

anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

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FIFTY PENCE

**GEORGE
WOODCOCK**
(1912-1995)
*Tributes on
pages 5 and 6*

ARE WARS AVOIDABLE?

As we go to press, there are wars going on between Ecuador and Peru, and in Bosnia, Chechenia, Rwanda, Sudan and perhaps Mexico and Kashmir. The term 'war' is sometimes restricted to conflict between established governments, and the term 'armed conflict' used when one or more of the disputants is only a would-be government, but the distinction is not important. There are also numerous 'border incidents' and 'clashes', but considering the way society is presently organised, things are pretty peaceful at the moment.

The difference between murder and war is that in murder one goes off to kill one's enemy, whereas in war one sends one's subjects to kill the subjects of one's enemy.

Soldiers who kill in war are considered less blameworthy than murderers on the grounds that, whereas murderers decide whether, who and how they shall kill, soldiers are mere mechanics. But more premeditation and planning goes into the least planned of wars than into the most premeditated of murders. More are killed in the smallest war than were ever dispatched by a serial killer. By any standard of nastiness, war is nastier than murder.

Yet wars are often written of, and spoken of, as if they are unavoidable, like droughts and earthquakes. Wars certainly appear to have been going on more or less since governments came into being some ten thousand years ago. Might the anarchist contention be right, that

governments and wars inevitably go together?

Anarchists sympathise with the aims of those who try to reconcile warring governments and persuade governments not at war to spend the wealth they acquire on better things than weapons. But we doubt whether such well-meaning efforts can have much success.

We agree with the militarist philosopher Heinrich von Treitschke that "without war, no state could be". It seems to us that without war, or at least the threat of war, no government could long survive. Within-group loyalty is enhanced by between-group enmity. War induces the subjects of a ruler to perceive themselves as a group, and the ruler as a leader within the group. Without an external

threat, subjects would think more as individuals and perceive bosses as parasites. The fabric of government would fall apart.

Many politicians are aware of this danger. Following the bankruptcy of the Soviet Union (through spending too much on the arms race) some in the West were unable to conceal their anxiety that the threat of war had receded. These are the people who now assert that Moslem fundamentalism has replaced Communism as the threat to world stability, and the assertion carries an undertone of relief. A threat to world stability is considered essential.

Of course this is not the only reason why civilian governments fear the

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THE UNGOVERNABILITY OF STATES

Everywhere you look the state is in trouble. John Major is regarded as a bad joke, Helmut Kohl can barely hold on to his coalition, Italy hasn't had a government in over a year, Clinton has totally lost control, Japan can't seem to form a government, Canada is coming unglued, Belgium already is.

One can cite many reasons for this. The global market, the rise of powerfully organised interest groups, high taxes and corruption, but these are only superficial explanations. The real reason is *modern society is innately ungovernable*. Seventy years ago conventional wisdom regarded society as too complicated for self-government. Experts and a powerful state were needed for organising and directing. Some 'experts' considered discarding democracy entirely in the name of efficiency. After several generations of rule by these 'experts' and their bureaucracies these conceptions have little appeal. More and more, popular wisdom holds the opposite opinion - society is too complex to be run by a hierarchy.

The state, having set itself up as everything to everybody, is faced with an impossible task. If society does not resolve its problem of ungovernability it will, like the poor neighbourhoods of large American cities, collapse into chaos.

Ungovernability cannot be overcome by inventing a 'new' state or a 'new social contract' as both Bill Clinton and Tony Blair would like to do. It can only be overcome by allowing people to practice self-government in their communities and in their workplaces.

This is not utopia. Self-government exists in embryo. A whole web of cooperative and voluntary agencies exist. There is a populist appeal for a genuine federalism and the growing conviction that non-governmental, non-profit agencies do a better job than governmental ones. There is recognition of the need for regional and community autonomy and the empowerment of the workforce as a means of overcoming the inter-related crises of state and economy. A social movement could be built on the anger of the populace and these embryonic alternatives.

The elite have at most five years to bring about serious reforms and let off some of the pressure building up. If they don't do this, social revolution is the only alternative. At present about 80% of the population are discontented. Should this figure reach over 90%, *and people decide to take action*, nothing can stop them. The Poles, Czechs and East Germans have shown us how to topple unpopular regimes without resorting to violence. All that is needed is the willpower and the unity of purpose.

ANARCHISTS WIN BY-ELECTION?

A frivolous person might claim that the anarchists won the Islywn by-election last week. Anarchists advocate refusing to vote for anyone to be in power, and 55% of the registered electors did not vote, as against only 19% who did not vote in the general election.

A more serious person might say everyone knew in advance that Labour would get most votes, and it rained heavily all day. The majority just didn't bother to vote, which is by no means the same as refusing.

ARE WARS AVOIDABLE?

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threat of peace. Throughout history, most rulers have been and are military men, directly in control of the armed forces and the weaponry. Civilian governments are unstable institutions, in constant danger of military takeover. They must keep the generals happy by supplying them with hardware (which is one reason why the 'peace dividend' has been so slow). They must also keep the generals busy, and find reasons to send them safely out of the country.

A century ago von Treitschke argued that war, for all its nastiness, was a price worth paying for the advantages of civilisation. Agriculture started about the same time as government, and the poorest children in agricultural society had a better chance of growing up than the richest of those who lived by foraging. Writing probably began as a method of keeping tax records. Metal smelting may even have started as war technology.

But as war technology improves, this argument becomes less and less tenable. In 1945, after atom bombs had been dropped on people, Albert Einstein said that there would always be enough people left to rebuild civilisation. But a couple of years later, when he learned about the hydrogen bomb, he said "I do not know with what weapons the Third World War will be fought, but if there is a Fourth World War it will be fought with sticks and stones".

Hydrogen bombs are reputed to exist at "sixteen hundred percent overkill", that is sixteen times enough to annihilate the



Cartoon by John Olday from *War Commentary*, March 1943. This is one of sixteen cartoons reprinted in *Neither East Nor West* by Marie Louise Berneri, £4.50 from Freedom Press (post free inland, overseas add 15%).

world. No government intends to use them (they have not even ordered an atom bomb dropped for nearly fifty years), because they threaten the rulers themselves, as well as the subjects who usually cop it. But there is no guarantee that they will never be used.

It is said that a hydrogen bomb would only be used as a last act of vengeance by

a government on the verge of defeat. So any time a hydrogen bomb is dropped on you, you can rejoice in the knowledge that your side has won.

People in general would like the advantages of technology without the danger of war. Anarchists say the only way to achieve this is to create a civilisation without bosses.

CALLING OLD COMRADES

A reader replies to our subscription reminder: "I have decided not to keep my subscription up. *Freedom* has a stridency of tone which I find difficult. It is almost as necrotising as *Socialist Worker* and the *Next Step* ... When I read *Freedom* I feel like a very old grandmother being very loudly told how to suck eggs ... Yours in solidarity still though."

Believe us, we know how she feels. We do our best to provide interesting news, but we don't change opinions. Veteran anarchists can predict *Freedom's* attitude to any topic we discuss. It is in the nature of a propagandist paper to keep reiterating the same points, stridently.

But the way to show solidarity with us is surely to encourage our efforts (and help our funds) by keeping your subscription going. When you have glanced through each issue to see whether there is anything of interest (which there often is, even for those most familiar with the ideas), you can leave it about somewhere in the hope of enlightening someone.

Please keep your subscription going.

Don't you just love being in control?

We already knew that capitalism breeds greed amongst the rich, but recent revelations about the rewards going to the 'fat cats' at the top of British industry have produced an outcry from those of us less fortunate ones merely earning a daily crust. According to the *Guardian*, Cedric Brown, Chief Executive of British Gas, is to receive a salary increase of 75% to £475,000 p.a. and also share options. At the same time British Gas is attempting to cut shopfloor wages by 16% and to make more shopfloor earnings dependent upon commissions from sales. So, British Gas, despite a declining standard of service to the public, despite worsening conditions for their workforce, are paying a massive increase to the Chief Executive and boardroom. This is justified on the grounds of higher productivity, i.e. the people at the bottom who do the work get paid less, the idle rich who sit on the boards get even more.

Anarchists have long argued that those who produce the goods and services we need, those responsible for making life pleasant and less grinding, should control their industry or service. The control also to be exercised by the community around the place of work in addition to the workforce. This would ensure that the product or service and its quality are

approved by those who in the end use it. This would prevent useless products (tanks, jet fighters, etc.) and reduce pollution. Worker and community control would ensure that the benefits of work stay with the workers and community that produce them and do not go to capitalistic shareholders.

Working people can take a step towards such control by insisting that the funds invested in their pension schemes be brought under their own control, and that these funds be invested in socially useful products and services. Pension funds control some £30 billion in UK equities. Pension fund annual general meetings provide the forum to make such proposals and to ask awkward questions about the ethics of existing investments. Pension funds could be used to fund worker cooperatives, a proper transport network, housing, housing cooperatives and associations, alternative and sustainable energy projects, food cooperatives. It's our money, so it should be used for our, and not capitalists, benefit. Those of us still members of trade unions could ensure that local branch supports move to bring pension funds under workers' control and start the process of moving off our collective wealth into schemes which enhance the libertarian revolution.

IN BRIEF

A few British elm trees survived the devastation of Dutch Elm Disease in the 1960s, most of them in urban woodlands too far from other elm trees for the infection to reach them. One such elm refuge was Pollock Park in South Glasgow, where most the elms were cut down on Valentine's Day for the M77 motorway extension.

A group of environmentalists, the self-styled 'Pollock Free State', were camping in the wood, supported by local people who objected to the devastation of their community for the convenience of car commuters from the more affluent suburbs. The tree-cutting contractors, however, arrived before dawn accompanied by 200 police and 100 security guards, and took the resistance by surprise.

As on other motorway schemes, most of the security guards were recently recruited unemployed men forced to accept any job on pain of losing benefit. They did not perform their job with any enthusiasm, and a dozen actually joined the protesters.

A spokesman for Wimpeys, the motorway builders, told press that the reason for the huge gang of police and security men was to protect protesters from injuring themselves. Four protesters were arrested.

Muammar al-Gaddafi has had a new book published about his social ideals, said to combine elements of anarchism with ideas taken from Marxism and Islam. The Constitution of Libya is in fact quite anarchistic, apart from subjecting women to men. Decisions are made by a myriad of local assemblies, of which every citizen is a member. Matters of national importance are decided by adding up the decisions of the communal assemblies. Gaddafi himself has no official position, but is ready to give advice if the assemblies ask for it.

