

The Newsletter

ORGANISATION OF REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISTS
FORERUNNER OF THE DAILY

published for libertarian news & views

No. 1

WHAT'S ALL THIS, THEN ?!

INTRODUCTION

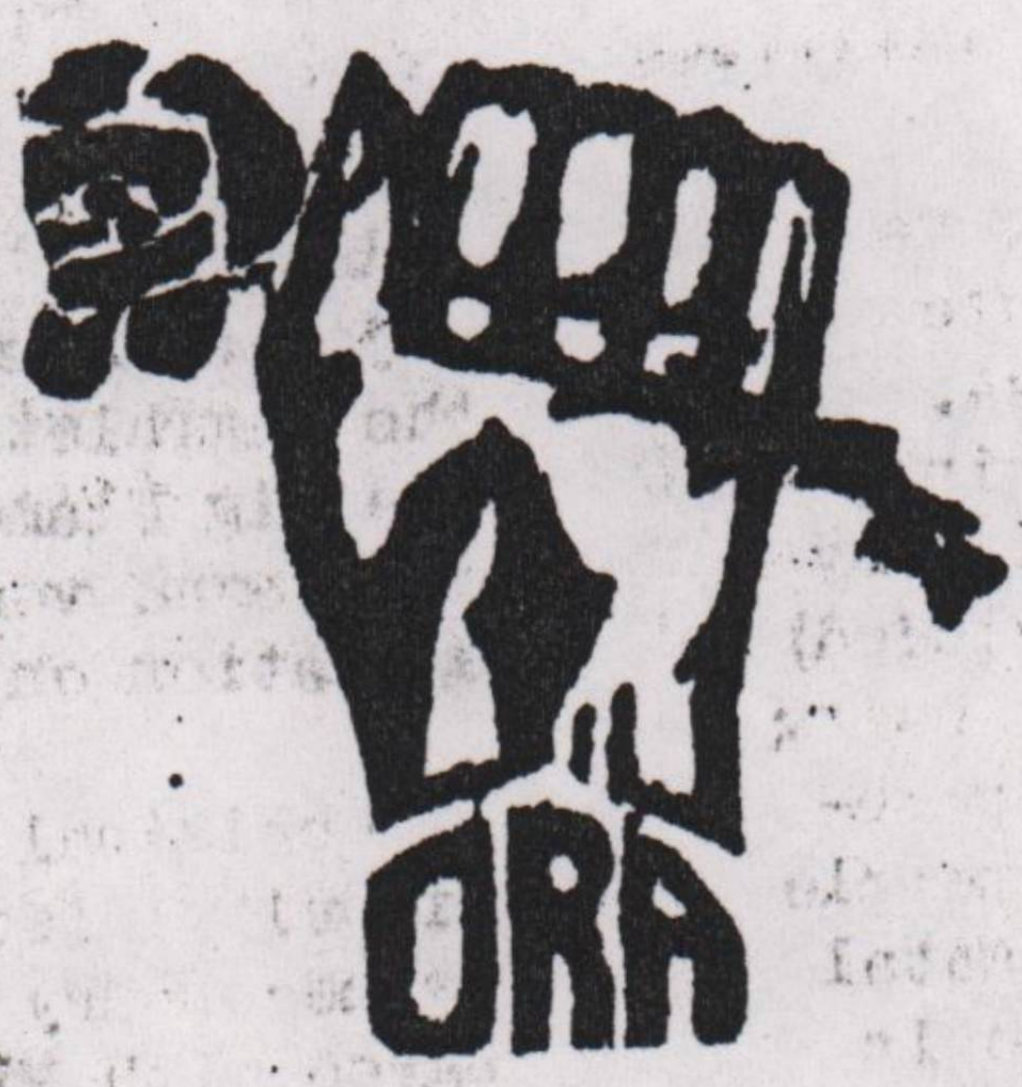
Since this newsletter is going out to over 320 contacts in the libertarian movement, some of whom associate themselves with ORA, some who have heard of us, some who we've just heard off; we thought it necessary to carry both an introduction and a report.

We apologise if you know most of it already but we thought that if we were asking people to discuss with us it would be as well to make sure that they knew exactly what we were and so on.

We are a group active in the anarchist federation of Britain, who started off being critical of the way the movt was developing, or rather failing to develop. The first stirrings of discontent came before the Liverpool AFB conference last November, when people in Lancaster, Swansea and York, separately produced sharply critical documents. The people in Swansea dropped out of the fray after their open letter was published, but their action had encouraged people in Lancaster, Leeds, Manchester and York to put a motion to the AFB that it call a 'reorganisation conference' to discuss the criticisms raised. The discussion at L'pool (what there was of it) centred around the document 'towards a history and critique of the anarchist movement in recent times' produced at York and a joint statement produced by all the critics at a Lancaster pre-conference meeting. The critics were by no means unanimous in their views (for instance there was considerable disagreement about 'expulsion' - something which the people who founded ORA could not agree), but they were at least concerned to discuss ideas

and to try and solve the problems. At Liverpool the reaction from those who disagreed tended to unite the critics, because it was so rarely on the level of sane argument let alone rational discussion.

Following the decision at L'pool to call a conference specifically on 'organisation of AFB' as asked for (well, not really a 'decision' - John Quail cut into the din and said that he would arrange such a conference at Leeds), the critics tried to develop their ideas further, people from Wigan, Stoke, Leeds, Lancaster, Manchester and York agreed to meet again to discuss problems and their solution prior to Leeds. It was agreed at the first meeting in Lancaster that ideas by themselves were sterile and that the only way we could have an impact was to organise ourselves around the points of agreement, and to put them into operation. A further meeting at York was agreed BUT the postal strike intervened. With the Leeds conference set for a fortnight hence (it was postponed, but this wasn't known til



MAY 1971—

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later) the people in York took the initiative in launching ORA, as a group within the AFB, concerned with developing revolutionary ideas and activity and with opening contacts outwards to other libertarian groups. Over 200 copies of the founding statement were circulated. (16.3.71)

The original call had suggested a new paper, 'under the control of its readers, writers, and sellers', this idea has been put into cold storage (though not shelved) by the surprise appearance of two new papers since then, and, the realisation that yet another 'editorial group in search of a movement' would not do. The decision was then taken to build up more slowly, yet more carefully. ORA, as it is now, is concerned to develop its own ideas and activity; to encourage such development through the AFB by means of pamphlets (originally supposed to be one per month - it's been 5 finished and many started in 2 so far, and is growing geometrically), leaflets, the newsletter, discussions and debates; to build a sound base of ideas so that the work can be undertaken more successfully, or at least more consciously. These activities are also intended to have an effect outside the AFB (the first two pamphlets are 'internal' but the rest are intended for general sale; the newsletter, we hope it will provide a forum for all libertarians). We see it as necessary both to define clearly the areas of disagreement so that they can be argued out politically (rather than personally) and thus help to develop libertarian ideas generally, and through this, to accustom libertarians to be willing to work together where this is possible.

