable level to deal with the problem of over-production.

The final chapter entitled "Ends and Means" discusses Carson's alternative to capitalism. The capitalist system should be replaced with voluntary associations; an economy of worker co-ops, mutualist associations, and syndicalist unions, based on the commons, free exchange and usufruct principles. The state abolished and replaced by a federation of communities.

Carson's revolution would be gradual and is marked by the development of a "dual power situation". This requires the building of an "alternative social infrastructure" giving rise of forms of "social-counter power" such as syndicalist unions, co-ops, tenant unions, mutualist societies, "cop watch" groups and libertarian municipalist movements. Such a development is a form of "prefigurative politics", by which people try as much as possible by their actions to live the revolution now. The distinction between reform and revolution is thus "mainly one of emphasis". The groundwork for the "final" revolution has to be laid beforehand and this is the task of the alternative social structure.

The modern or Corporate State, is vastly more intrusive than its 19th Century version, and thus presents a problem for anarchists. (Consider that in many countries 20% or more of the population depends upon the state for employment or survival.) Even Benjamin Tucker saw the need for a "staged abolition of the state" so not to give rise to a dangerous situation. Therefore, it is necessary to have a "strategic position" vis a vis the state. "It is not enough to oppose any and all statism... without any conception of how particular examples of statism fit into the overall system of power." As a result, the dismantling of the state must

occur "in the right order" and to do so in the wrong way is to court disaster. The proper sequence would be to first eliminate all state measures which support and give rise to capitalist and bureaucratic power. With the exploitation of labour abolished, any social welfare still needed could be handled by mutual aid societies.

The Corporate State *will* fall. First, through its own internal contradictions and secondly from outside; "from a host of movements whose only common denominator is a dislike of the centralised state and corporate capitalism." Carson sees a need to build broad-based ad hoc coalitions, but his "political strategy" is not electoral (more like the movement which brought down East German Stalinism, perhaps.) Nor is dismantling the state the primary function of the revolutionary-evolutionary movement. The "political" movement should exist only to get rid of those forces which stop us from pursuing our primary activity - building the new free society.

Carson is a mutualist and offers a mutualist alternative to capitalism. The other schools of anarchist thought shouldn't ignore his work because of this. In a voluntary society, people can live as they wish, providing they don't coerce or exploit others. Thus, in a mutualist economy anyone who wanted could live according to, say, the principles of libertarian communism. Carson's analysis can also be adapted to all forms of anarchism. The most important aspect of this book, the one that should overshadow other differences, is that the economic analysis of exploitation and capitalism has been placed on a solid anarchist basis. We need no longer play second fiddle to the Marxists.

Larry Gambone

*STUDIES IN MUTUALIST POLITICAL ECONOMY* is available for \$16.00 US. For shipping and handling, please add \$2.19 (U.S. orders). For Canadian orders, add \$5.30. For UK orders, add \$5.95. Kevin Carson P.O. Box 822 Fayetteville, AR 72702-0822 USA



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# ETHICAL ANARCHISM

*A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee.*

V.N. VOLOSINOV

Begin by un-thinking yourself out of the assumption that you are a self-contained individual with a consciousness embedded deep within the brainium in the cranium. Suppose all this so-called individual sovereignty was really only half yours with the rest belonging to the other. Without the other you would be a dead duck. You need the other in order to build your own identity. In the shared space between you and another all meaning is created. It is a joint affair and is conducted within an unrepeatable time and space. You might want to go and lie down to consider the implications of this. The idea of a sovereign individual is mere myth. We are all social beings and we can never be independent from the Other. As social beings we are ever-engaged in ongoing *co-constructive* relationships with Others. And this is the very reason why it is crucial to respect the Other - man, woman, environment, animal - because the Other is Other. Respect does not mean you should love your neighbour as thyself. Some neighbours are bastards. Respect them but do not love them. Never sleep with those whose respect for you is lesser than your own.

We have waded into Bakhtin's concept of *Dialogism*. A way of interacting with another that depends on at least two consciousnesses in order to come alive. It is a turbulent place where words are created in-between real living bodies drawn from the teeming diversity of everyday life. The ethical content of Dialogism means we must share a collective responsibility for one another. Not one of us is alone. We are both free only as far as we are able to work collaboratively to define who and what we are and who and what will be. This is the basis of Ethical Anarchism.

Tread carefully around those who use a dominant voice. Dialogism is not possible in the shadow of a voice where the *Other* is not needed. The self-centred power of the dominant voice rests entirely on its ability to construct the *Other* by controlling their definition. Creative communication is only possible between equals. Everyone is born a hero or a heroine. None are above you and none are below you.

Dialogue means that freedom and responsibility cannot be an "I" experience. Only as part of the "we" can we be truly free. Make no mistake. The day-by-day ethical practice of a free society is no easy task. Crisps are not Utopians. Once the bungs are released, what flows will not be

only fine wine. Dialogism requires ethical decisions to be made moment by moment. You should experiment for yourself. Go out onto the streets and into the taverns and begin communicating with Others dialogically. To do this you must presume the Other is capable of responding meaningfully, responsibly and unexpectedly. Dialogism is ever-changing, negotiating meaning, improvising. It is like Jazz, love, life, sex. Refuse all other forms of dialogue. Learn to dismiss such voices as irresponsible. They will trigger a mischievous reaction in you: parody, randomised rascality, mutism, evasion & etc.

Go forth and deal directly with the world.

Peter Good

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## A REPLY IN DEFENCE OF INDIVIDUAL SOVEREIGNTY

It is clear that individual sovereignty means different things to different people. Josiah Warren (1798-1874), an early exponent of this concept, saw it not as an escape from society or interaction with others, but as the key component of what he referred to as true civilization, a society that wants "To make the interests of all to co-operate with and assist each other, instead of clashing with and counteracting each other." In the book *Equitable Commerce* he wrote, "The true basis for society...is FREEDOM to differ in all things, or the SOVEREIGNTY OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL [emphasis in original]." Warren's vision of anarchy was one of private property, use and occupancy land tenure, free trade, and free credit. But it was also one of co-operation, sociality, companionship. Even though Warren and his associates believed in minding one's own business, they also believed absolutely that pursuing one's own interests both required and promoted cooperation with others. I share Warren's anarchist vision of social individualism.

I am an anarchist because I believe coercion and the initiation of force are always wrong, and that government, which is the embodiment of the principle of violence, should be abolished. Once the state, which protects the people and institutions that rob and bully those who actually do productive work, is done away with, people will be able to retain the full value of what they produce, use and live on the land without paying rent or taxes, and engage in whatever consensual economic and social acts and relations with others that they wish.

I am also an individualist. I feel that people should be absolutely free to do whatever they please, as long as their actions do not violate the equal freedom of others. They should be free to dispose of their resources and time as they see fit, as long as

they cause no harm to anyone else. Accordingly, people should not be forced, by either the state or the community, to pool their resources with others if they do not wish to do so. They should not be coerced into supporting "community" projects of which they disapprove. Individuals should be free to interact with willing others as much or as little as suits them.

While I question the existence of any sort of innate human nature, people clearly tend to be social beings who spend much of their time in the company of other people. We are cared for by others when young, and usually seek human companionship of some sort when mature. But I believe we are each unique individuals, as well, and have (or could have) rich inner lives that are certainly influenced, but by no means defined, by our interactions with other people and everything else in the world. I process the interactions I have with other people, beings, and things, and this affects the way I see the world. But the result is still an individual consciousness unlike any other with tastes, desires, and habits that are all my own.

Conceiving of oneself as a sovereign individual and viewing others likewise does not make one antisocial. I enjoy the company of other people and envision a future where sovereign individuals live in libertarian communities of various sorts. I work for a world in which people could freely choose all sorts of ways to relate to each other socially, economically, sexually, and otherwise, all the while retaining their freedom to disassociate from some or all others when and if that suits them better. What is needed for such relationships and interactions to work is tolerance of peaceful others, keeping one's word, leaving others alone when they so desire, and respect for the limits to our freedom of action, which occur where it impedes the equal freedom of another.