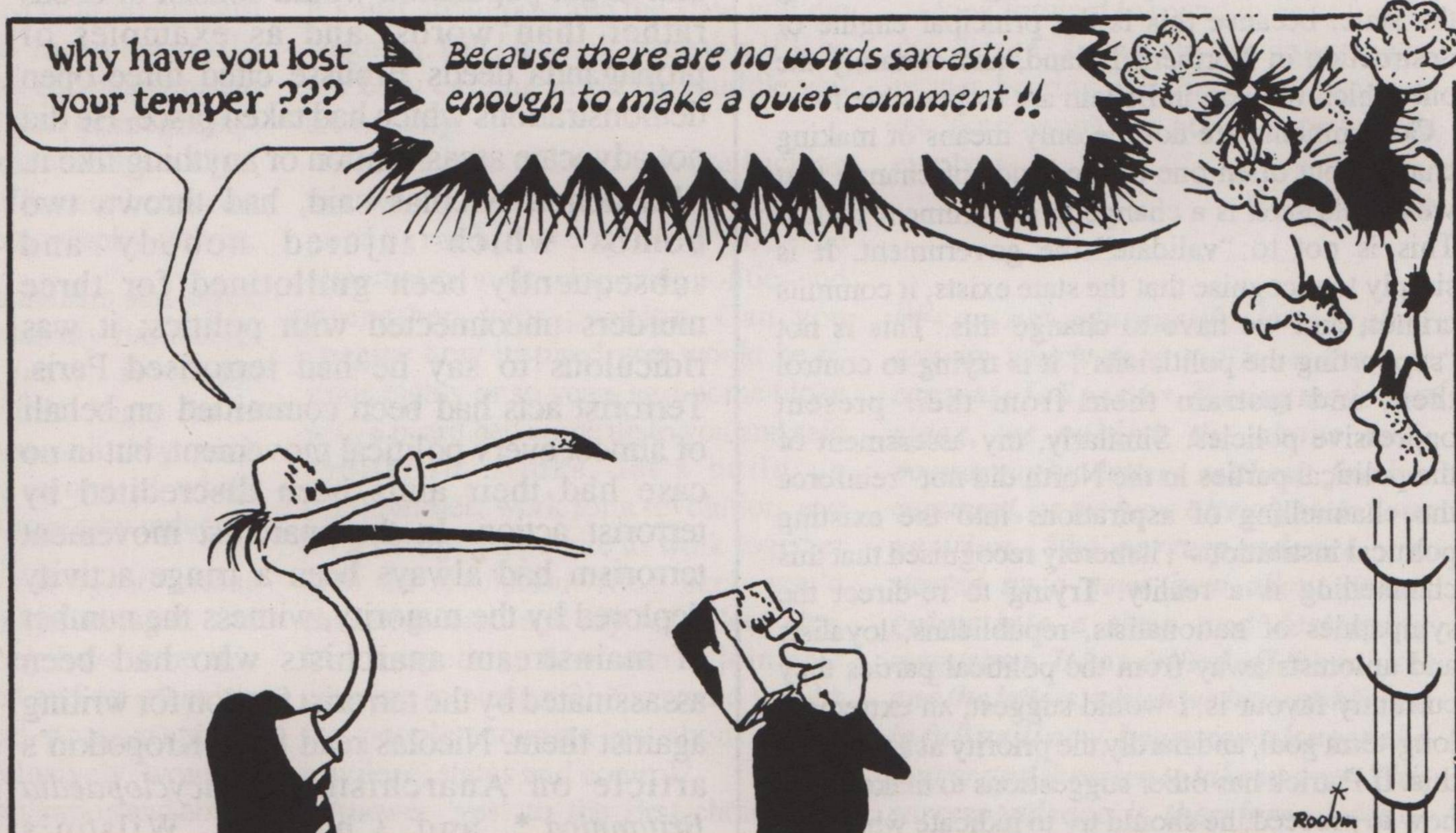
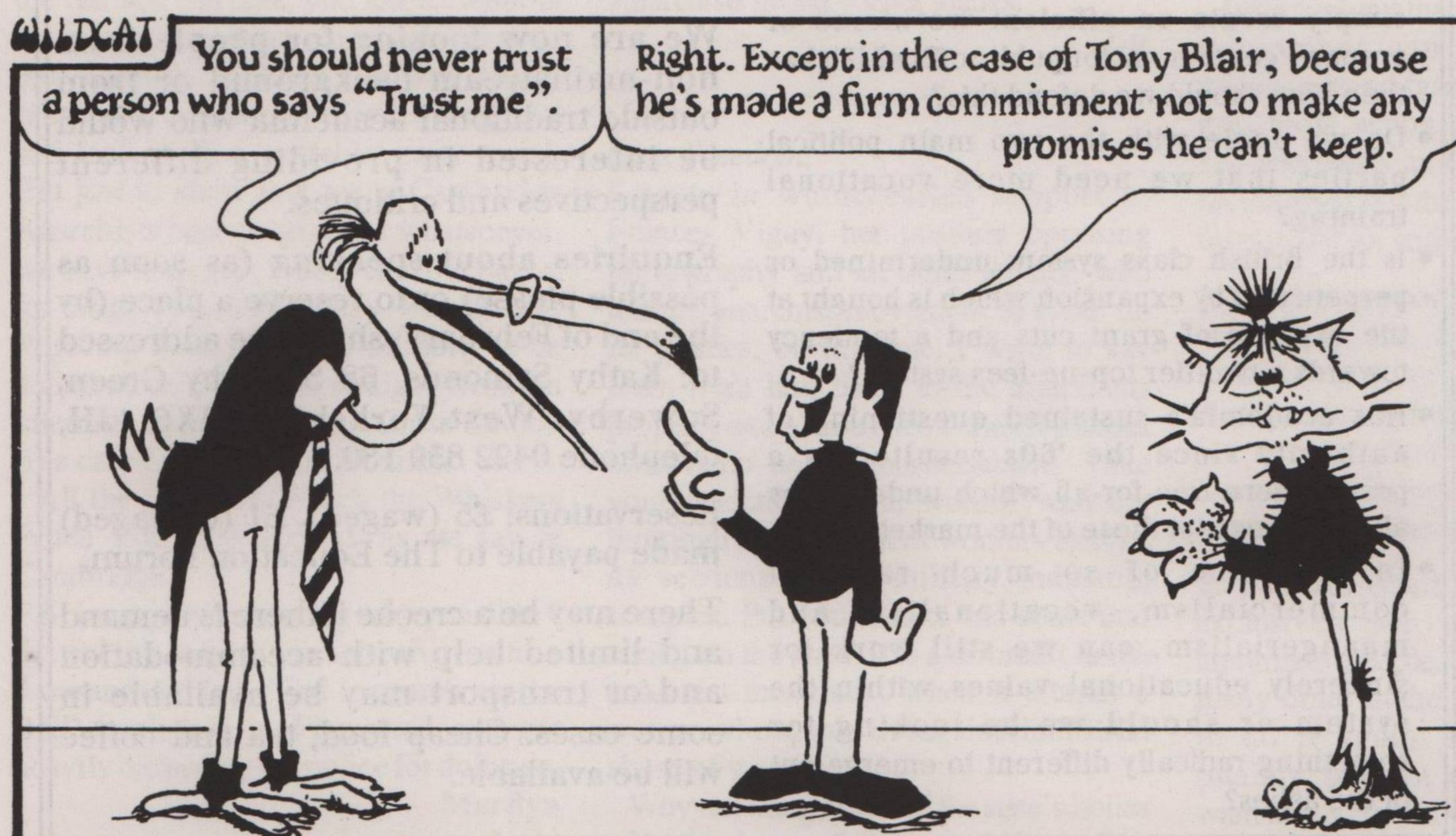
Everybody understands, however, that Gaddafi is the boss and the Constitution is a game to please Gaddafi.

Most directors of big public companies are also non-executive directors of other companies. Non-executive directors attend board meetings and have a say in how much executive directors are paid, but take no part in the running of the company.

A firm of pay consultants, Sedgwick Noble Lowndes, has published a survey of how much is paid to 311 non-executives in 102 companies they advise. The overall average is £960 a day, and the average for big firms £1,250 a day. Non-executive chairmen of big companies get £1,900 a day.

About half these non-executive directors are full-time executives elsewhere. The other half have to manage as best they can on multiple non-executive directorships.

Those who actually produce the wealth are lucky to earn in a year what the fat cats can make on the side in three weeks, but grumbling about it is called the 'politics of envy'.



In the course of his letter, Patrick Nicholson raises some important issues, which deserve wide debate, as well as making some criticisms of my article on Ireland (*Freedom*, 14th January 1995) and of the peace group Negotiate Now. First, to dispel some of the distortions and misunderstandings: neither Negotiate Now nor myself have ever "applauded three gangs of murderers" in Northern Ireland, nor have we ever "apologised for any of the political groupings involved". I did say that Sinn Fein's proposals to the British government were a "fairly modest package" and should be taken as valid among decent people, but, as Patrick well knows, I was referring only to their immediate post-ceasefire proposals on improving human rights in Northern Ireland, better provision for Irish language speakers and decisive action against employment discrimination. I was not referring to their stance on the broader issues. Finally, my article was written some considerable time ago (long before it was published), before the new breed of loyalist politicians in the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party had made their mark. It would no longer be completely accurate to say that "it is difficult to see major figures on the Unionist side willing to make the compromises necessary". David Ervine and Billy Hutchinson are not yet "major figures", but they are getting there.

On the substantive issues: Patrick criticises me for presenting the British government as the "main lever for change", thereby "validating the government's role as powerbroker". Governments and political parties "are not the only means of achieving change", Patrick informs me, and there are other options beside "returning to the terror or supporting the politicians". This criticism is based on a misreading of my article. Nowhere did I suggest that governments and parties are the only means of achieving change, nor did I advocate "supporting the politicians" in their manipulations. What I did say was that people here in Britain have a responsibility for what the British government is doing in the North of Ireland, and we have an acute responsibility at this time to try to pressure the government in the direction of peace and justice rather than the current oppression and inertia.

We the British people can make changes in Northern Ireland more possible by removing the dead hand of the Tory government from the political process, and by insisting on equal treatment of the contending groups insofar as this lies in the hands of the government. It is up to them what kind of agreement they come up with; it is up to us to ensure that the environment for their negotiations is as benign as possible - this does not include plastic bullets, night raids, harassment at ports of entry, harsher policies towards political prisoners, continuing employment discrimination against Catholics, inaction over miscarriages of justice like the Casement Park Accused or the remaining member of the UDR Four still in prison.

The plain fact is that the British government is in control of the Six Counties of Northern Ireland, and is fully responsible for what happens therein (and for the fact that the political entity of 'Northern Ireland' continues to exist). We are responsible for what the British government does, in the sense that if we continue to pay taxes (through VAT if nothing else) and we do little to obstruct state repression, we are enabling the Government to do what it does and offering little resistance. Therefore we have a duty to try to understand what has been happening in Northern Ireland, what is happening now, and what could happen in the future. If we care about others, we also have a duty to try to influence the course of state policy to try to ensure the best outcome for the people whose lives we have disfigured and damaged (I include Unionists here as well as Nationalists). Our actions, as citizens, can help to make social change, and can save lives. But they can only do this by restraining and redirecting the state, because this is the principal engine of destruction in Northern Ireland, and certainly the one which we here in Britain are responsible for.

Governments are not the only means of making change, but often one of the kinds of change that we should seek is a change in government policy. This is not to "validate" the government. It is simply to recognise that the state exists, it commits crimes, and we have to change this. This is not "supporting the politicians", it is trying to control them and restrain them from their present oppressive policies. Similarly, my assessment of the political parties in the North did not "reinforce the channelling of aspirations into the existing political institutions", it merely recognised that this channelling is a reality. Trying to re-direct the sympathies of nationalists, republicans, loyalists and unionists away from the political parties they currently favour is, I would suggest, an extremely long-term goal, and hardly the priority at a time like this. If Patrick has other suggestions to make about how to proceed, he should try to indicate what they

Justice and Peace in Ireland

The article with the above title published on 14th January 1995 was adapted from an essay in a recent pamphlet edited by Milan Rai, Gill Allmond and Andrea Needham - *Making War, Making Peace: Personal Experiences of the Conflict in Ireland, with IRA ceasefire supplement* - available from Freedom Bookshop at £1.80 (please include 10% inland, 20% overseas for postage and packing).

In our 11th February issue Patrick Nicholson replied at length and invited Milan Rai's reply.

are. It is difficult to know what steps can be taken that do not in some way involve changes in government policy or the positions of the political parties in the North of Ireland.

The next point concerns Negotiate Now (NN). Patrick suggests that NN "appears to support the stance of one of the political parties" and is therefore not able to pursue peace. The issue here is preconditions to negotiations. Should there be any preconditions to negotiations between all the

parties to the conflict? If so, what form should they take? There are three possible positions one can take: no preconditions at all, preconditions only on some of the parties, or preconditions on everyone. The government and the Unionists say that there should be preconditions, and that they should be imposed upon the IRA alone (disarmament). Sinn Fein says that there shouldn't be any preconditions, but if there is to be disarmament, this should be imposed on everyone equally and simultaneously

PUBLIC DEBATE ON ANARCHO-TERRORISM

Seventy-odd people attended the meeting at Conway Hall, London, on 17th February. Peter Cadogan and Nicolas Walter presented in person the debate they had begun in the columns of the *New Statesman* last November. Here is a brief report.