This attitude was reflected in the motion put before the AFB Leeds conference at the end of April. It called for the AFB to 'open its doors' to other libertarian tendencies - this was argued as being a means of encouraging clarification of ideas and to enable the AFB to become an aid to doing some work rather than just a 'conference' irregularly and an abstraction all the time. It was never expected that this would be accepted (indeed there is no way it could be either accepted or rejected the AFB being what it is - or isn't as the case may be). It did succeed in its objectives, which were to publicise the views of the movers of the motion about the direction the movement should take (whilst maintaining the views about the way the movement should develop internally) and to make contact with other people who agreed with this, or, who at least were prepared to discuss it. At the same time ORA was making contacts with other libertarians, arranging discussions and debates, and sounding out areas of common interest in which we might work together.

The decision to start putting our ideas into practice would seem to have been the right one since we have had a good response both from people who are interested/sympathetic in the AFB, as well as some very non-sectarian greetings from comrades in Solidarity, the ILP, Socialist Current, and non-aligned libertarians. The May 8-9 Scots Conference (which won't need reporting in detail since a Statement was sent off to FREEDOM and should be published by the time you get this) welcomed ORA and promised SAF cooperation, many individual comrades associating themselves with ORA. The 'what gives' section mentions some of the results of the contacts from 'outside'.

We now seem to be a viable grouping, but the ORA people do not want to form another sect - we see our role as acting within and on the libertarian movement in general, as well as initiating our own work. In order to remain more of a network than an isolated group among all the others we are producing the newsletter. We hope it can act as a link and a catalyst not only for ORA and the AFB but also to all libertarians (it obviously doesn't matter whether the debate and co-operation we seek happens 'formally' or 'informally', so long as it does happen and ceases to be a platitude). Your reactions are therefore very important.

REPORT

list of pamphlets under 'what gives'. We will be glad to help produce/distribute useful pamphlets by people not in ORA. ORA 1, 2, 4, and 5 are nearly out of print - this doesn't matter for 1 & 2 since they are internal, but some people (us included) think 4 & 5 useful propaganda (no 5 is being revised, the author recognising some problems of style and having asked other people to help - write to Laurens Otter, 35 Natal Rd, Thornton Heath, Surrey). If anyone is able to help with production we'd be glad to hear from them.

the idea of weekend discussions seems very popular - see 'what gives'

various ORA people have produced local leaflets and comrades have promised drafts for specific occasions/situations. We hope that

-along with discussions - this will be our major emphasis in the next few months, since the pamphlets seem to be developing healthily. The Big Flame group (see 'what gives') have done some very good broadsheets for mass agitation on the Bill.

The original 'ORA group' (now happily a minority) feel that some kind of membership is necessary for fund-raising (we largely agree with Mike Malet's piece herein). We don't want to make decisions binding on anyone - the nature of ORA is up to the Nov. Conference, but we have found it easier to acknowledge donations with a receipt card - if you want to 'associate' this is one of the ways.

help break the york-croydon axis- contribute.

CORRESPONDENCE

THOUGHTS ON ORA I & 2 - Mike Malet

(A) Organizational Proposals.

i/ ORA motion for AFB Conference at Leeds, as put down in the 'ORA Contributions for the Leeds Conference'. I would support this.

ii/ ORA as tendency. As Laurens suggests, I favour ORA as a tendency within the AFB. To replace the AFB would indeed mean a purge. If the communication lines within the anarchist movement tie up - theory constructed on personality differences - this will greatly hinder activity.

iii/ Finance. Pamphlet no. I does a great service by putting this in the forefront of our thinking - where it should be. Without finances we can do nothing. I would certainly be prepared to pay something regularly. I would favour larger amounts at longer intervals (eg £1 per quarter rather than 1/6 a week - bureaucracy tends to increase with frequency). This is essential because, as you point out, there is a need to plan into the future for propaganda; not just scrape the money together ad hoc., which in my experience can cause as much friction as regular payments among the 'collected'. One LFA idea - if meetings are held a min. of once every 2 months, ask people to put in what they can afford. If the psychology is right, you'll get more than a 'flat' contribution. Income % are invidious.

iv/ Secretariat. Yes, for ORA. NO at this stage for the AFB. Let AFBIB, to whom I think you are slightly unfair, continue its liaison functions until the pattern becomes clearer. Apart from the ORA pamphlets, AFBIB is the only semi-permanent, regular thing that has emerged from the anarchist movement in recent years. I think it would be a mistake to kill it off at least until we know the future pattern of the AFB ie. we know what other organisations will come in, as their views will need to be taken into account. Also by the time such a pattern becomes clearer, we will have some experience of the running of the ORA secretariat. If ORA works other people will be encouraged to follow.

v/ Membership. I favour what I would call 'voluntary membership', ie. that membership be not mandatory for ORA (I am not here referring to the AFB in general). Otherwise, I am greatly feared that there will be a sharp and unnecessary division between ORA members and (all) non-members, which would very easily take on a personal and thence theoretical basis. I want to see the money come in - one of the main points of membership - without the battle

lines being drawn.

vi/ Voting. I'm a bit dubious about this middle point between majority rule & minority freedom. I don't think at this stage we can expect such an issue to be fully debated & satisfactorily resolved by the AFB. And also, if ORA can show the way, others would probably follow. At this stage, I think there will be some fear within the AFB of a takeover at Leeds by ORA, and bickering over the early introduction of voting into the AFB conferences. This could waste a lot of time that could be spent much more constructively on the questions of finance and propaganda. I have no objections to voting by itself, but because of its liability to abuse it should only be used where the issue is clear (a) it is desired to ascertain the strength of feeling over such an issue and (b) a minority wants its opposition to be specifically recorded.

vii/ Groups. I'm not at all happy about the discussion of the psychology of groups. So much depends on the people who found the group & how equal is their experience. The small initial group tends to acquire an 'aura' which can very easily put off newcomers. Groups do, in my experience, tend to look 'inwards' in this way, mainly for social reasons, & this has to be constantly guarded against. This is not the same thing as self-examination of a group by its members.

viii/ Anarcho-communism and anarcho-syndicalism.