Being self-centered, even to the extent of living the hermit life has nothing to do with domination. Looking out for oneself in a social setting is best accomplished by getting along with others and having trusting relationships with those with whom you trade. If you are not nice to your neighbours, you cannot expect tolerance and good feelings in return. And withdrawing completely from society harms no one else and indicates no willingness to dominate. On the contrary, those who seek to dominate others frequently do so in the interests of some grouping larger than the individual, whether family, nation, or ethnic group. I am less likely to trust those who advocate for others than those who are concerned primarily for themselves.

Social obligations that are not freely chosen and individually agreed upon are not consistent with a free society. I am wary of "musts." If one is required to be responsible for another, one is a slave. Being benevolent, charitable and caring towards others, including strangers, is not merely the

right thing to do; it is also likely to benefit all of us by promoting similar behaviour on the part of others. Being neighbourly is a sort of enlightened self-interest. But *requiring* such consideration for others turns us into the servants of others, presumably even our "bastard" neighbours. We pick and choose our friends and sex partners. We should also be free to pick and choose those we interact with or assist in other areas of our lives.

While most of us live, talk, work, and have sex with other people, individuals will never be free until they are at liberty to choose where, when, how often, with whom, and even whether to have such encounters with others. Viewing ourselves as part of an overarching "we" to whom we are somehow responsible, like it or not, is liable to lead only to putting ourselves at the service (and mercy) of others. The only way to have voluntary associations of any sort is if there are independent people who agree individually to communicate and cooperate. If people's consciousness or personality or ideas are dependent on their interactions with another, then we cannot properly talk of free will, free choices, free exchange. Should we ever arrive at a point where individuals have true freedom of action, it will be despite our associations with others, not because of them.

Joe Peacott

## REFORM ANARCHISM

I no longer believe in the possibility of revolution. There may be further upheavals, like those which overthrew the regimes in the Soviet empire, the Philippines, Iran and Ukraine but they, so full of hope, did not make life much better for the people involved and sometimes made it differently worse. But no revolution.

It is strange that it has taken me so long to face reality. Leaving advancing years aside, I think the reason is: if not revolution, then what, except reform?

And what is reform for an anarchist? It seems obvious that there are many things which we must have, whatever *ism* rules (or, ideally, does not rule); a health service, transport, libraries, housing, schools(?), refuse collection, energy supply, food and goods to consume. Therefore why should we not try to improve them or the ways of getting them? That surely is reform.

However, for generations, people with various motives have worked to get rid of social abuses and make life better. Many things have improved, but which were the result of wealth generated by economic growth and which of protest and campaigning? Wealthy but undemocratic

countries get decent housing, education and health care. Britain, rich and democratic (for the sake of argument) has a growing wealth gap, problems with health differentials, educational inequality, pension provision, housing and, as in democratic America, increasing abuse of human rights.

Reform has been at best disappointing. Surveys seem to show that people are less happy today than 30 years ago and, for those few problems that have been resolved, new ones have arisen.

I am not miserable and do not disregard the good to make an argument. I simply say: there are people who are suffering dreadfully and a world which is being destroyed and neither is necessary. Things could be much better but the roads to reform have not led very far.

What prevents change is the established power structure and the prejudices that support it. The form of society in Britain is determined now as it has been for more than 500 years by its controlling elite, as have been the reforms. Other countries - even those which have had revolutions - are not significantly different.

Their approach to grievances has always been to deny, firstly, their reality, then their importance; and finally to permit a mild tweak of the system which does not reverberate dangerously. So, for instance, by the time "we" got the universal manhood suffrage demanded by the Levellers in the 1640s, it was blunt and rusty; safely absorbed in the old order.



We do need to be cautious, but different. Established rulers incorporate change in order to maintain their power; anarchist reform must seek change as a step toward the destruction of that power. At its simplest, nothing is worth the bother unless it creates a structure or a process which is controlled by the people who need it and whom it serves, without hurting anyone else. That is not an iron law: there will be compromises and defeats. Until it is dead and buried, a ruling elite always stands a good chance of grabbing back whatever concessions it has made.

We have to make advances where the system is weakest and at its most confused. I have in mind the public services, which have to exist for the common good: health, education, health and safety at work, regulations regarding food and all consumer goods, pollution, energy consumption and saving and so on but which are run for us by bureaucrats, experts and managers. Our

claim should be that these are aspects of everyone's life which can be properly regulated only by the people who need and use them.

The justification of this claim is our experiences of the abuses we have suffered for years - asbestosis, industrial accidents, air and water pollution, scandals in education, health, pensions, child care, farming (BSE and foot and mouth; GM gambles, chemical additives). Consider the corrupt use of public money by local and national government: the failed computer systems, the notorious Dome, the Lord Chancellor's wallpaper, the nuclear power abyss, MPs' expenses and Ministers' cars.

This is a demand made in the interests of efficiency as much as anything. It is clear that none of the dominant systems can deliver what we need even economically and reliably, let alone justly. Resources are running out; economic wealth increases at the expense of the environment, yet half the people of the world live in poverty. The text-book checks and balances do not work. We know the evils of both capitalism and state bureaucracy yet both, somewhat tweaked and twisted, are still the dominant socio-economic models.

It is also becoming clear that representative democracy itself is part of the problem: people will not vote to increase the cost of petrol and energy, reduce car use and air travel, make food dearer (and better) or take the urgent steps needed to raise the living standards of the starving world, combat climate change or protect the environment.

The individual in the polling booth is solitary, selfish and stupid: what else is a cross but evidence of illiteracy? It cannot express a people's complex responses to five years of high crimes and misdemeanours committed by their Government. Nor can it articulate their, or our hopes for the next five. We vote Tweedledum out and Tweedledee in - the triumph of hope over experience, once again.

Anarchist reform has to be democratic, accountable and efficient by developing a new social process: popular control. We need to help open the way for any of us to get into organisations at every level to question plans, financial estimates and appointments long before they have got into the bureaucratic steamroller. We need to have access to any information we want regarding public decisions and spending since no one doubts that secrecy and confidentiality exist only to protect those who have it from those who would be victims of it. We also need proper complaints procedures anywhere and everywhere.

Who ought to exercise these rights? Only independent, autonomous outsiders like patients' organisations, parent groups, local community groups, concerned members of the public who band together for a purpose; perhaps Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Council for the Protection of Rural



England; professional bodies and trade unions (with caution; they have axes to grind and need watching) and, with extra caution, the Press.

This is an approach to reform which is aimed at shifting the balance of power progressively and openly to groups of people who are involved in the issue but have no interests except the well-being of themselves, relatives, friends and their environment. It is an unheroic guerrilla strategy of ambushes and skirmishes requiring intelligence and persistence but one which has to be inspired by the earth-shattering – earth-building – vision of anarchism as a universal good – just, moral, altruistic and efficient.

Dick Frost

## FROM DUCE TO TONY

If you wanted a definition of the standpoint that anarchism opposes, you could hardly do better than Mussolini's: 'Everything in the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state'. Mussolini's brand of statism did not, of course, match the rhetoric. But, in many respects, Mussolini was the very model of the modern political leader. Put aside the warning images of buffoonery that the British people came to see as typifying the 'Duce', and you get a prime minister (for Italy had a monarch) who seems to have been a model for our own 'dear leader', Tony Blair. Where the Duce led, so Tony seems to follow.