Peter Cadogan said that from 1886 to 1896 the anarchists in London were at the centre of the labour movement, on the committee of the Fabian Society and so on. In 1896 a meeting in London of the Second International took the decision not to admit the anarchists, and they have been excluded from the labour movement ever since.

The reason for their exclusion was that anarchism in continental Europe had adopted assassination - or "propaganda of the deed" as it was called by the Swiss anarchist Paul Brousse - as the main means of expression. The murderer Ravachol terrorised Paris in the name of anarchism, and an anarchist bomb in Italy in 1921 led directly to the dictatorship of Mussolini.

British anarchists were not involved, but refused to condemn anarcho-terrorism on the continent or even to acknowledge its existence, and have since tried to pretend it never happened. That is the main reason why they have so little influence: "They are in a ghetto of their own making".

"I call upon everyone here to express, renounce and spurn the anarcho-terrorist tradition", opening the curtain on anarchist history, so that the anarchist movement may flourish once again.

In response Nicolas Walter read out the actual article in which Paul Brousse first used the expression "propaganda of the deed". As Brousse saw it, the aim of anarchism was to foment revolution among the poor workers and peasants, many of whom were illiterate, and few of whom would have time to read propaganda tracts. Effective propaganda to that target population would consist of deeds rather than words, and as examples of propaganda deeds Brousse cited three open demonstrations which had taken place. He did not advocate assassination or anything like it.

Ravachol, Nicolas said, had thrown two bombs which injured nobody and subsequently been guillotined for three murders unconnected with politics; it was ridiculous to say he had terrorised Paris. Terrorist acts had been committed on behalf of almost every political movement, but in no case had their aims been discredited by terrorist action. In the anarchist movement terrorism had always been a fringe activity deplored by the majority, witness the number of mainstream anarchists who had been assassinated by the terrorist faction for writing against them. Nicolas read from Kropotkin's article on Anarchism in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,* and Charlotte Wilson's

Anarchism and Outrage,* to show that British anarchists neither advocated terrorism nor sought to deny its existence.

Peter Cadogan, Nicolas said, "does not know what anarchism is or what it was". He did not mind Peter's fantasies appearing in *Freedom*, where readers would know enough about anarchism to make judgements, but he objected to them appearing in the non-anarchist press where people could be grievously misled by their ignorant stupidity.

Interesting contributions were supplied from the hall by people who identified themselves as associated with the Class War Federation, the Anarchist Communist Federation, the M11 Resistance Group, London Anarchist Forum (convenors of the meeting), South Place Ethical Society (proprietors of Conway Hall), the William Blake Society, Freedom Press, and no group. Following the lead of the platform, no punches were pulled in the words, but the tone of voice was unfailingly affable.

A useful and entertaining meeting.

DR

* Kropotkin's *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article is reprinted in *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism* (£1.75), and Wilson's *Anarchism and Outrage* in *What is Anarchism? An Introduction* (£1.95), both published by Freedom Press.

(disarm the RUC and the UDA and the UVF and all the Protestants who hold guns legally, as well as the IRA).

So all three options have been taken. As a matter of logic, it is impossible to take one of the three choices without supporting one of the political parties (unless you want to impose preconditions only on the government and the Unionists but not on republicans). If you select Option A, you echo Sinn Fein; Option B, the Official Unionists; Option C, SF again.

If Sinn Fein had remained committed to one-sided preconditions before negotiations, it would be possible to choose either Option A or C and not support a political party, but unfortunately the republicans have in the past few years moved in the direction of compromise and greater respect for others, so people in Britain no longer have this luxury available to them. We have to make up our minds which position seems to us both right and most likely to achieve peace, without worrying who else supports it. Unilateral nuclear disarmament was right even when pro-Soviet Communists supported the demand (and remains right today). 'No preconditions before negotiations' is an equally uncompromising and realistic demand.

Finally, the matter of my "well-written republican journalism". My impression is that one of the main factors deterring people from taking a critical stance on Northern Ireland (indeed, from taking any stance whatsoever) has been the fear of being labelled a republican sympathiser. Criticism of the state and independence from state propaganda about the war inevitably attract such smears, and anarchists and peace activists should be slow to join in the mud-slinging. Is there any basis in my article for the tag? I would like to draw attention to one short passage: "In what direction should the constitutional question go? Reasonable people may differ." In other words, Unionism is a reasonable position. If this sounds like republican journalism to Patrick Nicholson, I suggest he gets hold of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.

The problem is that, at the moment, Sinn Fein is putting forward rational and long-overdue proposals which deserve support, and the Unionist political parties are not - and neither, to a large extent, is the Government. If my article reflected that, it was not a reflection of my sympathies, but of reality. Patrick needs to show that I have distorted reality in favour of the republicans. If he can't, he should withdraw the charge. Let the discussion centre on the issues, not on name-calling. Smearing people is unnecessary and merely adds a layer of intimidation to the debate over Northern Ireland which is scarcely needed. People are already steering wide enough of the issue.

The important point which we all surely agree on is that there is a possibility that the Irish war can be ended in the next few years, and we have a responsibility for trying to see that come about. Whether we are in the PPU or Negotiate Now or Troops Out or 121 or Freedom or the ACF, or indeed the Labour Party, we will be judged harshly if the war returns and we did nothing to stop it.

Milan Rai

WHAT IS EDUCATION FOR?

A conference hosted by students for anyone interested
22nd/23rd April 1995 at the University of Bradford

Higher education is in crisis. In the rush to expand there is now an increasing feeling that we are losing any sense of the purpose of education and that many questions remain not only unanswered but also, more worryingly, unaddressed.

- Has formal education ever done more than simply create an efficient workforce or prepare 'gentlemen' for public office? If it has then how should we defend this?
- Do we agree with the two main political parties that we need more vocational training?
- Is the British class system undermined or perpetuated by expansion which is bought at the expense of grant cuts and a tendency towards a two-tier top-up-fees system?
- Has academia's sustained questioning of authority since the '60s resulted in a post-modern free-for-all which undermines all values except those of the market?
- In the face of so much rampant commercialism, vocationalism and managerialism, can we still work for sincerely educational values within the system or should we be looking for something radically different to emerge out of the ashes?

Speakers so far: David Beetham, Alan Carling, Michael Cohen and Colwyn Williamson, Roger Fellows, Paul Rogers, Colin Webster and Mike Peters, Tom Steele. Also a voluntary drama workshop about education as empowerment run by Maggie Dawson.

We are now looking for people from non-mainstream background or from outside traditional academia who would be interested in providing different perspectives and critiques.

Enquiries about speaking (as soon as possible please) or to reserve a place (by the end of February) should be addressed to: Kathy Symonds, 68 Sowerby Green, Sowerby, West Yorkshire, HX6 1JH, telephone 0422 839 180.

Reservations: £5 (waged), £1 (unwaged) made payable to The Education Forum.

There may be a creche if there is demand and limited help with accommodation and/or transport may be available in some cases. Cheap food, tea and coffee will be available.

Little Boy Blue

All those long years ago before the first 'innocent bystander' had been murdered for the unity of Holy Mother Ireland, Yves Klein made his leap into the void. Not metaphysical but physical in that that happy witty Parisian swan-dived off a rooftop in that year of our Lord two years before, at the age of 34, he solved the theological ancient question by turning in his royal blue paint pot and dying. Literally. Truth must be told in that though Yves did the swan-dive off a rooftop willing friends and admirers were grouped below to catch the falling body. And, à la Trotsky and his murderous Uncle Joe, the catch as catch can group receiving the falling genius were painted out of the photograph, leaving only Yves' body flying angel-fashion to an unencumbered pavement. Yves Klein was no artist, but an entertainer and a gifted performer. Those seeking to be entertained flocked to him, if one could move in his circle or to his work gallery-wise, if one was geographically able, and my pleasure was that among the wine shops and the pornographic shops physical and literary that made Soho a necessary part of one's life was the art gallery in D'arblay Street.

Run by a tall and good looking, it is said, transvestite, it was like Messen's Bond Street London gallery, a place of pleasure and excitement to visit, for while Messen's surrealist gallery was decayed bourgeois decadence the crowded narrow D'arblay Street gallery offered new meats to the jaded intelligence. A Fourth Dan, Yves declared himself a master of infinity. He published his own newspaper containing nothing but his own writings and ideas. There are those among us, as Jesus was wont to say, who in the dull realities of their living will mutter at the back of the crowd demanding of their indifferent neighbour why this man was important in that he sold off space and issued

receipts on gold leaf, half of which he threw into the Seine, and where he walked the Town and his happy frau, the demi monde and the press and the art dealers followed in his steps and if you wail 'why?' he raised his trivialities into an art and in doing so gave pleasure without hurt and, comrades, among our own sectionalised grouping united only in a common hatred of each other who dare make that claim. I am pausing to eat some cockles, drink a can of Long Life beer and watch the television, 'Jacques Pepins' recipes for guava paste on toast'. Yves Klein was a master of the single gimmick, and this is no crime, for in politics and in advertising it is a common fault. Yves's gimmick was the use of royal blue paint and in that he claimed that he had made contact with pure colour and space and he painted everything but the kitchen sink with it, and the crowd loved him for it. In that small gallery in Soho one saw A4 size frameless canvases soaked in royal blue paint at a dealer's price of fifteen guineas for 72 square inches, and in 1995, comrade, you could not afford them with all your combined student and/or social security grants, for Yves Klein and his royal blue are part of the world art market and when you speak hush your voice, man, and speak in hundreds of thousands of yen or dollars.

Yves Klein's major exhibition, 'Leap into the Void', is now supporting the walls of the monstrous Hayward Gallery and wall after wall holds the royal blue, nothing else but, canvases. Squares and Golden Means they fill, wall after wall, dazzling slabs of royal blue as infinity comes to grey raining town. But for the academic there is your 'true' art, for

decorating the hand-out for the exhibition is an all royal blue headless flying figure. It is there within the Yves Klein exhibition, an 18 inch plaster figure soaked in royal blue, but sadly Yves only dunked a small piece of plaster in a pot of royal blue for the figure is of the Victory of Samothrace and is said to have been carved by Pythokritos of Rhodes in



Anthropometry performance at the Galerie Internationale d'Art Contemporain, Paris, 1960.

the second century and is at the moment within the walls of the French Louvre, all eight foot of marble, but if the surrealists can take the piss out of Leonardo's Mona Lisa then Yves can dunk a small factory figure by Pythokritos of Rhodes, second century BC, for plaster, like political manifestos, are perishable, comrades. Yves's Pauline Road to Damascus in relation to the yen and the dollar art-wise was in Paris on 9th March 1960 when he produced his anthropometry paintings. No longer the Andy Capp paint-roller but volunteering nude women who agreed to be covered in royal blue paint and then to create Klein's huge royal blue abstracts by pressing or rolling on the canvases. These great smears of royal blue are beyond your worn leather purses, comrades, but you can state 'this is not art' and then storm off in a huff, outraged. But, comrade, their value is subliminal in that if loaded with the world's wealth, the penthouse beautiful and all the guava paste on toast that your guests can eat, one can display a Klein anthropometry royal blue abstract upon one's William Morris papered wall knowing that only you are conscious of the fact that it is a subliminal erotic painting. There in our world of the fundamentalists, the politically conscious and the smashing of the bookshops, Oscar Wilde thou should be living, pre-prison, at this hour. Murder for moral scabby reasons is now accepted as acceptable from the anti-abortionist to the gunmen of Holy Ireland, way, way across Western Europe, for the aesthetic acceptance the human figure viewed for pleasure must be veiled as a subliminal abstract with infinity's royal blue paint. The Hayward Gallery's Yves Klein 'Leap into the Void' is trivia by a gentle, witty and fun-loving artist and one is well rewarded in beating one's path to the Hayward's louring concrete doors and one was wet-eyed, rainwise, as one stood in the drizzling rain with but fifty private viewers over-full with free orange juice as the press camera clicked and the fine rain spattered one's face, then to applause as hundreds of royal blue balloons were released to float infinity-wise through London's falling grey rain. And like the blue balloons we drifted away on our own dreaded roads to Samarcand carrying a Yves Klein royal blue balloon, blurred figures in a blurred townscape, meat for the painting postcard trivia of the French Impressionists. A wasted day but a fun day, for one dreads the morrow when the politically conscious and the fundamentalists will take over and in the White Hart pub they will discuss the anarchist society and in the puddle of Guinness on the pub table I see the puritans smashing the stained glass windows and banning the theatre, and there will be no cakes and ale and no dancing on the village green. Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn.