Whilst advocating an anarcho-communist grouping, Laurens at the start of his pamphlet speaks only of anarcho-syndicalist bases. We should not forget that anarcho-communist organisation has been effective in the past, of the Jura watchmakers, & the Petrograd & Moscow Federations in 1917-1918. The NABAT group in the Ukraine mentioned by Peter Newell - 'asks', anarcho-syndicalist communist is apposite, as also is his mention of Spain. If comrades are interested, I can dig out some documentary material by the NABAT people. This might prove relevant to discussion on the reconciliation of tendencies within and without the anarchist movement today.

(B) Present Problems & Their Solution.

i/ Present Problems. These are well & clearly defined. The fundamental one being, to put our own house in order, the neglect of this over the last 5 years or so having resulted in our total lack of influence over the present upsurge of industrial militancy. Whilst agreeing that the Black Flag people haven't helped very much, I don't believe that comments about 'pope Albert' are helpful at all, & if more coming together is wanted, such remarks will militate against co-operation within the anarchist movement, & reflect no credit outside it. One important factor: we must not turn in on ourselves if some of the solutions fail, or are slow to mature. I am thinking here particularly of the proposal to invite other groups to

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federate to the AFB. One of the main problems in the past has been the difficulty of ascertaining the strength of all the groups, & this will have to be faced realistically in order to decide how much work can be taken on.

ii/ Solutions. These can be grouped under (a) education within (b) propaganda without, (c) AFB

a) Assuming a solution of the financial question, the proposal for conferences, schools, gatherings etc WITH AMPLE PREPARATION, is an excellent and viable one, and can be pushed forward on its own necessity. I myself would certainly be willing to speak on such topic(s) on which I am reasonably competent. The point about preparation cannot be overemphasised, but I would add a cautionary word about the result to be expected from the anarchist movement in general. For the Liverpool conference in 68, the Lewisham group circulated, a fortnight before the conference, to every group listed in FREEDOM, a copy of principles for discussion. It transpired that hardly anyone at the conference had bothered to read them - to our disgust, as the paper had been headed 'for discussion at the Liverpool Conference.' I would certainly hope that amongst activists such as ORA this would not recur. Leeds will be a test of whether matters have improved since.

b) propaganda without

I- the question of FREEDOM and other papers. The appearance of the ASA paper has been out of the blue, not only to me but also to York, Aberdeen and Montrose, at least. I cannot see what use is served by launching such a paper (a) without preparation (b) that contains nothing not said in FREEDOM. I do not consider that the production of a second paper is a matter of urgency. And if we are thinking in terms of a new paper being controlled by the AFB, or ORA, we should think very carefully about the implications of this. The history of Le Monde Libertaire is very relevant in this connexion.

I DO NOT CONSIDER THAT THE MOVEMENT IS LARGE ENOUGH TO SUPPORT A SECOND PAPER. The time & money this would consume would be far better paid by concentrating, at least, initially, until the movement doubles or so - on the production of leaflets, pamphlets, conferences etc. We should take seriously Janet Lawrence's warning in FREEDOM. She and her husband are experienced activists whose views we should weigh carefully. We should also consider that, whatever the intention of those concerned, a new paper would be seen as a rival to FREEDOM, with all the bitterness and personality quarrels that would ensue.

2. the reason that ORA is being taken seriously, and welcomed, is that it is doing what it says it is doing ie producing leaflets and pamphlets, & ensuring that these are circulated here intended, (initially) in the anarchist movement & sympathisers. It strikes me that this should grow and continue. There will be time enough for ambitious projects such as another paper & invitation of outside groupings into the AFB, when ORA is seen to work over a period of time, say a year. I would hate to see pamphlets

stop, no weekend schools & everything concentrated on a fresh newspaper. Increased correspondence between individuals/groups has a vital part to play in this increased activity.

3. AFB. As mentioned above, an early invitation to outside libertarian groups to federate would be premature. Let us wait a year. The concentration should be on the building up & viability of ORA within the AFB. To rush the experiment could be disastrous, & our concentration on producing propaganda is far more important. In that year also, we can hope that some of the cooperation with groups like Solidarity on a local basis will go forward.

(C) Future Possibilities.

(i) Some small points: blacking of goods: this will have to be re-examined in the light of the Industrial Relations Bill; it should be emphasized that reforms are certainly worth concentrating on, but should be kept within a revolutionary context; Declaration of Principles: Yes, about time. I like Peter Newell's in AFBIB I4.

(2) Some points in Laurens' analysis.

(a) The question of united fronts is difficult to decide. This must be left to the individual & the group - pre-eminently a matter for local decision. It is possible, for instance, to work on single issue campaigns with YCL, IS, even CP, provided you have precise agreed objects. The same criteria apply to workers' bodies.

(b) We must think very hard before we invite other groups into the AFB. Refusal, inevitable in most cases, will cause bitterness & suspicion. Leaving the matter open gives up more room for manoeuvre. The right of veto on entrants by individual groups could cause a lot of bother. If it is suggested that the indicated groups be invited to a November conference with this in mind, I would oppose the suggestion.

(3) Solidarity. I think, largely for historical & emotional reasons, they will refuse to federate. They are reluctant to link up with anarchists for the most part, because they are convinced that almost all anarchists are 'irresponsible'. This is part of a rather sectarian attitude in general (-----'s letter is a good instance of this suspicion), which is belied by their local cooperation in particular (see Dave Coull's report in AFBIB I4 for his & my reception at the Dundee Scottish Solidarity conference). Aberdeen is one of those situations where a personality quarrel has led to a theoretical split - leading to what you might call a 'reinforced Solidarity' position to meet anarchist attack - a great pity, this has gravely weakened the libertarian movement in Aberdeen.