Tony doesn't talk much about the Third Way these days, but it is still central to his project. This was an idea developed by various academics, most notably Anthony Giddens, to provide Tony Blair with some kind of theoretical underpinning for his opportunistic realpolitik. Similarly, the Duce leant heavily on theorists, such as Vilfredo Pareto and Benedetto Croce, to provide him with a loose ideology to suit the facts of his regime. For both, power came first, theory second. And both prime ministers were astute enough to know that some kind of theory is necessary to clothe a naked desire for power. Mussolini was probably the first politician to attempt to steer a middle way between free market liberal capitalism (of the sort that characterised much of the nineteenth century, and later inspired Mrs Thatcher), and the type of statism that was born in the Great War. Tony has attempted something similar, attempting to steer a way between the statism that characterised the social democratic era of the late 1940s to the late 1970s, and the free market capitalism of the 1980s. Just as the Duce's statist ship went with the current of the times more towards state capitalism than the market, so Tony

steers with the current of our times, more towards the market than the state.

Unlike Tony, Mussolini was a reasonably well-read Prime Minister, but, like Tony he had a socialist background. Or, perhaps that should be, unlike Tony, he had a socialist background. At the least, they both originated on the left of the traditional spectrum of politics. What they do have in common, is that they were quick to abandon their 'socialism' when power beckoned. Aware that the First World War was a chance to fracture the Italian system in order to make an opening for his assault on power, Mussolini abandoned his pacifism, and, backed by French money, headed the campaign for an Italian intervention. A paler version of this can be seen in Tony's enthusiastic membership of CND when he first entered politics, followed by his continued support for Britain's nuclear weapons once that seemed to be necessary for his assault on power. And, perhaps, that 'paler' might, horribly, not be so 'pale' one day.

Famously, as an ex-newspaper man, Mussolini realised the power of the media. It could be argued that the defining characteristic of Tony's regime has been his approach to the media. This has been marked by deference to those elements of the media that he cannot, or does not wish to, control, and the intimidation of those elements of the media that are open to bullying. New Labour has neutralised the potential threat of big news media interests, epitomised by Rupert Murdoch, with private assurances, and the adoption of public policy that is in tune with their interests. So, David Blunkett was famously the blue eyed boy of the Daily Mail, while Murdoch's aids are routinely briefed by Downing street, or perhaps the briefings flow in the opposite direction. And although Mussolini dealt directly with the press, while Tony has made widespread use of media-savvy spinmeisters like Alastair Campbell, the principle is the same – the media creates 'truth', the media is the dominant element in the development of agendas and the tone of public discourse. Mussolini held his 'dialogues' with the masses via his balcony rants, and the radio, while Tony has his 'dialogue' via the press and chats with David Frost. Further, just as Mussolini bullied those he could not co-opt, so the Blair assault on the BBC over the Iraq fiasco is a prime example of latter day bullying, more subtle, but just as effective.

Perhaps the Iraq adventure echoes the Duce's dying days, when his much-vaunted 'New Roman' foreign policy ended as he became increasingly tied to the expansionism of a more powerful mentor, but there are interesting parallels with Mussolini's invasion and occupation of Abyssinia. Italy already had a pre-history of intervention in Abyssinia, just as Britain has in Iraq. Horribly, the Italian conquest of Abyssinia led to less deaths than the US-UK invasion of Iraq has. And just as the Italians used the very latest in airborne terror (gas

attacks from the air, a technique picked up from the British, who used the same methods in Iraq after the First World War), so the 'coalition' forces used the latest terror weapons – new generation napalm, fuel-air bombs, depleted uranium rounds, miniguns, and cluster bombs – on the Iraqis. Interestingly, the Duce's excuses for his invasion match those of Tony. For Mussolini, the Abyssinians were a threat to Italian interests (in Somalia), and Haile Selassie's dictatorship was built upon slavery, amputations and general barbarity. The Duce argued that his forces were bringing civilisation and modernity to Abyssinia, and the fascists' favourite song of the period talked of blackshirts bringing freedom to a little slave girl who went on to become an Italian blackshirt. Similarly, once the Weapons of Mass Destruction argument fell apart in Tony's hands, his excuse for invasion and occupation has been bringing civilisation to a people oppressed by barbarity. Unfortunately for Tony, the Iraqis seem even less keen on US-UK imperialism than the Abyssinians were on the Italian version.

Mussolini once said that fascism was rule by corporations, hence the fascism system of 'corporatism'. That term next surfaced under Harold Wilson, when the state allied with the TUC and the CBI (itself a creation of the first Wilson government) to create tri-partite bodies like ACAS to police the social democratic market. But, Tony has gone one step further, by excising the unions from his form of corporatism. Instead, we have, as George Monbiot has pointed out, 'a corporate take-over of Britain'. Two recent examples of the power of corporate interest in Blair's Britain are his gambling and alcohol policies. The drinks industry, for example, is under pressure in an increasingly difficult market in which they not only compete on the high street, but also with cheaper booze available from the supermarket chains. So, in response, we get 24 hour drinking. And, in true Mussolini-style, one policy is almost immediately contradicted by another, as the government first permits longer drinking hours, which, will change this famously, and historically, drunk nation, into a nation of café-intellectuals, then brings in more legislation to fund more policing of those future café-intellectuals when they begin to bare their arses round the clock.

Mussolini's attitude to his party also appears to have been a model for our latter-day Duce. The national Fascist party was not meant to be a source of policy, ideas, or anything that might be remotely seen as democratic. Not that parties usually are, and it has been a long time since Bo Mackenzie confirmed that even the labour party's once much-vaunted conference-based democracy was nothing of the sort, and that Labour, just like the German Social Democratic party had long ago succumbed to the 'iron law of oligarchy'. But, under Tony, the labour party has been finally emasculated. All that matters is obedience to the party

line, which comes, most definitely, and without exception, from the top. Perhaps Tony could get the party to adopt Mussolini's old slogan, 'Believe, Obey, Fight'. It is fatuous for labour members, like Lord Hattersley, to declare, as he recently did on Newsnight, that socialists (presumably with and without peerages) should stay inside the party, and 'change it from within'. If the huge opposition from both within, and without, the labour party over Iraq was unable to change the Duce's policy, then how can any policy be changed? The party only exists as an instrument for the leader to create 'consensus'. Ironically, it was the Fascist Party that voted Mussolini out of office in 1943 – clearly they had more independence than the Labour Party in 2005.

## GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING

Come in, dear reader, and let my story be a reminder to you of why you should never get involved with government and why time is wasted in trying to get government to do anything about itself.

My story begins with a planning application for a block of flats and three storey houses (72 dwellings in total) in a small village. An old tannery, operating since 1917, had been on the site and had recently closed down. It had contaminated the surrounding land and provided dubious and unpleasant employment activity and smells for the locals over the years. The tannery family were the applicants/developers and were apparently hoping to maximise their profit from the site, irrespective of the impact on the village.

Unusually, not only is the site in a village, it is also in a National Park, a Conservation Area, next to a Listed Building and in the last woodland in the village. Part of the woodland was to remain, as was a nasty tip containing various chemicals, not least of which is Chromium VI, a known carcinogenic waste. The tip sits next to a local stream which runs into the next town and eventually into a river. In addition, the tannery site is next to the village Nature Reserve, developed entirely by local people from an old dam. Near the tip sits the two old tannery dams which were neglected for many years but still host plenty of wildlife.