Arthur Moyse

Through the Anarchist Press

Recently I spent a considerable time (yet another bonus of not reading the gutter press) studying the works of Thomas Kyd, the Elizabethan dramatist who is probably most admired for *The Spanish Tragedy*. I was fortunate enough to peruse the 1592 edition printed by Edward Alde, for Edward White. Alas, the name of the author is not revealed. It is only through scholarly surmise, even innuendo, that one of the best playwrights has a name at all. Similarly to Shakespeare, not a single line of his writing in his own hand remains and the only scrap of evidence that he existed at all is a clumsily written description of the contents of his desk, which he shared with Christopher Marlowe, after his chambers were raided by the police spy and this written 'evidence' I have also seen.

Elizabeth I, Good Queen Bess, was a monarch controlled by her secret police and even tricked into policies by Walsingham, head of the snooping department. Letters forged by him led to the execution of Babington and his followers and then subsequently to the killing of Mary Queen of Scots. A recent article in *Freedom* attacks the republican Cromwell for the suppression of Catholics in Ireland. Cromwell inherited the situation. The first blame must go to the secret police and Walsingham, for it managed to sever the reconciliation of religious groupings during a period of great cultural distinction and comparative tolerance. To bring the matter into perspective awaits the anarchist historian, but it should be mentioned at this stage that Elizabeth I was not an absolute monarch, that her hand was forced by her manipulators and clearly she had to live with the knowledge that her father, Henry VIII, when Elizabeth was three years old engineered the killing of her own mother.

Strange as it may seem, that period of Enlightenment left no manuscripts by Thomas Kyd, who nevertheless is credited with numerous plays. It is also asserted that

Kyd wrote poetry. F.S. Boas in his *The Works of Thomas Kyd* mentions (page xxv) that there is still extant in the British Museum "what may be a specimen of his non-dramatic hack work". It is a slim pamphlet printed by John Wolfe in 1586 which contains three stanzas written by Chidioth Tychborne on the eve of his execution (Tychborne and six others, including Babington, ascended the bloody scaffold on 20th September 1586). There is a virtuous answer to Tychborne's poem on the opposing page entitled 'Hendecasyllabon T.K. in Cygneam Cansionem'. Boas thought 'T.K.' could read for Thomas Kyd because some of the phrases are ones "of which Kyd is fond" such as "thy hope, thy hap and all" and also "time trieth trueth and trueth hath treason tript" and echoes of both phrases are to be found in Kyd's authenticated works. This versified answer is certainly the work of a hack, a practised hand who can certainly turn out the ringing phrase and to whom it matters little whose side he may hurt or praise.

Even here the past is obscure. Kyd himself is a mystery, perhaps the author of an early very popular version of *Hamlet*. No copy remains. It would take a lifetime's devotion to unravel the facts. How much was lost in that police raid will never be known. But this poem, so-called, is Y.K.'s own fault, nobody else's. Tychborne says (and I find his poem moving):

"My thread is cut, and yet it is not spunne"

T.K. venomously replies:

"Thy ill spent youth thine after yeares hath nipt,
And God that saw thee hath preserude our Queen,
Her thread still holds, thine perisht though unspun,
And she shall live when traitors lives are done."

A pamphlet produced in 1964 which purports to be a copy of Tychborne's elegy and T.K.'s answer, although handsomely produced needs yet to be "corrected and amended of such grosse faults as passed in the first impression". The 1586

original is in the British Museum, a forerunner of the gutter press, decorously printed.

Revenge personified is the theme of *The Spanish Tragedy* and is given utterance in the words of humans. The concept does not allow for the acknowledgement of emotion. This idea is now alien to us, a concept we can hardly contemplate. Through the thickening of our *alma mater* the voice of bygone ages hardly penetrates at all.

Chidioth Tychborne has no entry in that usually most reliable *Dictionary of English Literature* (W. Davenport Adams) and I haven't found any other example of his work. As to why human beings collectively both try to preserve and destroy all proofs of achievements has puzzled me more than anything else. The manifold brain of humanity had so many knocks from left and right that I shudder to think what will be our heritage when the anarchist reason will at last shine upon us all.

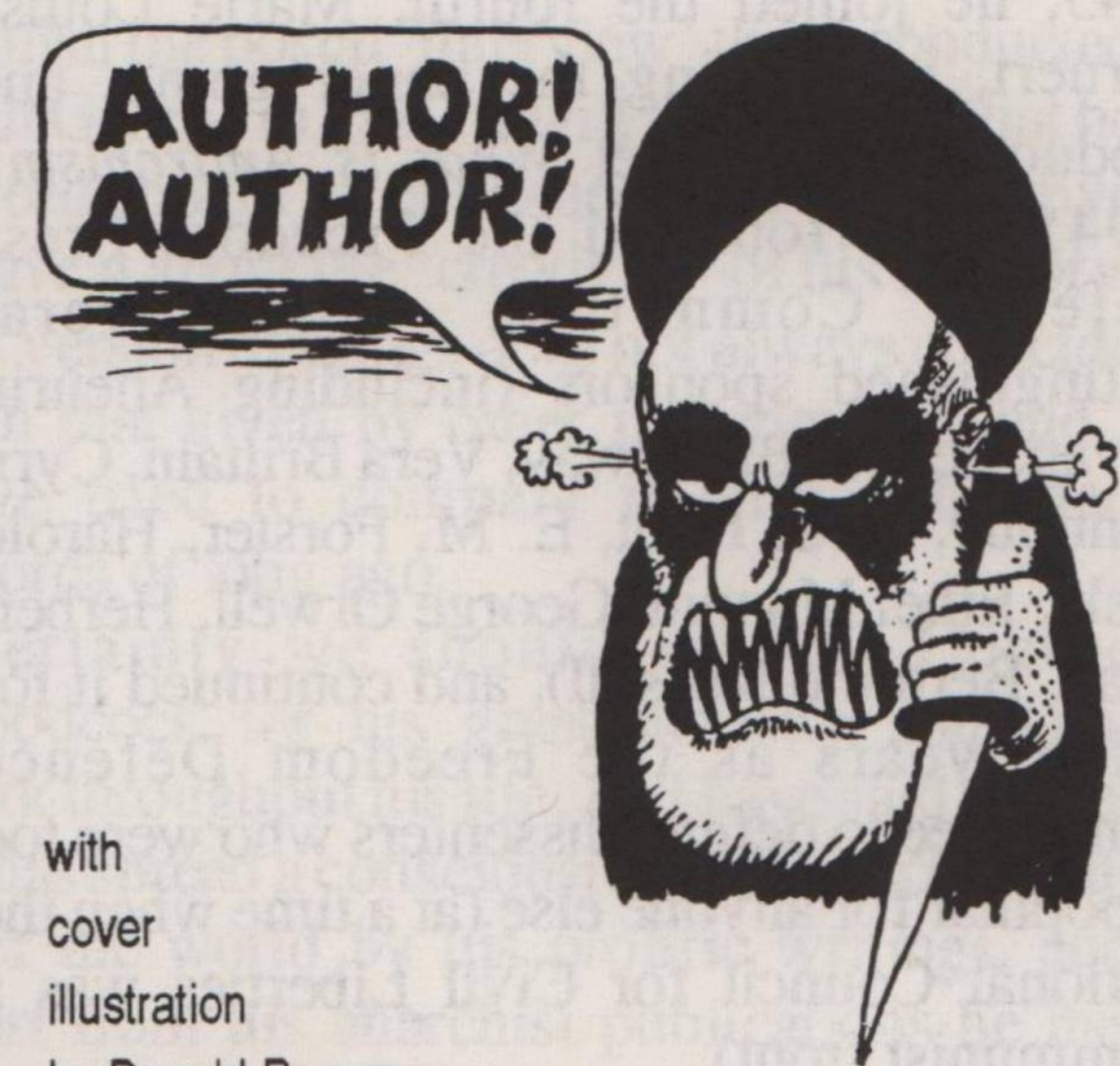
Helped by my own knowledge of poetry nevertheless and the ways of gutter journalism, I think I can elucidate a little on Boas's contention, disregarded by and large for the past ninety years, that the poem referred to above may well have been written by Thomas Kyd. I am trying to be generous to T.K. but from observation many examples could be quoted where a response to an existing poem is in fact a compliment. T.K.'s language and answer is vicious but the title 'Hendecasyllabon T.K. in Cygneam Cansionem Chidrochi - Tychborne' is a gentle touch. Remember this is, in modern terms, a Samizdat publication - Walsingham's police had to be taken into consideration. The title is a swan-song in eleven syllables (to a line). Swans were supposed to sing most sweetly before they died. Tychborne was the last to die and in the manner of his death - he was hung, then taken down while still alive and chopped into little pieces with the quartering knife, into eleven pieces - like a line of eleven syllables.

John Rety

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on

Fundamentalism



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George Woodcock (1912-1995)

George Woodcock, who has died at the age of 82, was the best-known writer on anarchism in the English-speaking world, and was also a leading authority on Canadian literature, though he always saw himself primarily as a poet.

He divided his life in almost equal parts between two worlds. Although he was born in Canada, in Winnipeg on 8th May 1912, his Anglo-Welsh parents soon brought him back to Britain, where he spent his first 37 years. He was brought up at first among his extensive family in Shropshire and then in Marlow, where his father worked as a clerk for the Great Western Railway but died when he was young. He went to Borlase Grammar School and did very well, but he couldn't go on to university because of family poverty. For eleven years he too worked as a clerk for the Great Western Railway. He began writing for the little magazines and little presses of the 1930s, and eventually joined the London literary bohemia. In 1932 he started a writing career lasting more than sixty years by publishing poems in A. R. Orage's *New English Weekly*; he soon contributed to more prestigious papers, including Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse* and Julian Symons's *Twentieth Century Verse*, and had slim volumes published by Charles Lahr and the Fortune Press. At the same time he became involved in left-wing politics, moving from socialism to pacifism and also to anarchism in the shadow of the Spanish Civil War and the coming Second World War.

During the war he was a conscientious objector and worked on the land, spending some time in John Middleton Murry's colony at Langham. His main achievement during that period was the production from 1940 to 1947 of sixteen issues of his own little magazine *Now*, a remarkable paper which combined literary and political material and published contributions from George Barker, Alex Comfort, E. E. Cummings, Lawrence Durrell, Roy Fuller, Paul Goodman, James Hanley, Dwight Macdonald, Charles Madge, Henry Miller, John Middleton Murry, George Orwell, Kathleen Raine, Herbert Read, Kenneth Rexroth, F. A. Ridley, D. S. Savage, and Victor Serge. From 1941 to 1948 he worked closely with the Freedom Press, which also published or distributed most of the later issues of *Now*.

He was for a time the most prolific writer in the anarchist movement, producing a stream of reports, reviews, comments and essays in *War Commentary* and *Freedom* and other papers, and also a series of impressive Freedom Press pamphlets *New Life to the Land* (1942), *Railways and Society* (1943), *William Godwin: Selections from 'Political Justice'*, (1943), *Homes orhovels* (1944), *Anarchism and Morality* (1945), and *The Basis of Communal Living* (1947). He wrote an excellent short book, *Anarchy or Chaos* (1944), most of which he later repudiated, though he rescued some of it as 'The Rejection of Politics' (1972). When three of the editors of *War Commentary* were imprisoned, in 1945, he joined the fourth, Marie Louise Berneri, in keeping the paper going, and produced a pamphlet *What is Anarchism?* (1945). He founded the Freedom Press Defence Committee, with several distinguished sponsors (including Aneurin Bevan, Fenner Brockway, Vera Brittain, Cyril Connolly, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, Harold Laski, Ethel Mannin, George Orwell, Herbert Read, Bertrand Russell), and continued it for a few years as the Freedom Defence Committee to defend dissenters who were too unpopular for anyone else (at a time when the National Council for Civil Liberties was a Communist front).