SUMMARY

I. ORA Pamphlets I & 2 are most welcome, & should be required reading for any serious activist anarchist or sympathizer.

2. Don't O.R.A. bother with a newspaper now -- continue the good work of pamphlets, leaflets, communications, already started. Add: conferences & weekend schools, to be well organized.
3. As far as O.R.A. itself is concerned, the finance question must be solved in connection with a voluntary membership scheme. To work, budgeting should be on a 75-80% basis of promised contributions.
4. Powers of secretariat, & occasions of voting, must be thoroughly discussed & carefully delimited.
5. More ambitious projects, such as inviting outside existing libertarian groups to federate to the AFB, & a 2nd national newspaper, should be left until they can be adequately supported. Don't rush things - I would suggest a review of the situation in a year's time (April 1972).
6. The question of united fronts should be a matter of local, not national, decision, at least until the growth of more national cohesion. A Declaration of Principles, could, however, be tackled meantime with advantage.
7. Any definite statements in this summary or the fuller discussion, relevant to the Leeds Conference can be taken as determining my view thereat & thereon.

ORGANISATIONAL PROBLEMS - Tony Fleming

'Democratic Centralism' is phrase that makes me want to freak out. It does seem to involve very much the linked idea of work being the basis of voting power and not bigger subscribers. Laurens seems a bit ambivalent and confused about this issue, but I think in the end he does feel that the hard-
er workers have more rights.

One main point seems to be that the inactive sympathisers will, with equal vote, provide a dead weight against moves towards activism. I'm not convinced this is true. I would have thought he would tend to drop out particularly if confronted with his inactivity. The activists will surely tend to have most impact in groups anyway because more dynamic personalities (debatable, come to think of it). I would think even with free-loaders having equal votes there is a danger of the activists becoming a power elite.

Maybe I feel ultimately I would be happier to see small, active 'horizontal' groups than large ones developing power structures

This really does connect with the whole wider issue of leadership. What is the role of the activist? I think FAI theory with its readiness to take over the Spanish CNT, was suspiciously near to Leninism.

(whose elitist ideas were nearer Bakunin than Marx). I don't see anarchists as forming any kind of vanguard a la trot-SIL etc. I do see us as propagandists and catalysts. We can, and must, offer an alternative viewpoint. We must really work to get people to buy it. But the lesson of the GEC sit-in fiasco was precisely that advocates of workers' control provided a leadership and not just a catalyst. I see nothing wrong even with anarchists being shop-stewards -- in fact I'm in favour of it -- but I see a lot wrong in any spokesman position becoming a leadership position.

Likewise, within the anarchist movement, the revolutionary activist should be a catalyst rather than a leader. And thus, if the inactive stay in, their having equal rights acts as a counter to any elitist development.

In fact in some ways the problem with the anarchist movement seems to be that the AFB is a church accepting its political irrelevance. The sterile debates are a substitute for action. The present historically accidental uniting of libertarian communists, individualists and 'quietists' is disastrous in terms of effectiveness. Coherence is vital, and this applies on a local level as much as a national. Two groups with different perspectives in the same area, uniting where they have something in common, is better than one, where mutual incompatibility will make for ineffectiveness.

It would be nice to feel that the AFB could become a dynamic organisation. Maybe it will one day. But there is no structure through which reform can occur. Unless the spiritual-individualist group moves out (and though there is only a historical fluke unparalleled anywhere else, to explain their presence, there is no reason why they should) it must remain simply a medium for the exchange of ideas -- but how did the secretariat disappear originally?

The linking-up with groups like Solidarity is good. I am not sure that it wants too wide though. If it does there is the marshmallow AFB thing again. Different perspectives, and interaction between them are important: do we want an effective local based organisation or a medium of self-clarification of ideas and exchange of views. I opt for the former and therefore don't want anything too wide. But too narrow factionalism involves introspection and sterility. We need a balance.

we now have info.
on AFB/UAG --
SWF history. we'll
include if wanted

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One point and few suggestions -
from Will Warren

Just now many young people are approaching anarchy, and it is necessary to speak to them in language they understand. Anarchy is not only from the head: it is also from the heart and guts. I recall a demonstration at Mildenhall last year when we were joined by a group of lads with the black and red banner. I asked them which group they belonged to. They laughed and said none, they came from the village. In spite of this they had some of the basic beliefs and were eager to learn more. These are the kind of people it is necessary to contact and show that their vision of a law-less world is something that can be achieved.

I am glad you are attempting to decentralise the paper. This is necessary but hard to achieve. It is so easy to become centralised and cut off from the common people: almost every organisation does this to some degree. I recall how when I was in Spain during the Franco war I saw how the Anarchists were rooted in the people, ordinary people. I know theoreticians are needed but I think they should work at problems set by the man in the street, on the buses and in the fields. Take money, for instance. More and more people are turning away from the money state but cannot see the essential steps to take. Publish a paper on that and something will have been achieved.

May I give a list of a few subjects I feel could be considered in discussion papers?

- the place of punishment/correction in an anarchist state in dealing with unsocial people.

- decision making, by vote or the feeling of the meeting.

- why increase the GNP?

- how to influence others in a totalitarian society, ie South Africa.

- freedom of expression for all, are there any limits?

- the rights of children

- incentives to work

- how to deal with the 'born leader'

- trade unions, what changes are necessary.

- how to defend an anarchist system against aggression, ie. Catalonia

- the place of an authoritarian church

- and three other things.

- not to be inward looking

- not to spend time in criticising others but to be positive about steps taken now.

- organise anarchist work camps to demonstrate that people can live, work and play together without leadership.

extracts from a letter, from
Geoffrey Barfoot

I am strongly convinced that, just as we are sceptical about authoritarian myths, so we should be sceptical about authoritarian myths, so we should be sceptical about the development of libertarian myths. It has been perhaps one of the weaknesses of the historical anarchist movement that it has tended to offer alternative myths, as a study of some of the posters and pamphlets of pre-revolutionary Russia show. The destruction of all myths is a revolutionary activity. *** (prior to this comment Geoffrey was talking about the Marxian myth of the proletariat and its influence on syndicalism)

I am interested in the weekend-discussions you propose and if it were possible I should like to contribute a paper on the value of scepticism. A suggestion - would it aid the educative process if some attempt were made to contact the public during the weekend? A leaflet prepared with local conditions in mind or an open-air meeting, something like that?