Now call me naive, but even with my government "allergy", I did have a fleeting thought that with all these supposed legal protections, this might actually mean that there would be a studied view of the site and that, at the very least, a block of flats in a village would be unacceptable in a National Park. Moreover, the whole site seemed to replace an ugly industrial

In many ways, Mussolini was a more able politician than Tony Blair, but their essential function as prime ministers in a capitalist system is the same. It was the Italian communist, Palmiro Togliatti, who claimed that fascism was the only original idea that the Italian bourgeoisie had ever had. But, bound in the corset of traditional Marxism, Togliatti was wrong. Berlusconi, our own Duce's closest friend, proves that corporate bosses (as opposed to all fractions of the bourgeoisie) possess a remarkable ability to adapt to new economic and social conditions. It was another Italian communist, former associate and, later, victim, of Mussolini who provided perhaps the most penetrating analysis of the function of capitalist politics. Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, his stress on

complex with an even worse urban one. But all these "protections" turned out to be nothing more than the hollow government sops to make people believe that somehow they have "ownership" of their locality. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

There was an overwhelming number of formal objections to the National Park. In fact, there was only one letter of support and that was equivocal. Various other organisations lodged objections, but they proved toothless. English Heritage, another government body, capitulated on being offered the sop of keeping a chimney! When asked if they would Schedule the tannery dams, they explained that the approach of government was to move away from Scheduling. But then, with Prescott's rampant development schemes, they wouldn't want to hold up the developers' profits by looking after the landscape and heritage, would they? The Council for the Protection of Rural England did nothing more than an objection letter and that seems to be the full extent of their authority.

And the politicians? The local M.P. was a waste of time and would not say whether he was for or against the development, although later claimed he had had a "substantial" input; the M.E.P. was sympathetic (OK when you are in Brussels) but ultimately did nothing. The District and County Councillors objected but did nothing more than write letters.

So, as ever, to get anything done, it was down to the people. I formed an Action Group but was criticised because I was an in-comer who didn't know about local village life (I was born and bred in a town one and a half miles away) and received hate mail and opprobrium in the local press generated, I believe, by those who were closely involved with the developers.

the vital role that cultural factors play in sustaining the system, highlights the fact that the Duce / Tony comparison has more worth than a tongue in cheek article might suggest. Tony's rhetoric is determinedly cross-class, resolutely capitalist, imperialist, and, fundamentally, anti-democratic. It is maintained by an enthusiastic echoing of the dominant public discourse, and the dominance of a supine party dedicated to power. History moves on, styles change (technology and fashion ensures this), but functions within this system remain the same.

Steve Cullen

Many local people were interested in the Action Group but became reticent about doing something themselves. Some offered money but didn't want to "get involved" or "we don't want any trouble". The worst was the almost feudal allegiance to the developers, who came to a meeting to state what their grandfather had done for the village in a way that suggested that now was the time for the serfs to pay back their philanthropy by not making any objections to their profit-making venture. Many people were fooled by this approach and, of course, this is Middle England where the only real protest is a slightly angry letter to the local rag complaining about the inability to buy that "good, old-fashioned seed cake".

Views didn't change when the Parish Council, who had voted not to support the development, were threatened with legal action by the developers because local people had the temerity to question the stability and content of the tip and the flood risk. Vested interest on the Council and reluctance to tackle the bullies kept them from putting their heads above the parapet again.

When the matter eventually came before the National Park, they happily went into private session. So much for "open" government. The developers had produced a secret financial "Viability Report". Despite this application being, in the Park's own admission, the largest – if not the largest in years – when it came back into public session it approved it. The level of "debate" was woeful: the second speaker moved the resolution to approve! No consideration of the government's own mealy-mouthed presumption that "the polluter pays".

More to annoy than any confidence in the process, I lodged a formal complaint to the Park about the inaccessibility of the report.



And guess what? It wasn't upheld! To keep up the "buggeration factor", I took my complaint further to the Local Ombudsman: the government organisation which overviews the workings of local government to see if there had been maladministration. No surprises that my complaint was yet again, not upheld. Apparently, there was no "injustice" to me in not having access to the secret report.

So, undaunted but unhelpful, I applied under the inappropriately-titled Freedom of Information Act but the report was "exempt" from its provisions as, I have found, is most substantive government information.

What now? Well, the courts - yet another arm of government. This would mean

expensive and prolonged litigation to seek a judicial review, i.e. that the decision-making process was flawed. Even if they found against the Park, this would only mean referring the decision back for them to reach the same conclusion but via a route not challengeable in the courts. So, tails we win, heads you lose. If the local people and politicians didn't want this development, why should they have it? Well, this is the illusion of democracy: the blind adherence to the idea that people are free to control those who govern them and that somehow, that magical cross on a piece of paper every few years, coupled with a few Daily Mail campaigns against "yobs" are somehow powerful weapons against the monstrous beast of an ever intrusive and controlling

government machine. Emma Goldman had the grasp of the pointlessness of politics to be working for the people: "What does the history of parliamentarianism show? Nothing but failure and defeat ..... time and time again, the people were foolish enough to trust, believe and support with their last farthing aspiring politicians, only to find themselves betrayed and cheated".

So, I shall continue to battle on to try and minimise the effect of the planning consent. But I won't be making any overtures to any government group to do so.

Jean Robinson

## NECESSARY DIVERSITY

A lot of anarchist time and resources are spent in debate, argument with, and opposition to the expression of more conventional politico-economic beliefs. It is perhaps paradoxical that the closer the relative position the greater the animosity - and the more it seems provoked as a mental spasm rather than an intelligent response. There are important points of principle between political groupings - these are not necessarily straightforward. Marxists are authoritarian, but anarchists can deny the freedom of those they disagree with.

Many hours, much emotional energy, even passion, and righteousness founded on conviction, are expended in pursuit of what amounts to religious purity of the mind-sets of various beliefs. This inter-sect babble is today's version of fiddling while Rome burns. For some lack-of-reason we have all become petty minded in the face of the global situation. Look at it another way, we use our various 'boxes of principles' much as the ostrich was supposed to use the sand - we stick our heads in as deep as possible and become afraid to look out.

Much comfort (as well as erudition) is still drawn from the work of the four anarchist fore-fathers, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta and Proudhon. While their work can provide good background reading, the context in which it was written is long past and it becomes increasingly difficult to make direct applications which will influence people today. Having said that, it is likely that our best route to Anarchism in the future is to pick the threads of principle from the past, extend and re-weave them where appropriate into new contexts. By this I mean it is time we took our principles of freedom; abscise of imposed authority; working co-operatively; living by mutual aid; seeking sustainability amongst networks of

diverse communities; living in ecological balance in bio-regions, and pushed them forward in today's melee - don't waste time and energy 'proving' others wrong. Concentrate on being right, positive and creative.



This strategy could face several problems. Can anarchists survive without any enemies? Do we need tweedledums to provoke our tweedledeeishness? Would we maintain our position without the tactical support of opposition? It does demand the conviction of isolation, of standing alone, of being constructive rather than destructive. Can be very difficult ...

Wait a minute! Most anarchists would go as far as 'living by mutual aid', but what about the others - seeking sustainability amongst networks of diverse communities, and living in ecological balance in bio-regions? True, these are not threads from the past. However, they are logical structural answers to the needs of anarchism beyond the confines and politico structures of the nation state - limits we should have not accepted so quiescently. They are the inheritance from our fore fathers and it is time they were largely museum bound.

For the future we have to think far beyond the confines of politics, economics, and present social structures. This is not just necessary for anarchy, but for the continuation of humanity in confronting

both known and the unknown hazards of the future. Unless, that is, we are victims of the belief that humans are in some way special, exceptions to the rules which we believe apply to other life-forms and to ecosystems in general? Life forms have two basic strategies for dealing with the unknowable hazards of the future. One is crude numbers; generate as many replicas of yourself as possible. The other is to diversify. To fill as many environmental niches as possible.

Humans have certainly over-done the crude numbers strategy. So much so that whatever catastrophe wins the impending disaster race, a massive human die-back seems unavoidable. Consider one certain scenario discussed in past issues of Total Liberty - what happens when the oil runs out? How many people will be fed? How many sustainable systems of agriculture have been lost in the mindless oil-fired race for greater numbers?