In 1949 he returned with his German wife to Canada, where he spent the last 45 years of his life. They had a hard struggle at first, but he earned a precarious living as a busy writer and

broadcaster. For a time he taught at the University of Washington (until he was excluded from the United States because of his anarchism) and then at the University of British Columbia. He eventually became the leading advocate of Canadian literature, and was the founding editor of the prestigious quarterly *Canadian Literature* from 1959 to 1977. He and his wife spent much time travelling in several parts of the world, and they were involved in relief work in India and Tibet. They also established a fund for impoverished writers in Canada.

He continued to produce an enormous amount of journalism for the rest of his life, and also did a large amount of broadcasting. Above all, after the war he began to write and edit books, and over the next half-century he produced more than a hundred, several on anarchism or related subjects. There were several biographical studies *William Godwin* (1946), *The Incomparable Aphra* (1949), *The Paradox of Oscar Wilde* (1950), *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (1950), *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (1956), *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell* (1966), *Henry Walter Bates: Naturalist of the Amazons* (1969), *Gandhi* (1971), *Dawn and the Darkest Hour: A Study of Aldous Huxley* (1972), *Herbert Read: The Stream and the Source* (1972), *Thomas Merton, Monk and Poet* (1978). There were several travel books *Ravens and Prophets* (1952), *To the City of the Dead* (1957), *Incas and Other Men* (1959), *Faces of India* (1964), *Asia, Gods and Cities* (1966), *Kerala* (1967), *South Sea Journey* (1976). There were several books on Canadian literature and history, including the standard studies of *Canada and the Canadians* (1970) and *The Canadians* (1979). There were several other historical studies *A Hundred Years of Revolution: 1848 and After* (1948), *The Greeks in India* (1966), *The Doukhobors* (1968), *The British in the Far East* (1969), *The Hudson's Bay Company* (1970), *Into Tibet* (1971), *Who Killed the British Empire?* (1974). There were collections of general essays *The Writer and Politics* (1948), *The Rejection of Politics* (1972), *Anarchism and Anarchists* (1992). There were collections of poems, culminating in *Collected Poems* (1983). And there were three volumes of memoirs *Letter to the Past* (1982), *Beyond the Blue Mountains* (1987), *Walking Through the Valley* (1993); the first covers his life in Britain, the last 100 pages giving his account of the anarchist movement here.

Above all, from our point of view, there were *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (1962) and *The Anarchist Reader* (1977). The former was a general study, which began as an American paperback, was published in Britain by Penguin Books in several editions (1963, 1975, 1986) and impressions, and was translated into several languages; it must have been more widely read than any other book on anarchism since the Second World War, especially in the English-speaking world. The latter was an anthology designed as a companion volume, also published as a Fontana paperback in two editions (1977,

1986) and several impressions, which didn't achieve the same kind of circulation but must have more widely read than any other collection of anarchist writings in English during the same period. Both books, especially the former, received much praise in the general media but also some criticism in the anarchist press, mainly for the persistent bias towards the intellectual and romantic aspects of anarchism and against the activist and actual life of the movement; but, whatever their detailed virtues and vices, they have a permanent place in our history for having introduced more people to anarchism than any other publications over a period of more than thirty years.

He contributed entries on anarchism and related subjects to several reference books, especially the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

(1967) and the *New Encyclopedia Britannica* (1974). Towards the end of his life, several of his earlier books were reprinted in Canada by Black Rose Books, which also published ten volumes of the *Collected Works of Peter Kropotkin* with his new introductions. He continued to contribute to the anarchist press, including *Our Generation* in Canada and *The Raven* in Britain, and he was included in the Freedom Press verse anthology *Visions of Poesy* (1994).

He was largely forgotten in Britain, except among students of anarchism and other survivors of his literary generation, but in Canada he became a grand old man and received many honours and awards, though he always refused those offered by governments. There have been selections of his work, books about him, and William H. New's festschrift *A Political Art* (1978); this includes a bibliography of his writings, which is unfortunately rather inaccurate and very incomplete, but still fills forty pages. For his eightieth birthday there was *The Record of George Woodcock* (1992) which included a list of more than 140 separate publications. He suffered from heart trouble for nearly thirty years, and died in Vancouver on 28th January 1995.

He saw himself as an intellectual and as an autodidact, an independent man of letters rather than a professional scholar or journalist. He was an elegant as well as a prolific writer, and never wrote an ugly or unclear sentence. He was inclined to be rather vain, but then he had a lot to be vain about. He was impatient of what he saw as the pedantry of academic scholarship, and rather careless with facts and references; he might have replied that he preferred what he did to what other people didn't do, and he did more than anyone else of his time to make anarchism familiar and friendly to ordinary people. He was also a courteous controversialist, a loyal comrade, and a valued colleague. He and his wife had no children but a large family of friends all over the world, including many people they never met.

There were long obituaries in the Canadian press and radio, and there have been short ones in the *Guardian* and the *Independent*.

NW

Black Flag

When I die
let the black rag fly
raven falling
from the sky.

Let the black flag lie
on bones and skin
that long last night
as I enter in.

For out of black
soul's night have stirred
dawn's cold gleam,
morning's singing bird.

Let black day die,
let black flag fall,
let black rag fly,
let raven call,
let new day dawn
of black reborn.

George Woodcock

George Woodcock died of heart failure in Vancouver, Canada, on 28th January 1995. He was 82 years old.

Readers of *Freedom* will remember him as a former comrade and author of *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*. In Canada he was considered one of the country's leading men of letters. He founded the *Canadian Literature* quarterly in 1959, the first literary journal to deal specifically with Canadian writing, and was a mentor to many Canadian artists and writers. He was a well-known essayist, poet, literary critic and broadcaster. He wrote on Canadian history and on contemporary issues in Canadian politics from a decentralist, regionalist perspective.

In contrast to Herbert Read, he refused the Canadian equivalent of a knighthood, the 'Order of Canada', which was to have been bestowed upon him in recognition of his contributions to Canada's artistic and literary life. However, just last year he accepted the honour of 'Freeman of the City' from the City of Vancouver, his home of many years, on the ground that it was "an award by citizens for citizens" which recognised the libertarian role of the city in the abolition of feudalism and as a counterpart to centralised state power.

His death received national coverage, with Woodcock being described as a "lifelong anarchist", which might come as a bit of a surprise to some of his former comrades in England. People in Canada seem genuinely unaware of his break with the movement many

years ago. A recent radio programme on him by CBC was entitled 'George Woodcock: Gentle Anarchist'. His entry in the *Canadian Encyclopedia* describes him as "the pre-eminent figure in English-speaking anarchist circles" and *Anarchism* as "the movement's bible", when in reality it was more of a (premature) obituary.

It was amusing to hear national media personalities try to treat his 'anarchy' with some understanding and respect, but there is no doubt that those who knew him as a Canadian literary figure had some difficulty dealing with his political beliefs. Nevertheless, he did more than anyone else in Canada to popularise anarchist ideas and to promote anti-authoritarian approaches to politics, even as he was not a consistent anti-statist.

He was always very approachable and would contribute to virtually any anarchist publication that solicited articles from him. He wrote for the Vancouver-based anarchist news journal *Open Road* and more recently for *Kick It Over*, an anarchist magazine from out of Toronto. One short letter or telephone call was all he needed and, of course, he never expected any payment in return.

No doubt he will remain a figure of controversy in England, but in Canada it appears his reputation as a "lifelong anarchist" is secure. That is how he will be remembered and, perhaps, even revered.

Robert Graham

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

Bashing out the words

The Canadian obituaries of George Woodcock, kindly passed on by Freedom Press, were absorbingly interesting for me as I hadn't met him for 45 years. It was intriguing to see from the headlines that this "Winnipeg-born writer-anarchist 'created Canadian literature'," that "Woodcock's life was a beacon to young writers" and that he was "a pioneer on the frontier of Canadian culture".

One paper tells us that "he wrote more books — more than 100 — than ten hard-working writers put together" and another revealed that his work was "tapped out on an Olympia manual typewriter that he bought as a young man". I found this intriguing since my experience is that when two or three writers chance to be together, their conversation is not about publishers, nor about ideas, but about word-processors.

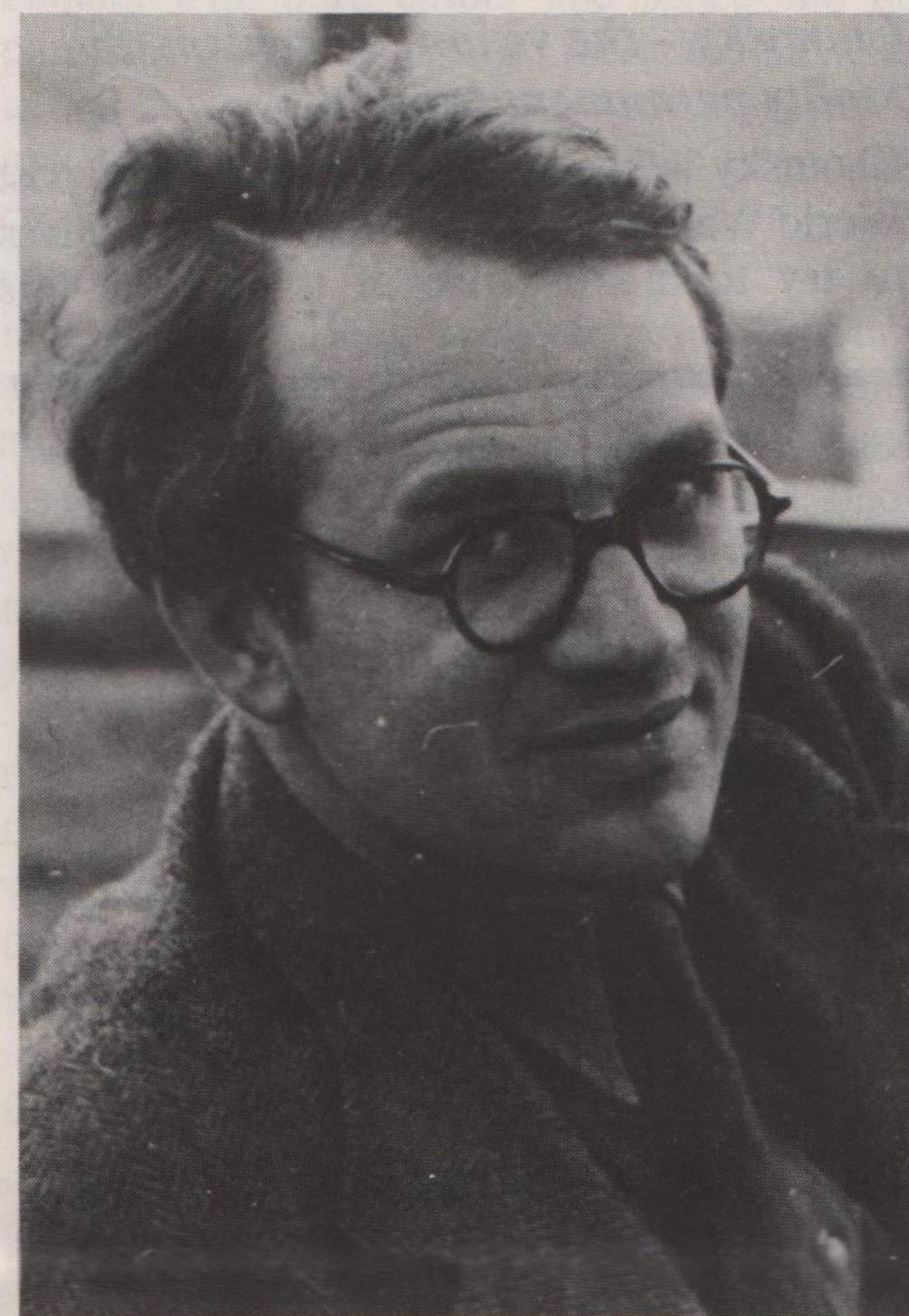
Now I have read less than a tenth of George's books, whether on travel, politics or literature, but it has always been obvious to me that, whatever the subject, he was voicing a recognisably anarchist attitude which, according to the *Toronto Star*, he invariably stoutly defended, arguing that "government inhibits man's natural social tendencies and that we would be better off with voluntary cooperation and mutual aid".