I don't suppose I shall get to the Leeds conference, but I know that we in North Somerset support the idea of week-end discussions, and also a further conference later in the year.

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For Newsletter - Trevor Bavage.

Maybe one reason I think that a membership organisation is useful for a mutually interested group of people in the AFB (ie like ORA) is that it doesn't get covered with the same dung as the AFB does now and again. It can choose to associate with certain opinions because its members can decide whether or not to accept those opinions. It is their mutual decision.

For instance the AFB, having no manifesto, no body of opinion to which anarchic folk can adhere, or criticise or amend, leaves us with the informal AFB manifesto, 'anybody who wishes to be called an anarchist is one'. This brings into the anarchic field, to put it mildly, a few cranks, who call themselves anarchists

help develop ideas & work - contribute

and disseminate their opinions through the channels which most anarchists use. One of the outpourings of literature by the "crank section" is by a Paul Pawloski who has sent out with the latest AFBIB two of his "crank" pamphlets, entitled "Polyandry is the answer" (a delightful leaflet in which Mr. Pawloski advocates killing 9 out of 10 women personally), and "fucking, sucking and smoking is our religion" (a pamphlet advocating revival of Greek Hellenistic religion - contains gems such as "drinking strong wine pleases Dionysus, making love pleases Aphrodite, and smoking cannabis pleases all the gods").

This crank literature is considered amusing by most anarchists (most anarchists receive it if their address is in FREEDOM or AFBIB), and amusing it is, but one must realise that to people who are coming to think about anarchism this sort of literature will certainly stop them thinking about it (especially 9 out of 10 women). The new people are the most important aspect of our movement, they are its growth, the spreading of its ideas. We cannot afford to put them off with such crank ravings, but neither can we order cranks from the movement - no-one has that right.

We can only organise around certain opinions and say that certain people who are not of those opinions are not part of the organisation, but we are all in the AFB. By taking such an action we can preserve some integrity and also not exclude cranks from anarchism. And so we have at least one role for ORA - a collective of certain anarchist opinion but exclusive to others of doubtful, if anarchist, opinion. The ORA, if its collective opinion is attractive, might, along with the ASA provide a focal point for growth and a spreading of anarchic ideas without being cluttered up with 'cranks' or any other mad ideologies which can do so much harm, amusing though they be.

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ORA I - Alth.

I'm full of admiration for your publishing so much stuff, all of which seems very worthy and much of it I agree with. On the Leeds AFB Contribution - I agree with the need for organisation, but I am not sure whether the problem has been fully faced of what to do when the minorities 'own thing' conflicts directly with the majorities 'own thing'.

You are so right about 'the present sectarian bickering'. What seems so pointless about it is that so much of it has no practical relevance, and one is forced to see it as splitting for the sake of it. Vide the statement of principles drawn up by the N.W.Fed. - there were great arguments about it when it was drawn up and several people got quite upset about it. It was finally more or less passed by the federation,

but to no practical end that I can see. When I suggested that if this clause (the NLFs) was what we really believed we'd better start thinking about what supplies and people we were going to send out in support the discussion faded out completely.

I don't think that this kind of forced splitting can be justified on the grounds of separating the sheep from the goats as it were, as passing resolutions on the grounds that they are something that one believes in strongly and cannot compromise on, and then doing nothing about them, puts one irretrievably among the sheep.

By all means a framework for healthy conflict: let's start discussing things we have, or are prepared to, put into practice, even if it's only on a necessarily small scale. Obviously there are some problems, particularly concerning projection into the future, that people rightly feel very strongly about and can't have any real experience of. But to split groups over issues that one does not intend to do anything about seems a waste of time.

Small but important criticism: why the hell must you say 'reify' when you mean name. Are you trying to write in code, so that ignorant twats like me won't understand you? "pyhhric" guerillactions? inaccurate and again confusing.

You can't seriously mean the C.I.O.O achieved 'total' confrontation.

Leaving aside other carping criticisms think the pamphlet very good and in general agree. Especially, "unless we put our own house in order" at least to a degree which enables further evolution of ideas, we should not delude ourselves that a society can be created in our visions". Quite.

Apparently I thought when I first read it through (going by my notes) that this leaflet suggested a 'brand' of anarchism in itself, not a way of conducting it.

Apropos what I was saying before, I think well thought out efficient and frequent action might well cut down the amount of pointless squabbles. I think people feel a need for sectarian disputes sometimes because it gives them the illusion that they are doing something. This is not an indictment of anyone - I imagine we've all been guilty of it sometime or other.

bored by discussion
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back pages for anything on, (then turn back to relate both)

This piece is to let people know how things are going financially. It is rough and will be out of date when you get it - it was compiled on 11th May.

FINANCE

expenditure

Postal costs to date, which includes postage of over 200 introductory statements; nearly 130 'contributions' to the AFB Conference; nearly 100 letters; lit.orders; complementary copies. (thanks, to the many who send s.a.e.)

total £12 : 82½

production costs to date, which includes the circulars; papers, ink etc for ORAI-5, and paper and ink and stencils for stuff in production.

total £34 : 82½

sum total £47 : 65

income.

sales to date

£19 : 30

(lit. on S/R over £10)

donations. l.o.

I : 50

t.f.

: 50

j.w.

: 50

k.n.

: 50

j.p.

I : 00

c.g.

: 20

d.k.

: 50

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I : 00

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I : 00

j.n.

2 : 00

t.b.

2 : 25

f.a.

8 : 00

18 : 99

sum total £38 : 29

loans £24 : 00

cash in hand £ 14.64p.

lit in stock, Ora I (60 left out of 250); Ora 2 (60); Ora 3 (450 just produced); Ora 4 (60); Ora 5 (less than 12). In production. - computers, china, bakunin, counter culture.



AGITATOR

The Vanguard Anarchists....