It is my contention that anarchists have to move conscious into a future where we have seen the limits of natural resources. This does not, necessarily, mean that we must all take the anarcho-primitivist path. But it does mean that we should actively encourage human diversity. How far should this encouragement go? Here we have to think and re-write much of the anarchist credo. For example, the axiom the 'my freedom ends where yours begins' is too simplistic for current use. Rather I think we should say 'freedom exists for all while there is space in between' - which could be seen as a form of freedom where false respect for the freedom of others is not required, therefore less pointless argument would be generated.

The desired re-structured society which anarchists seek cannot be found in sectarian squabbles. These provide a side-show from

which the present culture can draw comfort. We are dismissed because of the squabble - not because of what it may be about. This is one common example of the way the cultural immune system works. Another is rarely to use the anarchist word without attaching 'chaos' to it.

The immune system of the western culture is the greatest enemy we face. The culture generates the problems we face, in the environment, from the economy, and in a generally unsustainable way of life. A uniform conformist cultural monolith is the most dangerous structure humans have created. Yes, oil dependent, but that is only the most obvious serious dependency we face.

In this situation the classic ideas of rebellion and revolution are hopelessly out of date. What anarchists must do is become viruses in the cultural immune system. And wherever possible encourage groups of people to form structures around the perimeter of the present culture. We have to accept that freedom, coupled with responsibility, is the objective - not taking some oath on the works of Kropotkin. And it could be that some of those groups, like organic farmers, may be very conservative, or even Conservative, but as long as there is space between their freedom and yours, so what?

In this way we would tend to create diversity in human communities. For this to emerge we have to shed the arrogance of our certainty that whichever 'we' we are is correct. We have to parallel Voltaire's sentiment when he said, 'I may disagree totally with what you say, but I would die to defend your right to say it.' Let us suppose there are groups of Fascist or Marxist - whichever is the most unthinkable to you. Would we, in principle at least, die to defend their right to that particular way of life? If not, why not? Their life expression as part of the range of human diversity may be the one which enables our species to survive.

If we are serious about our anarchist ethos, and accept the logic of diversity in other species and ecosystems in general, it is surely hypocritical if we cannot apply the

same logic to our own species. In facing the future we have to choose between the values of co-operation (mutual aid as expounded by Kropotkin) or competition, as presently expressed in USA versus The Rest of the World, for oil and other finite resources. If those concerned with survival do not go for co-operation the localised scenario is that of many parts of sub-Saharan Africa today, armed gangs of marauding teenagers leaving sterile waste land behind them as they compete for survival.

For the anarchist future two elements, which are slowly emerging (particularly in the anti-globalisation movement) are required. First, we need to refine our concept of ethics. (I do not mean morals or morality. These are based on rules of behaviour handed down by a leader or based on some other unquestionable authority which people are supposed to follow blindly). Ethics are concerned with what is right or correct in particular circumstances. They are based on reason, logic, and rationality - two out of three will not do. They are refined by questioning and discussion. Anarchists require an ethical framework which will allow all parts of human diversity to exist, if not necessarily to co-exist. Perhaps this could be a participatory task for readers of Total Liberty in future issues. For present, it seems clear that individual freedom with responsibility, co-operation with a lack of coercion, and dependable trust, would be essential components to extend beyond anarchy.

The second element is the network. This should be the form of structure adopted by diverse human groups for the future. It is radically different from the present dominant hierarchy structure in human organisation. (Paradoxically some large commercial hierarchically structured organisations are experimenting with network structures for some of their functions.) Hierarchies exist in most mammal species. They allow the dominant male to breed with more of the dominant females than lesser males, thus refining and extending what seem to be desirable

characteristics. If you like, hierarchies are based on testicular dominance. Networks of equals, by contrast, are based on a reflection of the way the structure of the brain is organised. From this structure mind emerges. It may not be too much to expect that a form of common consciousness would emerge from a network of human groups, whatever their internal group values may be.

To complete the picture of diversity for the future it may be assumed that different groups will occupy different parts of the variety of bio-regions. Self sustaining groups should be the objective, but to what degree this may be necessary is a matter for conjecture. It depends also on unknown factors: what will happen to organised powers, primarily the states and their armies, when whatever crunch happens. As designers of the World War II Wellington bomber found, a fuselage of a network of structural elements took a lot of damage without crashing. Parts of networks can be lost without destroying the whole.

Finally we should consider what is happening to our species in the developed world. The process of neoteny (or neotony) appears to be underway. Mass dumbing-down, shortening attention span, narrowing fields of knowledge, total dependency on institutional provision for vital (literally) necessities of life. Neoteny is commonly observed in groupings which are preparing for an evolutionary shift. It is as though the genes agree on the lowest common denominator as the base line for the shift. Is this what is happening to humans? If so what is the shift likely to amount to? One thing is probably certain, those of us who are aware of the process are likely to be outside its effects when it happens - just as we are outside the majority now. This may be the major reason for a network of diverse aware human groups making conscious choices rather than running to the majority (unknown) agenda.

Colin Johnson

## Book Review: Anarchists in Social Work; known to the Authorities

"Anarchists in Social Work; known to the Authorities". Published by Martin S. Gilbert, Ulverston, Cumbria, UK. 2004. Pbk. 253pp. illus. Bibliog. ISBN 0-9549159-0-9 paper version £8.00.

This paperback contains a variety of items from Martin S. Gilbert, who also contributes the introduction, Mark E. Newns, Peter Good, John Evans and Doreen Frampton. Some have their first publication here, whilst others are reprints from magazine articles from Freedom and the Cunningham Amendment.

Martin S. Gilbert provides the introduction and theoretical background article for this collection. Having given a brief run-down on his personal take on anarchist theory, Martin recounts his time spent in local government social work during the 1970-1990s. I must say I was disappointed by the paucity of theoretical material, it being mainly confined to two collections of essays edited by Roy Bailey and Mike Brake. Now I'm not claiming expert experience or knowledge of this area, but I would have thought that some reference to the work of Colin Ward might

have been appropriate and the sociology of deviance material from the 60s-70s. Not to mention more recent material (Foucault anyone?)

Instead we are treated to several highly personal accounts of people's experiences in social and mental health care work from the practitioners' perspectives. (It might have made for a more balanced account if people's experience as "clients" of social work could have found a place here.) It is not surprising that most of the contributors found doing social and care work such a struggle. This is not a comment about them;



rather the bureaucratic and governmental frameworks within which these forms of work have to be conducted are not conducive to an anarchist approach. Indeed it would appear that as time has gone by it has become increasingly difficult to undertake meaningful and empowering social work in the U.K. and it is not surprising that people have left this field of employment as it is so frustrating. However, as Peter Good's excellent essay reveals, it is not just local government that stands in the way of individuals and groups trying to make an improvement in their clients' quality of life. Peter, in the 1970s, more through luck than judgement, found himself elected as Branch Chairman of COHSE in a mental health facility in Lancashire. Conditions were in dire need of improving, especially in relation to working conditions, staffing levels and so forth. And, in the spirit of the times, the branch actually decided they'd had enough and something needed to be done about things.

Now, I won't spoil the tale by revealing too much. Let us just say, that it is an honest account of just how far you can take industrial action, with massive support from the membership (which increased spectacularly once it was realised that this time the union actually meant business). And how management can make the life of a trade union official so difficult, can agree to anything as long as nothing has to change, and how, eventually, one can be sold out by a combination of one's own full-time union officials and the legal system, no matter how strong you think your case is. It comes as no surprise that Peter never worked in mental health afterwards. Quite simply he was blacklisted.

Mark E. Newns contributes what could have been quite an interesting account of his experiences both in the UK and USA in

various forms of social work. Sadly, what we are offered reads very much as a first draft. A few paragraphs read more as bulletin points on a to do list, whilst others are punctuated in a Jackson Pollock style – full stops and commas are thrown at the text and where they stick they stay. Sorry but this should have been tidied up prior to being committed to print. The text also degenerates into a rant about cyberspace and such like in several places.