I wonder by just how much his output would have increased if he had kept pace with the new technology of word production? I suspect that his failure to shift to word-processing had several factors. The first was probably a matter of habit and age. I feel conscious myself that it is hard for old dogs to learn new tricks.

George grew up in a world where the expense of typesetting was automatically a matter for publishers, not writers. He was as familiar as any other *Freedom* writer of the late 1940s with Bill Doble, employed by the firm that set the text on an Intertype machine in 'hot metal' and who, if he finished the job before the end of the working day, would, as he used to say, "throw it back in the pot" and do it again. It is a matter of discussion in my

trade union, the Society of Authors, that the publishers who expect a text on the right kind of computer disc, don't pay writers for being typesetters. And if George had bought himself an Amstrad he would have learned within a year that technical advances meant that he should have bought something more sophisticated and more expensive.

The second was probably a matter of ideology. If the durable and beautifully sophisticated mechanical engineering of the manual typewriter could be operated anywhere in his world from the Himalayas to the Arctic, using only his own energy, why should he plug into Vancouver's electricity supply? The reason why George and Inge



photograph of George Woodcock by Vernon Richards

were able to generate so much income for Asian and Canadian charitable projects was that they lived very simply.

A more prosaic factor was, very likely, that of day-to-day busy-ness. He probably never had a slice of time to set aside to stop working and learn a new technique of word production. It isn't a matter of Luddism. I know primary school children who have grown up with computer skills that astound me and are as natural to them as riding a bike.

All the same, I feel a certain solidarity with George, awakened by the reference to the Olympia portable. In the mid '70s my secondhand Remington, made in the '40s, finally died, and attracted by its beautiful output I bought a secondhand electric typewriter. But it soon died, because it depended on mechanical parts which wore out. I missed the next stage in evolution, the electronic typewriter, already being outstripped by word-processors. It would cost £50 to repair my electric machine, but I could buy an Olympia Traveller for £33, so I made a decision to stick to that product (once made in Germany but then in South East Asia) and to throw them away when worn out.

In practice, when the first one broke I got another and then repaired my third with parts from the others. I attribute the incredible life of Woodcock's machine to the superiority of pre-war engineering. But I write to this day on my cannibalised Olympia, and the technology I really value is that of the photocopier in my local library which enables me to deliver 'clean copy' to any publisher or journal that hires my services. My capital outlay on the tools of my trade is minute. And so, of course, is my income.

What really worries me isn't the mechanics of churning out words, but the fact that I am

surrounded by people who don't actually raise issues worth thinking about, but who are fascinated by the sheer technology of communication. They keep going on about CD-ROM or Internet and the new freedom of communication, but are bored by the topic of the every-increasing social injustices that surround us.

I am forced into the Woodcock camp of indifference to the mechanics of word production simply because I live in a society which ignores not only situations of the permanently jobless, but also the collapse of the kind of secure purchasing power that ensures that life keeps going, simply at the level that Woodcock saw in Vancouver or that I see in East Anglia.

In the world that matters to me people struggle to pay for their water and their fuel, but in the world of the communications revolution of the privileged, people assume that everyone who is anyone has a fax and an e-mail outlet and pays for everything by direct debit. Those of us on the outside of this world can only watch and wonder, and remember that our grandparents were awed by the telephone and radio. The printing press was seen as the Devil's invention in the fifteenth century, and, no doubt, so was the typewriter in the nineteenth.

So I don't sneer at the new technology, but I can't help agreeing with the Toronto critic Douglas Fetherling who remarked that Woodcock "was writing his whole life about a small handful of central ideas, about the role of the individual in a society that gets ever more complex, and how to preserve the freedom and dignity of the individual in the cultural, political and technological madhouse we have built".

Hammering away at his Olympia portable he actually managed to have a certain influence in the society in which he lived. I wish that the same could be true of all us other anarchist propagandists.

Colin Ward

George Woodcock died on 28th January 1995 at the age of 82. This is a tribute to a most interesting man, and one whose writings have probably made people around the world aware of anarchism more than any other twentieth century writer except perhaps Kropotkin. In saying this I do not mean that his writings give an accurate picture of anarchism historically; in my opinion they do not, for reasons that I will try to explain.

Voltaire wrote: "One owes respect to the living; but to the dead one owes nothing but the truth". I do not agree; in trying to write the truth about George Woodcock I do not mean to show him any lack of respect.

From October to December in 1982 I was engaged in a great deal of correspondence with him as part of the project in which I am engaged, interviewing people who were significantly active in the anarchist movement of Britain in the 1940s to 1960s. As no personal interview was feasible because he lived in Canada, we agreed to conduct the interview by means of letters to and fro. It was understood that all he told me was to be published, as well as going into the archives of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, and therefore I have no hesitation in publishing what he said about himself and other people. One thing that became apparent during the course of this interchange was that he was a most unreliable reporter. Because he had always been a most prolific writer it was easy to check certain facts by what he had written in *Freedom* and elsewhere many years ago. His inconsistencies were not due to the failing memory of an old man, for as he had been publishing continually for over forty years one could trace how his account of things had altered from time to time. I am not charging him with being a deliberate liar, for I think that he believed what he said at the time of saying it, but not only was he a creative writer but he

George Woodcock: a tribute

had a very creative memory. This is how he described himself in one of his final letters to me:

"You must remember, Tony, that I'm mostly Welsh by descent, and that I have a father and [sic] it is Wales, not England. Secretiveness, slyness, evasion are treasured by us. Frankness is a fatal Saxon virtue." (4th November 1992)

I do not suppose that all Welsh people will be pleased by his sweeping statement about them!

I think that in this burst of confidence he gives a pretty fair description of himself, and one should not expect, therefore, the truth and nothing but the truth in Woodcock's writings. His view of anarchism was highly subjective, and many people were highly amused when they read his statement in the 1986 edition of his book *Anarchism* that when Marie Louise Berneri died and George Woodcock departed to Canada the 'élan' went out of the anarchist movement in Britain! No one would underestimate the great loss that Marie Louise was to the movement, but few people were even aware of the departure of the shy, sly and secretive figure of George, particularly as he continued to contribute to *Freedom*! His contributions to the paper were valuable but his absence from this country made no difference whatsoever to the 'élan' of the movement. Louis XIV is reputed to have said 'L'état c'est moi!', and in George's naive perception it was 'The anarchist movement — it's me!'. He was very highly regarded as an intellectual in Canada where he was something of a big fish in a rather small literary pond. On the occasion of his eightieth birthday his admirers brought out a pamphlet, *The Record of George Woodcock*, which listed

142 of his publications. They included poetry, broadsheets, memoirs and letters, literary criticism, essays, history, travel, biography, politics, translations, symposia and anthologies; there were also some appreciations of him by other writers. The Foreword to this pamphlet is somewhat marred by a somewhat over-adulatory tribute by Robin Skelton who ended it thus:

"His industry is as astounding as his humility; he has never turned away from a task because it lacked obvious importance but has performed the most menial of writer's tasks with the same enlightened efficiency as he has tackled the major challenges. George Woodcock is a very great man of letters, and he is more than that. He is a National Treasure and in a properly constituted society his 80th birthday would have been celebrated with the issue of a postage stamp, the striking of a medal and a burst of cannon fire on Parliament Hill."

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84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

I am sure that his old comrades in this country would have been delighted to receive mail from Canada with George's face on the stamp! He sent me a signed copy of this tribute and had the grace to say: "I am annoyed by Canadians like Skelton who've been putting around the myth of my 'greatness' over the past year", but I suspect that he was really very pleased by such adulation, and what may seem to some people the rather ridiculous naive egotism of his later years may partly be attributed to all the flattery he received in Canada.

Douglas Fetherling has prepared a biography of George Woodcock which is soon to be published, and was in Britain two years ago interviewing various past contacts of his subject. I think that it is significant that two of George's old friends did not wish to be interviewed, for I think that they are familiar with some aspects of his past life which are so private that it is better that they are never published. Many of us have skeletons in our private cupboards, and it is no business of the public to know anything about them. When I publish the postal 'interview' that I conducted with George in 1992 it will be material that he agreed should be published, and with it I give a caveat about the 'creativity' of his memory. His version of things does not always coincide with that given by other interviewees, and I have tried to compare it with published records of long ago.

Certainly we should respect George Woodcock for his great industry and hard work throughout his life. As I have said above, he has spread a consciousness of anarchism all over the world by his prolific writings, and apart from his anarchist publications he has done much to further enlightened and humane ideas in many domains. His was a life to be proud of, and I wish there were more like him.

Tony Gibson

Over 400 anarchists from all over Australia participated in the Visions of Freedom Conference in Sydney last weekend. Participants not only came from the major urban centres and the country, but they included people from all generations and from all walks of life. Women almost outnumbered men and old faces were swamped by a sea of new people.

The overwhelming theme at the conference was the need for organisation. Many participants still felt and believed that issue oriented politics was the way forward. Many of the tensions at past conferences were forgotten and many people felt that now was the time to come out and identify as an anarchist. Anarchism was seen as a positive growing movement, a political, social and cultural movement whose time had come.

The plenary session on Saturday morning was followed by a series of talks and workshops on Saturday afternoon that covered theoretical as well as practical subjects. Many of the participants joined the 2,000 people who turned up at Sydney Town Hall on Saturday evening to hear Noam Chomsky talk about Visions of Freedom. The Sunday morning workshops started a little

Visions of Freedom Conference Sydney, Australia

slowly but more and more people turned up as the day progressed. The afternoon plenary session on Sunday was divided between reports on the various sessions and a discussion about the next conference and ways people can co-operate and help the movement grow.

In many ways the most important part of the whole conference/festival was not what was said and what is going to be done, but what contacts people were able to make. Many participants not only saw activists they had not seen for years but met others from their own States and from interstate who they had not met before. For me the personal contacts that were made were much more important than the content of the conference/festival. The content itself was patchy and in many cases reflected a genuine confusion about principles and practices of anarchism.

Some people left the conference not only confused but disappointed that no federation

of anarchist groups was formed. I believe it's wrong to believe that an open general conference is the forum where you can form federations of groups. Obviously such a conference is more an education medium than an organisational medium. I think most participants came away thinking that they belong to a growing culture of non-authoritarian change that is becoming an important part of the Australian landscape. They no longer feel isolated and now believe that an anarchist society is not only desirable, but possible if we as individuals and groups continue to educate, organise and open up federations with other like minded people in this country and overseas.

Chomsky – the vision anarchism, the reality permanent protest

Chomsky is one of the few intellectuals post World War Two who has used anarchist ideas to try to make sense of the world. His

contributions to philosophy and political theory has become more and more popular with the collapse of communism. All over the world many people believe that he not only has shown the limitations of capitalism but he has shown the way forward. Unfortunately although Chomsky has provided an invaluable service in analysing modern capitalism his ideas on how to make anarchism into a reality has resulted in a whole generation of activists embarking on a 1950s permanent protest trail.

Although Chomsky sees the Vision as Anarchism, his reality is rooted in a tradition of permanent protest. He does not believe that egalitarian revolutionary change is possible and he spends most of his time supporting the efforts of national liberation movements all over the world. His current visit to Australia has all but for a day been taken up with actions and talks and conferences that support the national liberation struggle in East Timor. Even his talk at the Sydney Town Hall on Saturday night on Visions of Freedom revolved around the impossibility of radical egalitarian social change today.