"The only way of deciding what are matters of collective interest and what collectively should determine them, the only way of destroying antagonisms, of establishing agreement between opposing interests, and of reconciling the liberty of each with the liberty of all, is free agreement by consent among those who feel the usefulness and necessity of such agreement Our belief is that the only way of emancipation and of progress is that all shall have the liberty and the means of advocating and putting into practice their ideas - that is to say, anarchy. Thus, the more advanced minorities will persuade and draw after them the more backward by the force of reason and example."

Errico Malatesta (in Le Reveil, 1906)

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The attitude of self-professed revolutionaries towards those they want to get their ideas over to, tends to determine the kinds of activities they will involve themselves in, and the emphasis that they will place on their role in these activities. In turn this emphasis is reflected in the theories of how the revolution itself will be accomplished, and the role the revolutionaries will play, during and after the revolution.

Probably few people would disagree with the statement that there are (to quote Malatesta) 'advanced' and 'backward' sectors of the population - though perhaps not all of these would accept this terminology. In fact the existence of eg. Powellite dockers, has led a minority of 'revolutionaries' to declare that the revolution can never be achieved, and that it is therefore best to live the revolution in one's own lifestyle, as best one can, in a commune, as far away from the (nasty) real world as possible. (Though this is perhaps not true of all communards.)

To those who refuse to despair, the problem remains - can revolutionaries "draw after them the more backward, by the force of reason and example", without fulfilling the role of the Leninist Vanguard? In practice, is it possible to participate in eg. local activities, 'making suggestions' and 'helping', without at the same time implying that these are the 'right' ways of solving the local problems. Once things start moving towards the total (social, economic and political) revolution, will the revolutionaries become just one among many, or will they still feel that their advice (help) is necessary?

I have called this 'The Vanguard Anarchists', because faced with this problem, most anarchists, in my experience, dismiss it; "I/we don't want to/refuse to be a leader(s)." In avoiding the problem, present-day anarchists tend to run the risk of unconsciously acting the 'Vanguard' role in practice.

Solidarity appear to have faced the problem, and to have come up with a ^{clear} statement on it; "Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses....."

(point 7 from 'Solidarity - as we see it.')

Their insistence that articles in their pamphlets and magazines be written only by people working in the field being written about (eg. the analysis of the Postal Strike by a Postal worker), puts this theoretical stand point into practice. In view of this, it would seem that Solidarity has already solved the problem, both in theory and practice. However, (again in my more limited experience) even they tend to fall back on the "we only make suggestions" phrase, in arguments on this point. I think this is making a very clear division between 'advising' and 'leading', which may in practice be very fine; such that unless this is recognised, the first may lead to the second by force of circumstances.

So far, ORA has not dealt specifically with this problem - which is why I'm raising it here, because it seems to me to be of fundamental importance. It exists at all levels and permeates all actions and theories; within local groups there are some who are more experienced/well read / active than others; between groups the same holds - let alone between people in groups and local people. I therefore include here quotes from ORA publications to date, which refer to this question. Although they are taken out of context they do show the way ORA has unconsciously developed.

COLLECT YOURSELF

china, bakunin, counter culture.

This piece is to let people know how things are going financially. It is rough and will be out of date when you get

11th May.

From 'Towards a History and Critique ..' (ORA No. I.) :

"A healthy group must have two parallel emphases, it must be political it must also consciously attempt to put its libertarian ideas into practice in its own structure emphasis on the political alone can lead to an unofficial leadership of activists ... entirely unofficial but nonetheless powerful." (P.8)

"We must be able to add force and direction to industrial militancy. This entails being something worth listening to and not just nice blokes in the bar. It means being a movement workers can use in their struggles..." (original emphasis, P.7.)

"Written into discussions at group, regional and national level must be the right of minorities to organise and carry out action on any issue, at any time, in any field they may wish" (P.10.)

From '... Revolutionary Anarchism' (ORA No. 5) :

"It is therefore in no sense of elitist lecturing, in no sense that we "the enlightened", set out to teach lesser breeds without the law; that the ORA sets forth these principles. Nor do we suppose that we know everything of value, and that we have nothing to learn from others...." (P.I.)

"....it would be contrary to the whole ethic of libertarianism to try and push the workers into a preconceived pattern. ... We will not attempt to create organisational forms unnaturally and before the demand comes from the working class; but in the interim we attempt to encourage cross-industry links, and links with different sections of the same industries between militant workers, and render all aid we can to workers in dispute..... there has always been an argument raised in anarchist and revolutionary marxist circles, that industrial unionism constitutes a blueprint; that a blueprint puts limits on the freedom of the workers' control syndicalists advocate. ...if one said that workers should control industry provided that (it was) in a manner, and according to a pattern, one has previously determined, one is not in any real sense advocating workers' control.... .. If the workers chose some other form of organisation, and this is libertarian, obviously anarchists will support it." (P. IO.)

"We do not therefore set out to encourage workers to form breakaway unions, though if the initiative spontaneously arises from amongst the workers themselves, we would be against discouraging them ..." (P.II.)

It would appear that ORA has (in theory) a distinctly non-vanguard attitude towards its practice. However, I would like some reactions to these points, because I am not sure that things are as simple as this - in practice. For myself, the whole thing comes down to an ideological whole, which engenders the attitude illustrated by the Solidarity statement. Perhaps the problem is more simple in practice, and it's my semantic hang-up ... ?