Which is unfortunate as Mark's tale is an unusual one, as he gravitates away from humdrum social work into teaching tai-chi and holistic health methods to prisoners and older people among others. This he saw as empowering in an inner sense, as opposed to the more political structural and economic forms of empowering. One can argue that until people are empowered within themselves they cannot struggle on more systemic levels. But equally, it cannot be a substitute for political and economic change.

John Evans' vignettes of attempting to do meaningful social work in the Welsh valleys is both amusing and saddening. John documents the endemic corruption and bureaucratic ineptness of much local government in Wales. The long-entrenched Labour Party functionaries who control much of this are, at best, well-meaning nobodies and at worst corrupt placemen (very few were women).

What comes through time and again are the valiant attempts individuals have made to improve the lives of the clients – be they the mentally ill, the poor, the elderly and so on – only to run up against brick walls and, increasingly, financial and bureaucratic restrictions imposed by central government. In addition, there is the simple fact that for many people the only way their lives could be improved is by them taking power into

their own hands and insisting on a redistribution of wealth, meaningful work and the creation of genuine communities of equals where all are given equal respect. And no government is going to employ or fund people who intend doing that.

In many ways this book is a reminder of times gone by. If the 60s were the time of theoretical experimentation and radical challenge, then the 70s were the time when that struggle took place. By the mid-80s it was clear that the hopes had been dashed and everyone was making the best of a bad job (or no job in some cases)! All that seems to be left of contemporary social work are people whose first concern is their career and others still trying to be genuinely helpful to their clients in a context that does its best to frustrate that desire. It's difficult to know whether to recommend this book. If you are of an anarchist mind, this will convince you that social work isn't going to be an easy ride, if you take your politics seriously. That's assuming anyone will employ you in the first place. As case studies the articles make for interesting reading, but the book lacks any proper in-depth theoretical material that will get it noticed by people outside the anarchist milieu. The problems that social work was created to ameliorate (never solve) are still with us. Whether it is a meaningful occupational choice of people will, I suspect, depend on whether you can find a niche that allows for a degree of personal autonomy and one that delivers tangible benefits to the clients you are serving.

Richard Alexander

*Note the book is also available in electronic format as a pdf file at the reasonable price of £3.00 from [www.anarchistsinsocialwork.org.uk](http://www.anarchistsinsocialwork.org.uk)*

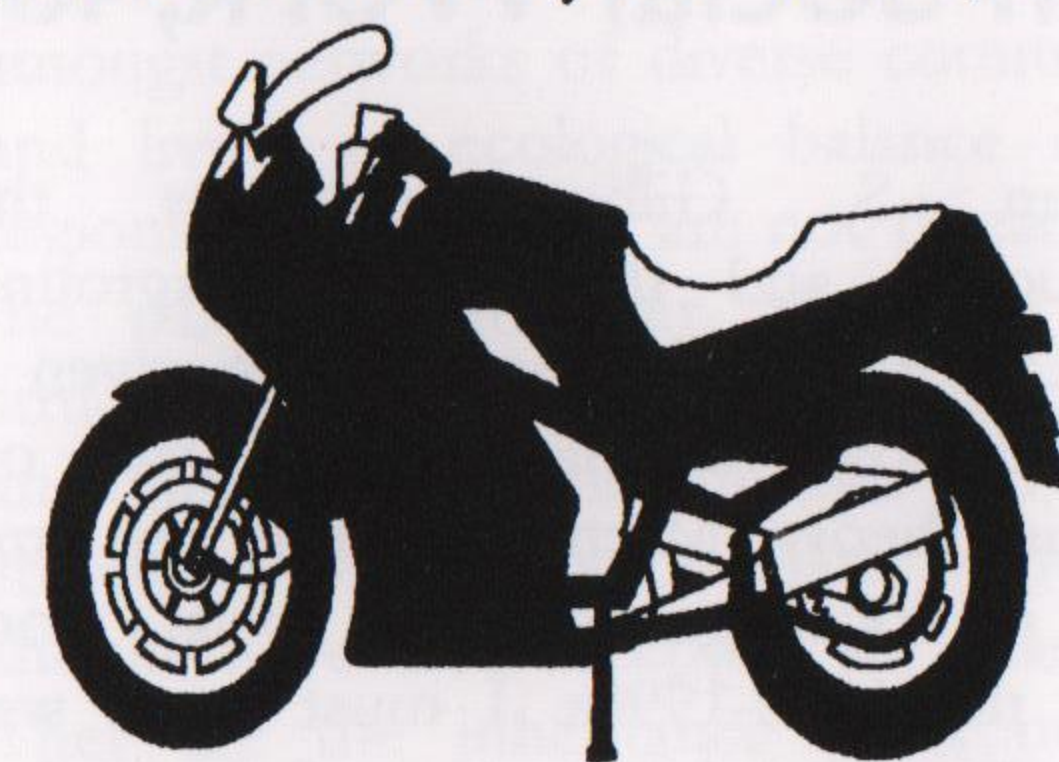
## Zen and the Art of MZ Maintenance (with apologies to Robert Pirsig)

Increasingly we live in a world reliant on technology not readily accessible to an ordinary person. Almost everything is either 'throw-away' or requires the services of a specialist to keep it in working order.

But before the fall of the Iron Curtain, automotive products produced in communist countries were readily accessible, with the factories actually encouraging owners to get involved with doing their own repairs and maintenance – even down to the supply of engineering drawings to make any special tools required.

My own experience is related to the East German MZ motorcycle, widely derided, (which actually had a lot to do with a kind of envy) and confused with the inferior Czech CZ. The MZ motorcycle, available in three basic forms, (125cc, 150cc and 250cc) was actually a very well thought out design. Owner maintenance was well within the

capabilities of the average owner. Its two-stroke engine, regarded by many as 'polluting' was actually very efficient, running on a 2% petrol mixture. This produced remarkably little smoke, certainly



much less than supposedly more 'sophisticated' Japanese equivalents. Servicing was made much easier, being a two-stroke, this was largely restricted to cleaning, or replacing the single spark plug, and ensuring that the ignition timing was

correct, a very simple job. Even the drive chain, the bane of most motorcycles, was simple to keep in correct adjustment. Being fully enclosed (a legacy of MZ's experience in motorcycle trials competition), chain wear due to road dirt was minimised – I adjusted the chain on my machine twice in the whole time I owned it, and covered some 20,000 miles. Even rear wheel removal, normally a drawn out process due to chain drive, was a simple and easy operation, not even requiring chain removal due to a cush drive system that allowed the wheel to be quickly detachable in the true sense of the word. My experience with Japanese, or other European machines had jaundiced my opinion towards chain drive – constant adjustment, and replacement, plus a dread of facing the inevitability of rear wheel removal at the roadside. MZ's realisation of the reality that tyres get

punctured, often in the most awkward of circumstances had ensured that their designers had thought through this problem, and engineered a solution. Only once did I have to actually remove the rear wheel at the roadside and mend a puncture. I completed the job inside fifteen minutes – the standard tool kit even included a tyre pump, neatly stored under the seat. A similar job on a Honda I once owned took an hour and three-quarters. More involved maintenance and repair was assisted by the two-stroke design – only three moving parts, crank, piston and connecting rod. It is true that a special tool was needed to separate the crank-case, but these could easily be bought, or made from the helpful drawings included in the factory workshop manual. To make ignition timing an easy job, plans were also included for a gauge to indicate when the piston was at top-dead-centre.