For many anarchists Chomsky's visit is a great disappointment, although thousands flock to his lectures and seminars, few are ever told or realise that Chomsky uses anarchist ideas to flesh out his analysis. This seems to be more Chomsky's fault than the fault of the organisers of his trip. I have always said that Chomsky has been able to help people gain insight into the workings of capitalism especially US capitalism, but he has not articulated or shown a way to make the vision a reality.

As anarchists we should be involved in activities that encourage human liberation not national liberation, we should also understand that it's important not to only have a vision and a goal but that we should have a way we can achieve this vision or goal. We shouldn't continue to support other peoples struggles, unless they encourage the struggle for human freedom and equality. It's all very well jumping up and down at every overseas struggle, but unless we are willing to organise and become involved in actions and struggles that do not just chip away at the edifice of capitalism, we will be destined to continue to support campaigns and struggles that do not include our Visions of Freedom. By all means listen to Chomsky and read Chomsky's books, but when you decide that you want to translate your vision into reality don't follow the permanent protest path that Chomsky has chosen to follow.

from *Anarchist Age Weekly Review*, no. 133
PO Box 20, Parkville, 3052, Victoria
Australia

CANADA UPDATE

Censorship in Canada

Censorship continues to plague Canada. It is very common for Canada Customs to seize homosexual literature at the US border, even though there is no law against possession of such material. So-called revisionist writings, i.e. Nazi apologist propaganda, is also forbidden and is illegal to possess under the 'anti-hate laws'. (On 23rd January the mounted police of Didsbury Alberta seized a book from the public library and put it through a shredder.) Censorship has reached a new height of absurdity in the on-going murder trial of suspected child-killers Karla and Paul Homulka. The Ontario government has forbidden publication of any information on the trial. American newspapers reporting on the murders have been seized at the border. Nonetheless, information has been getting out on the Internet, but now the government is trying to shut off that source as well.

Ontario government undermines voluntarism

The NDP government of Ontario is trying to wipe out volunteer long-term health care. The 1,200 mostly volunteer agencies which administer this are to be centralised into 150 government organisations called 'Multi-Service Agencies' (MSA). The MSAs are not allowed to contract more

than 20% of their work to the volunteer agencies such as the Red Cross or Meals on Wheels. This will lead to increased cost and bureaucratisation as well as undermine the notion of volunteerism, so necessary to the maintenance of a sense of community and social responsibility.

6th December: Five hundred construction workers and students demonstrated in Montreal against the Liberal government's proposed cuts to unemployed insurance and higher education. As the demonstration ended about 150 people went inside the hotel where the government representatives were meeting and thoroughly trashed the place, doing thousands of dollars damage. These meetings, supposedly to hear the opinions of the citizens, have been dogged by demonstrators wherever they are held, but this was the most violent confrontation so far.

The Party Quebecois (PQ) unveiled its strategy for Quebec independence. They propose a new relationship with the rest of Canada. Quebec is to become a sovereign state with Quebecois having dual citizenship, keeping their Canadian pensions and the Canadian dollar. The 'Federalist', i.e. centralist, response was the expected shouts of outrage and betrayal. The only problem for the PQ is that Anglo-Canada might wish to punish Quebec by rejecting any sort of deal. The effect upon the

economy might be horrendous. Quebec workers would become sacrificial victims to the Quebec nomenclature's attempted power-grab.

24th December: Animal rights activists calling themselves the 'Animal Rights Militia' made Christmas miserable for thousands of people in Vancouver. The group claimed to have injected rat poison into supermarket turkeys as a protest against the supposed cruelty of raising and killing these birds. Other animal rights activists denounced the action as 'immoral' and 'a set-back for animal rights'.

23rd January: There has been a major victory for environmentalists, fishermen and Native people in British Columbia. The provincial government has forbidden Alcan Aluminium from developing its \$1.3 billion dam project which would have destroyed fish breeding grounds and flooded aboriginal lands. The project has been called 'an environmental disaster' and was strenuously fought by the environmental and Native movements.

'Political Correctness' hit a new low at the University of Guelph in Ontario. A section of the student lounge has been portioned off and 'white' students are forbidden to sit there. Many students consider the act racist but its Doublethinking instigators, say that you can't have racism against the majority, only the 'marginalised' minorities can suffer from this form of prejudice.

Larry Gambone

MORE READERS LETTERS

Dear Freedom,
We think it's a shame that you can't allow an open debate about the issue of pornography within the pages of your paper. However, we ask for a right to reply, to set a few things straight.

There have been so many ridiculous assumptions and lies made about us that we can't address them all here, but we know this is only being done in an attempt to silence our voices and draw a false picture of us which no one in their right minds would want to support. This is a problem for free speech in general, used most often by the state, but particularly evident in the tactics of the pro-porn groups. For example, one of the main elements in the British government's censorship of the war in Northern Ireland was to draw a picture of the Irish people as all bloodthirsty mad terrorists wanting to blow up all English people and each other, knowing that this creates a deep-rooted prejudice and a hysterical situation which obscured the genuine political arguments, and prevented us from hearing what the Irish people were really saying.

Pro-pornography activists attempt the same thing by painting all the opposition as puritanical, right-wing, authoritarian, anti-sex, anti-abortion, middle class

intellectuals. We are as adamantly opposed to those anti-porn activists as you are. We have no sympathies or connections with them and their repressive aims. Their chains want to bind us as tightly as the pornographers do.

Those that attack us know that we oppose pornography for completely different reasons. Some of these reasons are that there is too much evidence to ignore, that the production and use of pornography really harms people, particularly women and children. This evidence comes from women and children survivors, sex workers and sex offenders. Pornography is an enormous capitalist industry which operates as an imperial force in the 'Third World'. An industry which sells us all the things which we as anarchists are fighting against, e.g. hierarchy, aggressive power inequalities, racial and sexual domination, and reduces the way we relate sexually to each other into just another trashy commodity in our throw-away culture. It alone doesn't create sexism but it is important in reflecting and reinforcing it, encouraging misogyny as acceptable and normal.

When speaking of the links between pornography and sexual violence we get

told by FAC [Feminists Against Censorship] 'but there's always been rape and abuse of women' as if that in some way excuses the pornography industry's part in it. It's a bit like saying to criticisms of capitalism 'but there's always been poor people'. Does that mean we should all start buying shares in it?

We would like to make a few points about our workshop which we organised during the Anarchy in the UK festival. This was attended by about fifty people and was highly successful, most participants expressing great relief to us that it had happened, to challenge all the pro-porn events which happened, during the festival. We won't dissect all the allegations made against the workshop in Iain H's letter as it's just another example of the way we are misrepresented as being authoritarian censors when we try to do anything. We can understand why he felt unhappy with the workshop as such a good level of debate happened there with people expressing independently their thoughts on the issue. It's very arrogant to assume that when someone makes a decision which is different to your own opinion that they

have allowed themselves to be indoctrinated or subject to 'brainwashing'.

Iain H claims that the several hand-outs we gave to people were all "from Dworkin/Mackinnon literature". No, sorry, this is absolutely untrue. Out of all several pages there was one line of Mackinnon's and not one word of Dworkin's. The words we presented were a selection written by individual members of our own group; WHISPER newsletters (Women Hurt In Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt – an American group of ex-sex workers), individual accounts by women who have been harmed by pornography, and *Fiesta* (British top-shelf porn magazine).

Perhaps the most baffling is the comment that we "refused to discuss censorship at all" since this issue formed a large part of the debate with a lot of interesting points being raised particularly by anarchist visitors from abroad, and we were certainly not afraid to answer questions about this. Maybe Iain wanted the workshop to be crushed into a worthless slugging match about the Smutfest, but our aim was to provide a space for constructive discussion, not

just another confrontational situation where no one listens to anyone else and everyone leaves feeling pissed off.

As for *Freedom's* 'Spot the Difference', clearly the differences are obvious, but it still remains strange that anarchists should devote so much energy into defending a leading high street capitalist business which practices a coercive monopoly over many small independent news stores across the country (apart from all the other objections).

Freedom's comments about "a rather similar group of women" assaulted members of the 121 centre is confusing. We were not involved in this, nor do we know anything about it, so how can we be expected to comment?

There are many more things we would like to say about all this, but we trust that most readers have the independence of spirit to read beyond the sad level of in-fighting and petty insult, to the real issues involved.

In conclusion, we would like to say thank you for the messages of support we have received over the past few weeks and of course, the struggle goes on ...

Cambridge Anarchists

The high moral tone

Peace in Ireland

Dear *Freedom*,

In his letter entitled 'Peace in Ireland' in the 11th February 1995 issue, Patrick Nicholson quite rightly asserts that "there are other options besides returning to the terror or supporting the politicians in manipulating their 'peace'." And in an attempt to indicate some of those options, I note:

1. The Peace People have started a Citizens Campaign throughout Northern Ireland, aimed at decentralising power. Could anarchists in Britain investigate and support that?

2. The Pat Finncane Centre in Derry are promoting a series of discussions on issues such as policing. I'm sure inputs from anarchists would be welcome.

3. Prisoners' supports groups, both loyalist and republican, seem to be edging towards a common set of demands. The need for early release of such prisoners in terms of confirming intercommunity confidence is obvious. However, sensitivities exist concerning victims of paramilitary violence. Would there be a role for anarchists in Britain in supporting such reconciliation moves?

4. Attempts by families of the Bloody Sunday victims to re-open investigations into the killings are stalled. Could anarchists lobby/demonstrate/propagandise by deed in order to get movement on this and other state-sponsored murders?

5. Is there merit in the concept of a 'Truth Commission' (despite the Orwellian language)? How might such an activity be resourced?

6. Building on the idea of 'apology' highlighted in the page 3 story of *ARROW*'s action at Cromwell's statue, could British anarchists engage with people in Ireland to assist in the sort of bridge-building Patrick Nicholson supports?

7. Recent surveys of *Freedom* readers indicate a broad left-liberal group who would be good at writing letters to newspapers, local councils, MPs and anyone else you can think of, in order to heighten awareness about the possibility of peace in Ireland, while affirming an anarchist tendency.

8. Direct actions in Britain, consciously non-violent and in support of non-violent social change in Ireland, seem like a good option. Individuals and groups in Britain could link up with like-minded individuals and groups here.

I am confident other people can come up with other ideas. All of the above exist in the realm of what I call 'micro-politics' and Patrick Nicholson's criticism of Milan Rai's article hinges, in part at least, on the fact that it concerns itself with 'macro-politics' – how, for instance, the British government may respond to particular leverages.

While, like Patrick, I assert the primacy of 'micro-politics' in creating new options, I feel that we must recognise the contexts we operate within. Power politics is one of them. Colonialism working itself out, possibly developing a new phase, is another. Pursuing peace is necessarily an ambiguous and at times dirty business. It is, no less than armed conflict itself, a real struggle. One of the bridges to be built is between personal small-scale initiatives and new social organisation. Perhaps the "energy, vision and idealism" Patrick indicates is required can be directed at this area so that substantive new options can emerge.

Dave Duggan

Dear *Freedom*,

In an article 'Action on Cromwell's Statue' (11th February) the writer comments "one placard remembered Cromwell's slaughter of 3,500 men, women and children in Drogheda in 1649 ..." To even the matter up why was there not another placard remembering the massacre of St Bartholomew's Eve in 1572 where 60,000 French Protestants (the Huguenots) – 6,000 in Paris alone under a flag of truce, and in forty other French towns – were murdered by the Catholic League with the connivance of the French monarchy? I bet all the Protestant soldiers knew about it, being brought up on Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, just as all today's Northern Ireland Protestants know it. I do not wish to take sides in the Northern Ireland dispute, but fair does.

If you are going to demonise historical factors set down as ideological facts then let's have a balanced view. Many killed at Drogheda (and later at Wexford) were Catholic soldiers and priests, not just civilians, and even Lord Acton was sceptical about the Protestant death toll for the St Bartholomew's Eve massacre but many died in both places tit for tat, but constant reiteration of past excess does not bring about peace.