R. A.



AGITATOR

FINE TUBES STRIKE, PLYMOUTH — *The Facts*

INVOLVED: T. & G.W.U. and the A.E.F. with the
AMERICAN OWNED COMPANY—MEMBER OF EMPLOYERS FEDERATION

1. Negotiations commenced 9th December, 1969 for a substantial pay rise. Concluded on 3rd June, 1970 in failure. Average take home pay per 40 hour week £13.00 to £14.00
2. Three requests to meet the management were made between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. by Shop Stewards on Monday, 15th June, 1970 to start informal talks, and prevent a mass walk out. Request refused.
3. 172 men and women withdrew their labour at 2.30 p.m. on 15th June, 1970
4. Strike made Official by A.E.F. and T. & G.W.U. Unions from 2.30 p.m. on 15th June, 1970.
5. During this period the Company introduced Job Evaluation despite Union objection on lack of consultation prior to introduction.
6. On January 1st, 1970 the Company introduced a Day and Night Shift without consultation of Shop Stewards. The Company already had in existence a Day Shift, a Double Day Shift, and Three Shift System.
7. Withdrawal at one stage of Union Notice Board facilities, and the Shop Stewards rights to sign Minutes of Consultative Committee Meetings.
8. Management held meeting with 53 "Blacklegs" and voice the opinion that they will remove all Union representation from shop floor.
9. Ultimatum given on 30th June, 1970 to 172 strikers to return to work the next day, or be sacked.
10. Management Committee taking on "Scab" Labour from 1st July, 1970.
11. Management give "Blackleg" Labour a 9% pay rise on 6th July, 1970, backdated four weeks with 4% to follow in the Autumn, plus staff status—this after 7 months of futile negotiations.
12. All approaches from Local and National Department of Employment and Productivity, the Local, Regional and National Executive of both Unions and the Regional and National Employers Federation ignored.
13. Conciliation offers by President of Plymouth Trades Council declined.
14. Conciliation offers by Dr. David Owen, Member of Parliament, declined.
15. Conciliation offers by Plymouth Lord Mayor declined.
16. EXTRACT FROM 1967 AGREEMENT.
The Management of Fine Tubes welcomes the role of the Unions as laid down by the laws of England and the agreements concluded between Unions and the Engineering Employers' Federation.

The Agreement concludes: We jointly approve this declaration and will strictly adhere to the procedure, negotiations and the settlements of dispute therein set out.

It is signed by the District Secretaries and Organisers of the two Trade Unions and by the Managing Director and one other Director of Fine Tubes Limited.

We have at all times used the proper negotiating procedure, and the cooling off period was much longer than that recommended by the present Government. If this Employer is allowed to set a precedent for the South West, then wages and conditions will always be poor in this area.

It means in simple language, if the workers in this area try to get decent wages, in line with the rest of the Country, they will get the sack.

WATCH IT BROTHER, YOU COULD BE THE NEXT

For more information on the Fine Tubes strike, contact the Plymouth branch of the A.E.F. Phone 65459

GIVE TO THE COLLECTIONS

COLLECT YOURSELF

STRIKE COMMITTEE: 48, STUART RD, PENNYCOMEQUICK, PLYMOUTH.

Overleaf is a reproduction of the Fine Tubes strikers case - which was used in York to raise funds. We're printing this and the further details below not to advertise our own activity but because this sort of case is precisely the one we took as a model in ORA pamphlet no I (pp6-7) - whether ORA was right about it will be proved by the ways you react. Have a look at the lists and see if your town is mentioned. We can produce offset-litho leaflets at cost price (York).

These are extracts from the latest bulletins of the strike committee.

"Production

From information received from inside the factory, their production is down to 40% of their normal output.

Blacking

Is being maintained at the majority of Fine Tubes customers, by the co-operation of fellow trade unionists up and down the country. Any blackleg employee now leaving the company are not being replaced.

Third Party Blacking

Is also helping us considerably.

Blackspot

At the moment is Sankeys of Hereford who supply the breweries with draw tube that goes into the 'keg' barrels. If full support in the breweries could be forthcoming, this would be the final nail in the coffin."

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As of 14.4.71

"Transport and Distributors dealing with fine tubes : these firms have been told about our official dispute.

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Fine Tubes own vehicles : Ford D800 DDH 699H (Artic.), NJY II7J (Artic.), Ford Transit JCO 788F, Ford Escort KCO 214G, Landrover RFG 545, Oil Tanker WHO 396D (blue)

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Transport Companies dealing with Fine Tubes : E. Pearse, PLYMOUTH. South West Gases, EXETER + PLYMOUTH. J. Miners, BRIDLINGTON (LJY 488H and MJY 450J). Ansons Transport, Liversedge, Nr. BRADFORD. Masons, ROTHERHAM. J. Pass & Sons, CHESTERFIELD. Drake Carriers, PLYMOUTH. Timik, Twyford, WINCHESTER. Air Products, All Districts. F. Taylors Transport, AILWORTH. Pioneer Transport, Beer, Nr. SIDMOUTH. Fearings, BURNLEY. Youngs Transport, SOUTHAMPTON. Premier Transport, Sussex Street, BRISTOL 2. Abbot & Trowers, NEWTON ABBOT. Parkin & Son, EXETER. Wragg & Sons, CHESTERFIELD. Woodbury Chilcott, BRISTOL. Cyprion Fox, Newport, MON. Chapmans, Ledbury, HERTS. United Carriers, BRISTOL. Pike & Sons, Stowe Market, ROTHERHAM. Falklands Transport, 70-80 Bridport Road, SHEFFIELD. Guest Removals, BATH and LONDON. Gregory & Sons, Ecclesfield, Nr. SHEFFIELD.

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Distributors and Customers

Fine Tubes Ltd., PLYMOUTH. Tubesales (UK) Ltd., SOUTHAMPTON. Tubesales Ltd., HOLLAND. Superior Tube Co., Morrilton, Pennsylvania, USA. Rank Xerox, BRISTOL. John Cashmore, WALSALL. R.G. Brown, Smethick, BIRMINGHAM. P.M. Steels Ltd./ Aluminium Supply Co., PBA House, Allum Way, TOTTERIDGE, N.E. Richard Wallington, British Crane Hire Corp. Mollards (BLACKBURN) All Groups. Marshalls Boxes, PLYMOUTH. Rapp Metals Ltd., LONDON. Smiths Industries, All Groups. Initial Towel Supply. E.A. Knight & Sons, Station Close, POTTERS BAR. Carlton Sports Co. Ltd., SAFFRON WALDON. (part of Dunlop Gp.) Walsall Conduits, BIRMINGHAM. Lowmoor Steels, BRADFORD †. Osbourne Steels, BRADFORD and SHEFFIELD †. Whitelands Engineering, PLYMOUTH. Coventry Tube Co. Ltd., COVENTRY. J. Sankey, HEREFORD. (part of G.K.N. Gp. All breweries receive kegs with Fine Tubes draw tubes in them.) British Syphony Co., EASTBOURNE. Stainless Equipment Ltd., Ponders End, LONDON. Stotsbury Tube & Fitting, BRISTOL and CARDIFF. Johnson & Baxter, PLYMOUTH (now distributing for Fine Tubes. Parker Pen, NEW HAVEN. Dorset Metals, Littlehall, BOURNEMOUTH. Gardener & Merchant, Canteen Suppliers.