It would be true to say that the MZ motorcycle was definitely in the 'no-frills' category, but everything on it had a function. The headlights fitted at the factory actually lit up the road well (much journalistic verbiage has been spent on the inadequacies of other, much more expensive machines in this important department), and the machine had that intangible quality of 'handling' well, if

having a tendency to 'fall' into bends and corners, (easily rectifiable by fitting a wider section tyre). It was a bit of a handful at under about ten miles per hour, (rectifiable by fitting a steering damper – an MZ factory accessory) but overall, a machine that was very usable, and when the occasion demanded, able to 'lift its skirts' and perform at quite some speed. On motorways, the machine could hold a steady 70 to 75 mph up hill, and down dale. And at this speed, the engine was turning at a leisurely 5,500 rpm – not that the rider noticed this, due to the rubber-mounted engine. This had its lighter side too; quite often whilst waiting at traffic lights I was informed by kindly other drivers or pedestrians that my engine was 'loose' – it did tend to bounce around in the frame a bit at tick-over speeds!

The brakes were not all they could be, but again a relatively simple solution was readily available. The front brake was infamous for its lack of stopping power, so many owners fitted a much more powerful brake salvaged from an early 70s Honda of more obese proportions, though of similar capacity. Again, the modification was well within the capability of the average owner.

The simplicity of design, and its relative transparency showed up the complex, and much more expensive Western motorcycle

design, with many owners performing feats that would be a challenge to any motorcycle on the road – one rider even went as far as travelling the Pan-American Highway on an MZ 250, all the way from Alaska to Tierra Del Fuego. He had a few problems, and the machine did need a major repair – the frame broke in Venezuela, but was soon fixed by a village blacksmith, which I think characterises the MZ marque well. Simple, robust and efficient. Maybe the 'ugly duckling' of motorcycles, but certainly a case of function before form.

In conclusion, the MZ motorcycle represents to me the pointlessness of much inaccessible technology. It worked, and worked well without the countless micro-chips and mini computers now deemed necessary on a modern motorcycle, and as a result could be ridden and maintained by the same person. Many owners could, and did, introduce refinements in order to make the vehicle a more useable machine, such as electronic ignition and a better front brake. But fundamentally, the MZ was designed as a simple accessible machine where an owner would find real solutions to problems rather than the more usual "refer to dealer" of the more exotic machines.

Padi Phillips

## WAR AND GOVERNMENT: NOT IN MY NAME

The American and British assaults on Iraq, and the ongoing occupation since, have seen unprecedented numbers of people on the streets of British, American and European towns and cities to protest against these atrocities. The protests have been marked out by the ever-recurring slogan on banners and leaflets *Not in my Name!* As an anarchist I shared this sentiment, but not just as regards the war and occupation, but more importantly and particularly towards government and the state.

This is an issue particularly relevant to anarchists. In my personal experience to date, when most people become aware of my anarchist politics I am bombarded with the usual set of incredulous questions, 'but what about work, criminals, order, pollution?' I have found this to be the case even from peace and political activists on the left, who perhaps might be better informed. When I state that I don't vote one usually gets either 'you'll let the Tories in' or 'you can't complain then about the actions of the government', both of which comments show a basic misunderstanding of the principles behind anarchist abstentionism, and why I, like most anarchists, don't vote. Such people seem unable to grasp that it is the principle involved in the electoral and political process, as well as the immediate outcomes and action of government that we object to. By

this I mean that if I vote I am giving my consent to the process of politics and the structure of government and state no matter



who is in power. The politicians of the party in power are then able to use my vote as a means of legitimising a series of acts committed by the state and government which, if performed by an individual against another individual, would be commonly accepted by most people to be a crime. For instance, killing people by the forces of the state be they police, or armed forces, is under certain circumstances regarded by many people as OK ie war, law enforcement, judicial execution, but if an ordinary person kills a neighbour it would

normally and rightfully be regarded as murder or manslaughter. Taking money against the wishes of someone is called taxation (V.A.T, PAYE etc) when the act is performed by the state, but is rightfully seen as theft if committed by an individual against another individual. Of course the state goes on to use the money stolen as taxation to pursue a variety of purposes opposed by most anarchists and ordinary people ie war, the arms trade, subsidies to Big Business and the corporations, politician's salaries, politicians' and civil service inflation proofed index linked pensions, the Royal List and Royal hangers on.

Now if we could transfer the understanding conveyed in the slogan *Not in my Name* from the limited purpose of opposing the warmongering actions of the likes of Bush and Blair to the wider context of opposing all the negative and anti-social actions of the state and government, indeed to opposing the institutions themselves per se, then we will have succeeded in awakening the instinctive anarchist that resides in us all. So I say once again "war and government: not in my name!"

Jonathan Simcock



# Disposing of Reverend Father Petty Doing degradation ceremonies successfully Preston Solidarity Federation's membership problems

In May 1976, I wrote up my thesis: 'Members & Officials: Some aspects of a Trade Union Dispute'. It was based on a paper published 20 years earlier in the *American Journal of Sociology* by Harold Garfinkel entitled 'On Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies'.

How does the exclusion of Jim Petty, addressed in the Preston Solidarity Federation's letter notifying his exclusion as 'Rev. Father Petty' measure up as a competent piece of 'status degradation'? Examples of status degradation would include the following: the defrocking of a priest; a court martial; a felon being sentenced by a court; disbarment proceedings against a solicitor; the exclusion of a trade unionist from membership of his/her union, or as in this case, "we no longer consider you (Jim Petty) a member" of our political party - *The Solidarity Federation / I.W.A.*

Degradation ceremonies in Garfinkel's scheme fall within what he called 'the sociology of moral indignation' and ought properly to involve public denunciation. The curse, in Garfinkel's view must be publicly delivered: 'I call upon all men/women to bear witness that he - in this case The Reverend Father Jim Petty - is not as he appears but is otherwise in essence of a lower species.'

In this way, according to Garfinkel, the moral indignation serves to effect the ritual destruction of the person denounced, and consequently reinforces group solidarity. 'In the market of politics,' argues Garfinkel, 'a degradation ceremony must be counted on as a secular form of communion.'

Thus in the eyes of *Preston Solidarity Federation*, and presumably the national *Solidarity Federation* and the *International Worker's Association (IWA/AIT)* - all of which are united in this secular communion, Jim Petty/Rev. Father Petty is regarded as something different from what he was before November 4th, 2004. No matter that Jim Petty was in the 1980s National Secretary of the Solidarity Federation's predecessor: the Direct Action Movement (DAM/IWA). Or that he has always held the same religious views as he does now. His former identity now stands as 'accidental' to his new defrocked identity: as a member of the East London Solidarity Federation said to me 'Jim Petty was a good comrade once' or the cackling mocking response of Comrade Ron Marsden (Manchester Sol. Fed.) to favourable references to Jim Petty's past work.

In this way Comrade Jim Petty, former militant anarcho-syndicalist National Secretary of the *Direct Action Movement*, has

undergone a transformation in identity to 'Rev. Father James Petty', now publicly shunned by his former comrades.

The denouncers of Jim Petty declare themselves to be speaking on behalf of the *Preston Solidarity Federation* in their letter of denunciation delivered in the name of values they describe as 'anarcho-syndicalist'. The conduct of Jim Petty is defined as "out of the ordinary" in the letter from Preston Solidarity Federation. The letter (1.) states: 'We have recently decided to rename ourselves Preston Solidarity Federation and to rationalise our membership' (my italics). Since you have never attended a meeting, never contributed in any way and had (sic) not paid subs up to date, we decided that we would no longer consider you a member. I emailed you with this information.'

This makes it sound like Jim is guilty of non-participation in the activities of the group. It also suggests he is sending money to an outdated organisation: 'According to our last bank statement you are still sending money into the Lancashire Solidarity Federation account.' This implies that Jim's membership incompetence extends to not knowing that these groups keep changing their names and identities.

But Preston Sol. Fed. also demonstrates incompetence in their denunciation. In their letter they do not make it clear when Mr Petty was excluded. Was it when they wrote, 'We decided recently to rename ourselves Preston Solidarity Federation and rationalise our membership'? Was it when he began to stop paying 'the correct amount of subs'? Was it when they noticed that Mr Petty had 'never attended a meeting'. Or was it when they wrote: '...it has come to our attention that you (Mr. Petty) are an ordained Priest in the Anglican Catholic Church.' Or was it after "having looked at the beliefs of this Church"? they wrote, 'we find it impossible to reconcile their (sic) beliefs with those of an anarcho-syndicalist organisation and with anarchism in general'.