I think Northern Ireland Protestants might be a little bit more supportive of Irish unity and of the Republican Movement if this also took on the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and its dominance such as in the Northern Ireland education system where Protestants go to state schools and Catholics to Catholic schools. In reality what this struggle is really all about is religious fundamentalism, not politics. This is a factor the Republican Movement steadfastly ignores. But it won't go away as even Irish politicians are now realising as many are trying to reduce the church's stranglehold on Irish life.

Peter Neville

Dear *Freedom*,

The letter you have in the current issue (11th February) about Ireland echoes exactly my own sentiments and those of my colleagues, nearly all trade unionists, in the committee that since July 1989 has been running the Irish Peace Train of which for my 83 years of sinning I am president – one of the very rare movements for peace here that have sprung up in the last 25 years which has survived and grown.

Your journal is a fortnightly treat – congratulations.

John de Courcy Ireland

More on Debord

Dear *Freedom*,

Michel Prigent correctly points out that the Movement for Bauhaus Cinema was in fact the Movement for an *Imagist* Bauhaus and that Debord did not attend Lefebvre's seminars.

As the translator of the original article I must take responsibility for both mistakes. In my translation I simply got it wrong with regard to the Bauhaus Movement (I'd never heard of it until I read the article) and where I translated that Debord participated in the seminars a more correct translation would have read *collaborated*.

I would perhaps not have bothered to write this note but I would like to 1) make it clear that the fault lies with me and not Gianfranco Marelli on both accounts, and 2) take the opportunity (somewhat cheekily) to say that if there are any French native speakers reading *Freedom* their help with translation work would be most welcome and may help prevent further slips. Contact me through Freedom Press.

Neil Birrell

Left, Right and Green

Dear *Freedom*,

Larry Gambone's response (28th January) to my letter on so-called 'anarcho-capitalists' makes certain mistaken assumptions which I cannot allow to go uncorrected.

I certainly would not consider "trading garden produce over the backyard fence" to be one of the seeds of capitalism of which I warned. Indeed, I consider that to be an example of the communal "cooperation and cohesion" which in my letter I specifically contrasted with the "competition and division" that characterises capitalism.

Personally I have no problem distinguishing personal property, exchange of produce, mutual aid and so on, from capitalism or proto-capitalism. The basic distinction, which appears lost on Mr Gambone, was apparent enough to William Godwin 200 years ago when he wrote his seminal *Enquiry Concerning Social Justice* (1793) of the three degrees of property. The third (capitalist) degree was "a system, in whatever manner established, by which one man enters into the faculty of disposing of the produce of another man's industry".

It is somewhat disingenuous of Mr Gambone to suggest, in *Freedom* of all places, that a non-capitalist society is impossible to sustain without the use of coercion ("the anarcho-communist police"). He seems to have little sympathy for the whole thrust of the anarchist position!

Worryingly, there seems to be a growing acceptance on the left in general that there can be no such thing as a free socialist society and that any position that is wholly anti-capitalist must necessarily also be authoritarian or even totalitarian in nature. This is perhaps the result of American victory in the Cold War – do we now all have to take at face

value propagandistic terminology such as 'the free world', 'free enterprise' and 'free markets'? Do we have to accept that the opposite of capitalism can only ever be tyranny? It is essential that anarchists are not fooled by this big lie.

I did not, as Mr Gambone suggests, dismiss his anarcho-capitalist friends "with swear words" (well, not in print anyway). And I strongly agree with him that capitalism depends on the state for its existence. But I don't see that this somehow makes capitalism compatible with anarchism. I repeat: anarchism is an anti-capitalist philosophy and opposing the state is only half the story. Since Mr Gambone didn't like the Bakunin quotation, perhaps I could invoke Proudhon's double-barrelled definition of liberty in *Les Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire* (1849): "No more government of man by man, by means of the accumulation of powers; no more exploitation of man by man by means of the accumulation of capital".

Peter Drew

History Workshop

Dear Editors,

I was interested to read to account (11th February) of last year's History Workshop, written by my old friend Martin Gilbert, even if for some reason he says that Peter Lumsden was an Anglican priest and is currently a Roman Catholic, facts Peter denies; in fact the comment should have been put after Andrew King's name. Sadly, despite their interesting programmes I have never been able to attend a History Workshop, and there is a reason.

History Workshops are always held on weekdays in term time. As a consequence, the many history and social science graduates in teaching – just the people who would wish to build on their knowledge and who would have loved to attend – can never make it.

Martin points out that the History Workshops are a declining and ageing institution. Perhaps if they were organised in school and college vacations, especially in residential institutions, they might get a greater attendance. It seems ironical that despite the production of many graduates that might be passionately interested in History Workshops, these are the ones expressly excluded.

Peter Neville

From an Oxford Man

Dear *Freedom*,

Sorry to see your recent letter pages riven with in-fighting – an unwelcome diversion from the more interesting commentary elsewhere! Suffice it to say, I remain one of those who believe that *editors* should do exactly that – especially when faced with the rantings of the dogmatic and prescriptive – all power to your organ!

Austen Naughten

at Cambridge

Hello me old cocks!

Yes it's me, Lorelei, the leggy lovely from Cambridge Anarchists whose letters you censor ... er, I mean, don't print. Just to say it was a bit ungentelemanly of you to call our Leader, Frances Vigay, "a simple lady". This is not the sort of thing the fair sex can take, you know, without having to loosen the corsets and getting the vapours. In fact, she was *totally crushed*. It is unlikely she will ever go out and lead another anarchist party again. But just to show that we at Cambridge Anarchists bear no grudges whatsoever, we have arranged, totally free of charge, for *Buggering Your Baby Weekly* and *Rogering Your Rotweiler Monthly* to be delivered to *Freedom* straight from an interesting stall by Kings Cross Station (it's called Housemans, I think).

All the best and 'Watch the Whiskers When You're Wanking!' as we say in Cambridge.

P.S. I was just wondering why you didn't drivel on about censorship when thousands of folk tried to march on the BNP bookshop in Plumstead and got heavily bashed by the police for doing so.

Marilyn Lulu

P.P.S. To *real* anarchists doing a bit of direct action from time to time. Just thought you might like a copy of a letter I've written to *Freedom* since experience has shown me they won't print it for some reason. And to all those who've sent letters, note and cartoons to Cambridge Anarchists group – a big thanks.

Liz

Dear *Freedom*,

I write in wholehearted support of Frances Vigay, her position opposing pornography and all other women who tell the anarchist movement to clean up its politics, on this one. I write to say learn from her, listen to the arguments properly and please cut out the crap about censorship and authoritarianism. Take your leadership from women who are thorough and consistent workers against *all* sections of the military industrial complex. Put your hearts and souls into taking on the state. It is a discredit to the anarchist movement when it attacks a woman who speaks out against industrial abuse of women.

Why not bring down all the state's holies of holies in one fell swoop? Why cling

desperately to the pro-pornographers and help prop up one of the state's rotten pillars?

If I was not an anarchist, reading your publication (I believe you *do* write to non-anarchists) your smear campaign on anti-pornographers would confuse me. I would get the impression that when women take non-violent direct action against the pornography industry it is as bad as when fascists attack alternative bookshops.

I don't believe that anyone in the anarchist movement can so monumentally misunderstand fascism and misrepresent grassroots action against pomography. For anarchists and non-anarchists alike, let me spell out the difference between a fascist and an anti-pornography activist.

1. Fascists support capitalism and attack any attempt (i.e. a voluntary-run radical bookshop) to throw it over. Anti-pornographers of the Vigay ilk do *not* support capitalism, and they work against its industries – one of which happens to be the pornography industry.

2. Fascists (mainly but by no means exclusively men) want to subjugate and annihilate people. They have done this many times in the past and are planning to do it again. Anti-pornographers (mainly but not exclusively women) want an end to the subjugation and abuse of men, women, children and animals.

They have made considerable progress on this but never have they taken control of a state or ever planned to. As if you didn't know.

It is extremely irresponsible to produce the label 'authoritarian' and stick it to the Cambridge Anarchist group. There is serious, serious work to do if you want to get the state writhing on its knees, gasping for breath. If you can't even identify who your enemies are, I suppose it's just about possible the state will die laughing. But I doubt it. Probably it'll be too busy cashing in on the muddle you are making.

Women who tell you you are backing the wrong horse when you support pornography are giving you the opportunity to develop your politics and strengthen your position. Can you imagine how inspired you would be if, some eighty or so years ago, some bloke with a beard had come up to you and said capitalism stinks, let's build up communities, work for a revolution, and let's strengthen people to work together *after* the revolution? Most likely you'd shake his hand and say 'excellent idea, Mr Kropotkin, how can I join this growing movement?'. Or would you be the people moaning on about losing privilege, status and control?

Answer 'yes' to the first choice and you're an anarchist, answer 'yes' to the

second option and you'll find yourself on the other side of the barricade. Say 'no' to pornography, its place in the media/communications industry, its abuse of women, its distortion of sexuality, and you are for freedom. Say 'yes' to pornography and again you are on the other side of the barricade.

This is the choice, this is the debate. Can we now get on with it without bringing the state and its ideology in on the act? It's powerful enough as it is.

I look forward to round three or four of the debate. In which the issues get a proper hearing and *Freedom* discovers its 'pornography is good' honey-pot is empty.

Rosy Bremer

[We are not in favour of sexual or other activity which does not have the free consent of all parties. Having made that clear, we publish the above anti-pornography letters without further comment, as we have already stated our position. The correspondence was started by a news item about people going into a shop and destroying magazines. It has drifted off the subject and the letters, which we have published in full until now, have grown longer and longer and threaten to take us over. This correspondence is therefore closed – Editors.]

ANARCHIST DISCUSSION FORUM

— NEXT MEETING —

**Saturday
4th March 1995**

**'ANARCHISM AND THE
WELFARE STATE'**

with
— **Theodore Papadopoulos
and
Steve Millett**

at
**'The Ruins', 32a Dale Street,
Nunnery Lane, York**
(10 minutes from train station along city walls)

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London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8pm at
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square,
London WC1R 4RL. Admission is
free but a collection is made to cover
the cost of the room.

— 1995 PROGRAMME —

24th February General discussion

3rd March Creation Science (speaker Donald
Room)

10th March Feminists Against Censorship
(speaker Avedon Carol)

17th March General discussion

24th March An Appreciation of George
Walford (speaker Adrian Williams)

31st March General discussion

7th April Libertarian Education — is it
possible? (open discussion)

14th April General discussion

21st April The Anarchist Barometer (speaker
John Rety)

28th April General discussion

5th May Pro-Sex Feminism and Sexual
Freedom For All (speaker Tuppy Owens)

12th May General discussion

19th May Just Talking (speaker Don Howard)

26th May General discussion

Many meeting slots are vacant, although a
number of invitations have gone out and we
are waiting for specific dates. If anyone would
like to give a talk or lead a discussion, overseas
or out-of-town speakers especially, please
contact either Dave Dane or Peter Neville at
the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper
Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth, Middlesex
TW7 4AW (telephone number 081-847 0203,
not too early in the day please) giving subject
and prospective dates and we will do our best
to accommodate. These could be instead of a
general discussion but the latter are not merely
unfilled slots but popular occasions in their
own right so we are unwilling to relinquish too
many. A collection is made to pay for the cost
of the room. Donations are accepted from
those who cannot attend regularly but wish to
see the continuation of these meetings.

**Peter Neville / Dave Dane
London Anarchist Forum**

The Raven Anarchist Quarterly number 27 on 'Fundamentalism' out now

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- 25 - Religion (1)
- 24 - Science (1)
- 23 - Spain / Emma Goldman
- 22 - Crime
- 21 - Feminism
- 20 - Kropotkin's 150th Anniversary
- 19 - Sociology
- 18 - Anthropology
- 17 - Use of Land
- 16 - Education (2)
- 15 - Health
- 14 - Voting
- 13 - Anarchism in Eastern Europe
- 12 - Communication
- 11 - Class
- 10 - Libertarian Education
- 9 - Bakunin and Nationalism
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