† raw material suppliers to Fine Tubes.

WHAT GIVES

summer school

it seems that it might be possible for ORA to borrow a particularly nice place in Surrey for a weekend mid/late August.

Since we have lots of discussion papers offered we'd like to hear from people interested.

meetings

SOCIALIST CURRENT - ORA DEBATE on the questions which divide us. prob June 28th. London. - a pamphlet debate is planned also.

A comrade in E. London has suggested 'a get together of the uncommitted wanderers in the London wilderness (and ORA) to see if we have anything in common beyond a disapproval of everything extant' - details later.

ORA conference

the november conference is open to all groups individuals and tendencies who share the general position outlined in our pamphlets and statements.

trevor bavage has offered to organise it in Leeds.

discussions

many people thought the suggestion of w/nd discussions excellent; a smaller but quite considerable number said they'd like to do a paper on something; a considerably smaller number are interested in getting it together. Over to you, as it were. There will be two this year, so far.

world conf.

in Paris, august 1-4. - since the AFB has not discussed it this year (at Leeds or L'pool) there will be no AFB delegates it seems. The Scots conference (glasgow May 8-9) included ORA in its delegates anyone wanting to get in as 'observer' get in touch. with mike malet. SAF sec. (in FREEDOM)

odds

many comrades in the universities have lamented the lack of publicity material at the beginning of each academic year. The latest comrades to take this up have been Ian Neary (c/o S.U. Sheffield IO) and Pete and Marion McCartney (144 Coltman St, Hull). We'd suggest people interested get in touch with them. If anything is got together, the people in York would be interested to help with production of leaflets etc. Ideas have included, a speaker tour, a 'freshers mag'.

the AFB now has a 'press syndicate' to pass on news of new posters/leaflets/pamphlets to groups and shops - comrades outside the AFB please note. c/o Charlie Crute, 3, Providence Avenue, Leeds 6.

kill the bill

SOLIDARITY are calling a conference in Manchester - inviting all libertarians. Could be very useful. details N. London. SOLIDARITY 53a, Westmoreland Rd, Bromley, Kent.

Big Flame (78 Clarendon Rd, Wallasey, Cheshire) have out another very good anti-bill broadsheet.

soldiers T.U.

at the moment has been heavily miscled in by left labour t.u.'s and 'entrists' trots (RCL) we are doing a pamphlet on soldiers organisations, and leaflets. We need people with forces experience to help out (we have 3 but need as many tales, anecdotes as poss.) and anyone interested in using the stuff in their local camp please get in touch.

"strike"

is a very good, new, libertarian magazine. they really want to involve others and have produced a 'pilot issue' (copy from 160, N. Gower St, London NW1) which despite lousy cover has good layout and lively style (yes it does make a change). They invite people to get in touch and work with them. Well worth doing so.

can you help

the people in York have been asked by local people to help out in a fight against an inner-ring road scheme which will knock down a lot of 'poorer' housing rather than upset people with weight and influence. Anyone with experience architects, planners; people who've done similar before, please get in touch. (CONF OVER)

ORA pamphlets

produced:

- * Towards a history & Critique of the anarchist movement in recent times: ORA1 7p (post inc.)
- * Theory and Praxis in an organisation: ORA2 5p.
- * The Bombthrowers - study of terrorism: ORA3 12p.
- * Neither Washington nor Hanoi: ORA4 5p.
- * Introduction to Revolutionary Anarchism: ORA5 12p.

in production: (being typed or run off - 12.5.71)

I + I = IO : Computer Ethics 7p.

The Counter Culture 12p.

Bakunin: the Organisation of the International 5p.

China approx 25p.

examples of soldiers organisation (title not decided, length as yet uncertain).

promised

origins and development of USSR and 'socialist states' - should be out in June.

History of British Trotskyism - sometime this autumn. (plus various smaller pamphlets for particular groups eg. SC debate; Madame Trotsky's resignation from the F.I. etc - this year).

history of the Direct Action Committee;

symposia on youth culture and one on marxism; south africa; we've asked for stuff on Ireland and Spain. and lots of ideas buzzing about.

what gives some hasty additions.

John Northey and friends in Plymouth offered to use their printing machine for stickers etc. against the bill - since then they have got in touch with Fine Tubes (see article) and are helping out there - so there will be delay on the stickers. John asks for designs and ideas. 16 Adelaide St. Stonehouse, Plymouth.

CAN YOU HELP cont: - the fine tubes strikers?

- the comrades in Burnley who have just formed a group and want advice on how to start off in a difficult area (others who are isolated might have some useful tips, please send them to bob houlding, 5 Hollin Hill, Burnley, Lancs).
- keep things going, by contributing to the newsletter discussing ideas and work. we have a litho press, in York, we all need leaflets on the bill, the immigration bill, rising unemployment, the EEC, if you have ideas lets get together and turn them into stuff we can all use. theory and practice must be developed together to prevent sterile bickerings, or disjointed, once-only actions.

Big Flame (see 'kill the bill') have also produced a pamphlet on the Postal Strike and announce the forthcoming appearance of one on the recent Ford Strike.

We don't want to hog all the contacts - if you are willing to let us circulate your address please let us know (we'll people already in AFBIB and FREEDOM don't mind unless told otherwise).

NEWSLETTER

costs:

- 350 x 6 - 4 reams A3
£ 6 -
 - 1 ream A4 - 62½
 - 2 tubes ink £ 3 - 08
 - Stencils £ 1 -
 - Envelopes £ 1 -
 - Post (350 x 2½) £ 8 - 75
-
- 20 - 45½

approx 6p each

NEXT ISSUE
LATE JUNE

notes:

IF Comrades
don't think its OK
and don't respond
with pieces/help
with costs.

We'll cut size
and/or mailing.

BEST WISHES

from the production
group.

(alison, ra + Keith)

heslington, YORK

ORA, c/o ro atkins, vanbrugh college