When it turns out that the Preston Solidarity Federation conducts their degradation ceremonies by e-mail they run the serious risk of unfavourable comparisons. A few years ago the *General Accident Company* stood condemned by trade unionists and political activists for sacking its employees in that way. The semi-detached method of expelling by e-mail and the language of 'rationalise our membership' is the language of managerialism and organisation man. It is the kind of language which invokes moral indignation from radicals and anarchists alike.

When a degradation ceremony is conducted in such a sloppy manner using

the language and methods of bossism, it runs the risk that the denouncers themselves will begin to be identified in the eyes of witnesses with managerial and capitalist values. Such shoddy communicative tactics show the *Preston Solidarity Federation* as an upholder of not only contrasting values to those of the Anglican Catholic Church (which is hardly a model of capitalist managerialism), but of promoting the rational management values which anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists historically despise.

It was argued at the Newcastle Anarchist Cultural Festival on February 11th, by Richard, a member of West Yorkshire Sol. Fed that Jim Petty is a member of a branch of a Church which opposes the ordination of women priests. This too is an issue of hierarchy and bossism: are they saying that if Jim was a woman priest in the Anglican Church then that would be OK? Homophobia was also thrown in for good measure, presumably this section of the Church opposes gay Bishops as well; again we are into hierarchies. Anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism ought not to be about careerism and job promotion, that may be of interest to consumer orientated individuals, status climbers, middle-class feminists, lipstick lesbians and gays, but it is not our job to give these people a leg-up.

Clearly the *Solidarity Federation* has got itself into a right pickle over this question of the reverend Father Petty. As usual they have been shy of going public on this matter. Their problem is that Jim Petty is well regarded both locally in Burnley and the North. In June 2003, he wrote in *Northern Voices No.1*, perhaps one of the most penetrating accounts of the breakdown in community relations and the riots in Burnley. His contribution to northern anarchism has been significant, particularly his leadership of the *Direct Action Movement* at the time of the Miner's strike.

Maybe we should be re-assured that Preston Solidarity Federation and the General Accident Company are so inept in disposing of their unwanted members and employees. In their wrong headed way they have thrown into relief a very important matter: is it possible for any organisation in a capitalist-consumer society to behave decently?

In a moment of anger in the 1930s, Ludwig Wittgenstein told his friend Maurice Drury, that if he must join a religious order, he should become a Quaker. Then, next day, Wittgenstein apologised to his friend saying he was wrong to suggest that any organisation would be more appropriate in

the present time. Wittgenstein was aware that any organisation in modern Britain, even the Quakers, would be influenced by the dominant culture. The question that *Preston Sol. Fed.* poses for us all is: is it possible for an anti-capitalist organisation such as the *Solidarity Federation* to behave better than a capitalist organisation such as *General Accident Co.*? This is a serious problem for all anarchist organisations in modern society which we should ponder given recent events.

Brian Bamford

(1.) Full text of letter.

Preston Solidarity Federation  
PO Box 469  
Preston  
PR1 8XF  
[prestonsolfed@boltlue.com](mailto:prestonsolfed@boltlue.com)

Rev. Father James Petty  
Burnley

4th November 2004

Dear Jim

According to our last bank statement you are still sending money into the Lancashire Solidarity Federation account. I have emailed you in the past to point out that you have not been paying the correct amount of subs for some time.

We decided recently to rename ourselves Preston Solidarity Federation and to rationalise our membership. Since you have never attended a meeting, never contributed in any way and had not paid subs up to date we decided that we would no longer consider you a member. I emailed you with this information.

Since then however it has come to our attention that you are an ordained Priest in the Anglican Catholic Church. It appears you have been a Priest for some time and was when you applied to join the Solidarity Federation. Having looked at the beliefs of this church we find it impossible to reconcile their beliefs with those of an anarcho-syndicalist organisation and with anarchism in general.

Please cancel your standing order to our account.

Members of Preston SF

## ANARCHISM IS BY CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

- Anarchism is a radical political philosophy that draws on ideas of liberalism, socialism and environmentalism
- Anarchism promotes voluntary co-operation and opposes all forms of coercion
- Anarchism is uniquely concerned with the politics of everyday life; with

relations between people, between classes, between countries and cultures, and between human beings and all other organisms that inhabit the planet

- Anarchism exists in many forms from "Individualist" to "Syndicalist" but all share an absolute commitment to equality and individual liberty; there is no place for party discipline or censorship in anarchist politics
- Anarchism advances wherever people establish libertarian relationships, and by extension, create libertarian communities. General elections, violent revolution and terrorism have no part to play in anarchist politics but non-violent direct action, alternative education and lifestyles, and subversive mischief-making are all popular, practical ways of promoting anarchist ideas
- Anarchism is easy enough to understand but requires constant refreshment. It is not an ancient body of dogma handed down by founders of the faith but a lively, dynamic political philosophy dependent on debate and criticism
- Anarchism can't create heaven on earth but can supply hope and inspiration to anyone interested in promoting peace, equality, justice and love

## RLP LIBRARY PROJECT

The RLP anarchist library project are appealing for gifts of books and magazines for their project in Kosovo. Anarchists have been active under very difficult circumstances in the region and have difficulty obtaining printed Anarchist material. Furthermore due to the state of the economy and unemployment it is very difficult for them to obtain foreign currency with which to purchase literature from abroad. Any gifts of books and magazines can be sent to R L Project c/o PF256, CH4142, Munchenstein 2, Switzerland.

## Radical Routes

Radical Routes grew from a small group of independent co-operatives that developed in the 1980s. These housed people who were interested in buying properties from which they could start other projects but who were either unemployed or otherwise living on low incomes. *Taking Control Events* were

organised whenever enthusiasm allowed. These were seminars on how to take control of housing and work by setting up co-operatives.

In 1988 the network took the name Radical Routes and began holding quarterly gatherings. In 1991 we adopted the role of a secondary co-operative that made it possible to raise investment centrally through a national ethical investment scheme. Previously each co-operative had raised money itself from friends, relatives and supporters and when necessary co-ops would lend money to each other. By promoting the activities of all member co-operatives we raised our public profile and at the same time we became more attractive to a wider range of investors through spreading invested money over a larger range of different ventures; thereby reducing the risk of investing money in a project that failed. In fact Radical Routes has never lost money through a failed project, a record which few if any other investment organisations can equal.

### The Values & Politics of Radical Routes

Radical Routes supports the idea of people controlling their housing and their work through co-operatives but specifically supports RADICAL CO-OPERATIVES - those opposed to capitalist systems of hierarchy, exploitation and money as power. We support co-operatives which are opposed to the destruction of the environment, committed to a positive ecological outlook and which support grass roots resistance to injustice.

We are not a charity or a commercial organisation. Groups that join are expected to be active within Radical Routes; contributing time, effort and money in the form of service payments. The amount of work expected of member groups varies according to the size of the group - at present it is between two and four hours a week.

By working for Radical Routes members help themselves and others, giving more people the same opportunities. One advantage of this mutual aid system is that member co-ops can provide effective support to one-another. Many needs and problems are common to other groups and so are understood and can be effectively dealt with. MUTUAL AID and TRUST are fundamental to the Radical Routes outlook.

We want to see a world based upon equality and co-operation, where people give according to their ability and receive according to their needs. Where work is fulfilling and useful and where creativity is encouraged, where decision making is open to everyone with no hierarchies and where the environment is valued and respected in its own right rather than exploited. We want to take control over all aspects of our lives. However, as we are not all in a position of control we are forced to compromise to exist. The specific means Radical Routes is pursuing are: