

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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FIFTY PENCE

"The very end of government is to secure wealth and defend the rich against the poor."

Adam Smith
(from *Wealth of Nations*)

WHAT LABOUR ALTERNATIVE?

Surely nowadays no-one needs to be told that politicians are in the business not only for the kicks that 'power' provides but also for all the business openings (the directorships, the consultancies, the free weekends at the Ritz, the free trips to the never-ending conferences to make the world more profitable, for some) as well as very profitable directorships for ex-ministers.

So how anybody can imagine that to vote for any of them will help to bring about benefits for the people at the bottom of the pile is beyond belief. After all, the public in general is as 'corrupt' as the politicians. Everybody knows that if the basic needs of a civilised society - food, shelter, health and security for the young, the old and the disabled - are to be available to all in a capitalist economy, it has to be provided through taxation on income and wealth. As governments are always at pains to point out: they haven't the means. What they are doing is to impose direct and indirect taxes and determining how the proceeds shall be distributed.

Pity the Poor Farmers!

When will the taxpayers of Europe stop subsidising the farmers? The latest handout is to fruit farmers who have been paid £1,900 an acre to grub up the apple orchards. Needless to say led by the French with 24,000 acres and followed by the Germans, Italians and Spanish who between them have scrapped another 32,000 acres, our own farmers have thought it more profitable to grub up 7,000 acres and collect the £13 million bonanza for sitting on their backsides. Meanwhile, of course, the underpaid part-time workers who did all the dirty work because they needed the money (even at £1 an hour!) are out of a job (if it can be so called). And presumably we shall be importing more apples!

The fate of the English apple over the years is vividly described by Chris Wilbert in *The Apple Falls from Grace: A History from ancient Times to the Present Day* in the small volume *Deep Ecology and Anarchism* (Freedom Press, £2.50 post free inland).

It is obvious that the party of the rich, the Tories, will look after the interests of the rich. Indeed one of the first things Thatcher did was to reduce the super-tax from 80% in two stages to 40%, and free the export of capital which *immediately* resulted in some £17 billion being invested in countries where labour was cheap, at the expense of workers here. People have long forgotten that when Thatcher's government came into power in 1979 unemployment was under 1.5 million. Within a couple of years it had doubled. Be that as it may! After all, what else can one ask of the party of the rich?

But there are perhaps a few million people in this country who have illusions as to what the Labour Party, with Tony Blair and his Shadow Cabinet, will do if they win the general election in 1997. According to *The Sunday Times* (9th April) Blair has already said *that the party would honour any tax cuts made by the Tories between now and the elections!* We have not seen a denial which would mean, at least for electoral purposes, that a Labour government would not 'tax the rich till the pips squeak', and in which case should be

telling voters *how* they propose to halt the virtual privatisation of the health service and the cuts in the educational services. (Incidentally, we would be more impressed by the 'militancy' of the teachers' unions if they recognised that compared with many other valuable public service workers, including farmworkers, dustmen, water and electricity workers, they are financially among the 'privileged'.)

By the time a Labour government is elected the Tories will have sold off all the 'family silver' (Macmillan's reference in old-age to the privatisations) and used it to reduce taxation, which in fact means the rich are even better off. After all, the unemployed and the millions of part-time workers (those who do less than 17 hours a week at derisory hourly rates) are not paying tax anyway, so reducing the basic rate from 25% to 20% only benefits those who already pay.

If the Labour lot really mean business so far as the rich are concerned, they must immediately declare a halt to the export of capital. They must demand that all off-shore
(continued on page 2)

THE ARMS DEALERS UNOFFICIAL AND OFFICIAL!

Mark Thatcher and Jonathan Aitken have certainly been hogging the headlines with their successes as international arms dealers. All to the good, and especially Mamma Thatcher's involvement in some of the profitable Middle Eastern deals.

But relegated to the 'In Brief' column of *The Independent* (7th April, and probably escaping the attention of most readers) was the news item that our very own Secretary of State for Defence, Malcolm Rifkind, was beginning:

"... a week-long visit to Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe today to promote exports of defence equipment and expertise" (our italics).

Here we are spending some £23,000 million on so-called 'Defence', against a potential enemy presumably, and

then the Secretary of State for Defence spends a week in Africa to sell weapons to other powers! If 'Defence' was not just another business then surely we would not dream of selling arms to other countries which might be used against us? That's too obvious. After all, Britain was exporting scrap-iron to Germany as late as a few weeks before Chamberlain declared war on Germany in 1939!

THE RAVEN 29

We aim to bring out our World War Two Anti-Celebration issue before the official celebrations. There is still time, but not much, for readers' contributions to be considered, so if you have something to contribute to this issue please send it in *now!*

Ideological Wars? You Bet!

Those of us from the older generation had no illusions about the First World War to end war. Even the revolutions it sparked off either failed and produced fascism in Italy and the nascent Nazi movement in Germany, or succeeded and produced a Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist dictatorship as ruthless as the rule of the Tsars which it had deposed.

By the mid '30s the threat of war was again in the air in Europe, with Mussolini in Abyssinia, Franco challenging the Spanish Republican government and Hitler promising to reunite all the Germans who had been separated from the Fatherland by the Versailles Treaty carve-up of Central Europe. In the 1930s too there was a growing anti-war movement; people who had experienced the horrors of one bloody war and still young enough to be conscripted for a second. For any of us who might imagine that World War One was a crusade, such volumes as Lord Ponsonby's* *Falsehood in War Time* left nobody with illusions about wars for freedom or anti-fascism and certainly not for racial or religious minorities! What is surely significant is that conscription (the Military Service Act) in the 1914-18 holocaust was only introduced in Britain early in 1916, whereas in the 1939-45 holocaust conscription was introduced months before Chamberlain declared war on Germany, and by the end of 1939 Churchill was demanding

* Harry Ponsonby (1871-1946) was an author and politician, product of Eton and Oxford. Entered diplomatic service and later was a Liberal MP, but moved to the Labour Party and to a Peerage in 1930. Just as during World War One he lost his seat because he advocated a negotiated peace with Germany, so he fell out with the Labour Party in 1935 and devoted his activities to the Peace Pledge Union.

WHAT LABOUR ALTERNATIVE?

(continued from page 1)

companies 'come clean' and return the super-tax to 80%. They should also sequester all the set-aside land (more than a million acres) and for the time being pay the land owners what they are now receiving from the CAP (Europe) and invite young, enterprising people to come and work the land on a subsistence basic and also assist them with temporary (mobile) accommodation while they build permanent homes on that land.

This may seem fanciful. Indeed it is! But only because the Labour Party has no intention of upsetting the capitalist apple cart.

The only alternative is when the exploited 30% at the bottom of the pile stop fighting each other and join hands. They are the producers of all the wealth which is exploited by a minority who contribute nothing - other than that they consume the lion's share and say that it's good for business!

that the obligation for National Service should be extended to include all "women and manpower still available".

It is surely not unreasonable to conclude that there was less enthusiasm among the people in this country to risk their lives for the so-called objectives in World War Two than their fathers (and even some of them) did in 1914-18. Is it possible that people in general are more aware of the fact that they are always the victims of war - all wars?

These reflections were inspired by a communication from Martin Walker, *The Guardian's* Washington correspondent, with the title 'Pentagon files show Japanese were always the atom bomb's prime target' (19th April).

In the first place the documents on which Martin Walker bases his report have just been released - that is fifty years after the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and at

least 52 years since the actual decision to do so was taken.

When the apologists for the atom bombing of these two cities argue that it shortened the war against Japan their duplicity is exposed, since the intention was from the beginning of the research by people like Professor Joseph Rotblat in Liverpool in 1939 that they were convinced that Germany would have such a weapon and Hitler would only be dissuaded from launching it by knowing that the 'Allies' could retaliate with a similar weapon. He resigned from the project "when it was realised that Germany could no longer produce its own bomb".

Fifty years later the bombshell is that the American politicians never intended developing and eventually using the atom bomb against Germany!

A 1943 document released in Washington

this month declared that:

"The general view appeared to be that best point-of-use would be on a Japanese fleet concentration", said the minutes of the top-level military policy committee on 5 May 1943.

"The Japanese were selected as they would not be so apt to secure knowledge from it as would the Germans", continued the minute of the meeting taken by General Leslie Groves, the military commander of the Manhattan Project."

The Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, which publishes the document in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* along with interviews with Manhattan Project scientists who were made to believe that the atom bomb they were working on was destined for Germany, publishes comments by Hans Bethe who directed the theoretical division of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos.

"I am amazed. We had no idea of such a decision. We were under the impression that Germany was the first target until the German surrender. That was my belief."

The fear was that if a bomb dropped on Germany turned out to be a dud, German scientists were sufficiently advanced to learn enough from it to accelerate their own nuclear weapons programme. In the view of the military policy committee, Japan had no effective atomic research programme.

"What began as a race against a potential nuclear power, Germany, turned into a project to produce a tool of immense military superiority against a non-nuclear state", Dr Makhijani* said yesterday.

By the time the bomb was ready, in July 1945, there was no longer a Japanese fleet to provide a concentrated target. Hiroshima was chosen because it was not a military or industrial centre, and was one of the few Japanese cities not destroyed by conventional bombing."

We leave it to readers to draw their own conclusions. Our only comment is to denounce all scientists who undertake such research and, far from showering them with honours, they should be made to feel that they are enemies of mankind.

* Arjun Makhijani, president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research.

Beating the Bullies

There was a quarter-page advertisement in the *Education Guardian* last week itemising the philosophies of Summerhill School and inviting enquiries. It served as a timely caveat on the recent developments of state education and a reminder that there was a time when state education increasingly incorporated A.S. Neill's child-centred progressive way of teaching young children to become autonomous, fulfilled, empathetic, questioning people.

The combination of the national curriculum, systematic testing and ever-increasing class sizes will inevitably lead to the re-introduction of rote learning, indoctrination and children returning to sit in rows, all the easier to discipline. The insidious dismantling of the National Health Service should be acting as a warning to those parents, teachers and governors concerned with children's education. Power is increasingly being withdrawn from teachers and the Labour Party is advocating no strike action for fear of alienating the support of parents, which according to parents' leader Margaret Morrissey is "hanging by the skin of its teeth". The status of teachers is declining, pushed down further by remarks such as "After this week the public might need reassurances that our faith in teacher's professionalism remains justified" (Gillian Shephard, Education Secretary). As with health workers, this constant lack of respect is undermining the good will of teachers and is leading to low morale and apathy in some schools, and it is in these circumstances that insidious reforms slip in the back door almost unheeded.

A survey by the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers questioned 3,500 members and found that many feel they are bullied by school governors, parents and headteachers. Some

claim to be working in a climate of fear where they are snooped upon by headteachers both to ascertain their political persuasions and monitor their classroom styles. Now that the three largest teachers' unions are so closely in agreement, it would be a lost opportunity if fear or apathy prevent their members from demanding the best for our children that the state system can provide. Opportunities for establishing free schools are minimal, as government legislation is stringent and schools like Summerhill only just survive in the constant shadow of predatory government inspectors and rising fees attracting most pupils from abroad. Progressive education is by-passing yet again those children who need it most.

Primary schools are in the front line of the class size battle. 20,000 primary school children are in classes of forty or more, and one million of classes more than thirty. Whilst it is generous of Gillian Shephard to give us fifteen reasons why class sizes are growing, it does not solve the problems. If, as she tells us, class size is not of great significance can she also tell us why every advertisement for private sector schools boasts of its small class sizes and favourable teacher-pupil ratios for all activities?

The ever-present Socialist Workers' Party managed to grab the Easter headlines by roughly lobbying David Blunkett. "These are the bullies who berated a blind man ... They may teach your children" screamed the *Daily Mail* - nice one SWP! All hands to the cause.

Perhaps the answer is after all in nutrition. A headteacher claims that since he banned junk food from his school's canteen the GCSE pass rate in the school has risen from 6% to 38% - apples for the teachers too please.

Silvia Edwards

out now

Raven 28

Noam Chomsky on the Restoration of Democracy in Haiti

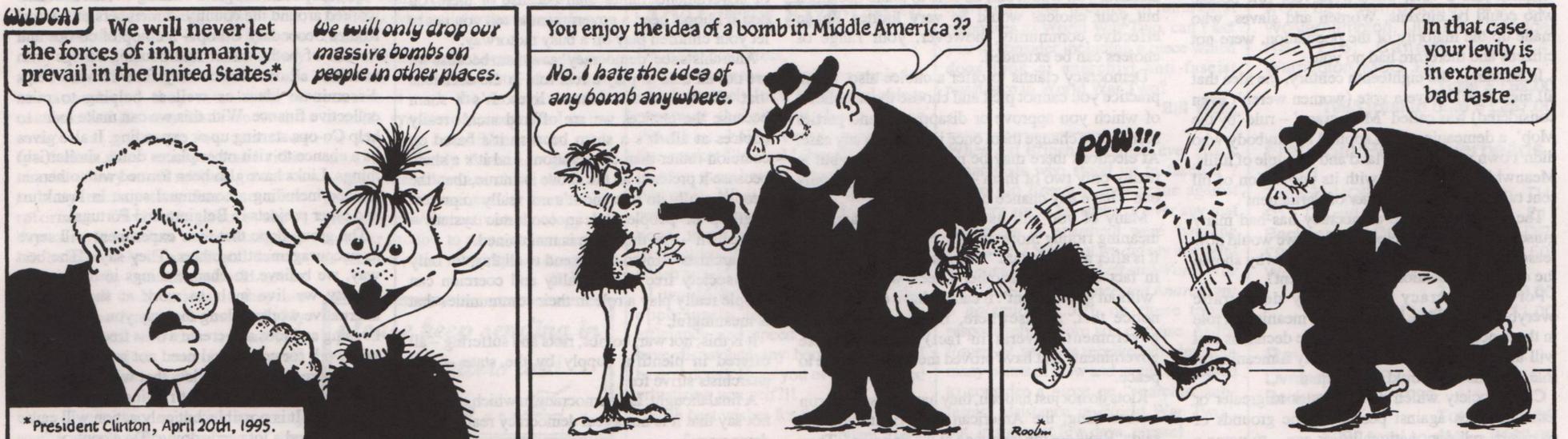
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* President Clinton, April 20th, 1995.

Housing has always been an issue of considerable interest to anarchists who have been great enthusiasts, in the main, of the self-build architectural tendency. *Freedom* recently conducted the following interview with Sam of the Giroscope housing co-op in Hull. It's been around for a fair while now and we began by asking him what problems it had met with back in the early stages...

Sam: A combination of things. A group of friends with no past experience of building work were attempting to build houses. The early work was a collection of blind faith and DIY guides – doing repairs and renovations that ten years on seem rather strange. Money was also a big problem, but buying the first house quickly led to the purchase of others based on its strength. Originally it, money, seems to have been begged borrowed and stolen. Although we were owning properties, not everyone (i.e. banks, insurance companies) were prepared to look at it as a serious prospect for the future. A major problem came from the various authorities. The general attitude of the Labour dominated Hull City Council was that if something had to be done they were the ones to do it. Central government grants were denied to us as we had to go through the City Council, and needless to say this money would have been a great help. Other bodies connected to them such as Environmental Health found Giroscope to be a fitting victim for the full wrath of Health and Safety legislation – however ridiculous, unnecessary or contradictory – and needless to say countless inspections.

Freedom: How does the group organise itself? For example how are decisions made?

Sam: The central decision making body of Giroscope is a weekly meeting – open to members, volunteers, tenants and the simply interested. Theoretically it is a democratic structure with all members having a vote, a rotating chair and secretary and open agenda. In this respect it is a worker's democracy. We do have a constitution of sorts being changed by the passing of a simple vote. It, for example, commits us to a 30 hour week (if the worker has no other commitments such as children to care for), low pay (presently £55 per week plus rent), non-violent, non-

ANARCHY IN ACTION?

— NUMBER 1 —

An interview with Giroscope: Building the future?

This is the first of what we hope to establish as a regular column in *Freedom*. We plan to look at concrete projects and activities which, if not always strictly anarchist, are indicative of the kinds of organisation and means of doing things which anarchists aim for.

discriminatory behaviour and so on. However, in reality votes are rare and we operate consensus politics allowing those with strong feelings on a subject to be more influential than their one vote would allow. Being a small group, frequently, many decisions don't really go to the meeting as we all know what's going on, who's doing which jobs, which tenants want what etc.

Freedom: Giroscope is much talked about in alternative housing circles. What have been the key factors to this success and do you see yourselves as serving as an example to others?

Sam: Everyone will have a different answer to what our success has been due to. Part of it will obviously be due to the group aiming to help themselves, which necessarily leads you to a serious commitment rather than the half-hearted activities of social workers who are only going to lose sleep if the project goes under. Giroscope is rightly proud of the strong do-it-yourself ethic. Instead of conferences, workshops, educationals (which we do attend and speak at) the early group were enough of Marxists to see production as the central focus. Another aspect was that it was a project

completely under the control of its members. With no mainstream funding, or no single financier or central/local government money we were in total control. At least part of it was due to housing being the focus. The property market was right. The first house was bought for around £7,000 (maybe £9,000) which has at least doubled in value. Bricks and mortar are fairly predictable! I would be pleased if we served as an example to others, however co-operation as a philosophy has been around since the year dot and there are many other groups like us around. It would be good, and indeed is good, to get people involved generally.

Freedom: What of the future. How do you see your group developing?

Sam: In the immediate future we are renovating a five-bedroom house for people with learning difficulties. Attached to this property are some workshops – so we are diversifying out of the purely housing to encompass other industry. Ideally these will be ethical co-operative concerns, maybe coming from our own group, but in reality any green small business would be good. Giroscope is big enough now and I hope in the future to assist and finance other groups to get started. We also wish to see our community grow bigger and develop, as well

as spreading the word of 'grassroot control, bottom up democracy, hard work and low pay.

Freedom: Do you relate to anarchism as a political idea?

Sam: The original group was deeply inspired by anarchist ideas, in particular those of Colin Ward in *Anarchy in Action*. Some of the group (myself included) do identify with anarchist philosophy and practices. The vision of a future of a million co-operatives owning both employment and houses, organising freely and with the central concern being for those involved and the environment, would probably be classed as either socialist or anarchist. It seems necessary not to be dogmatic but to practically deal with social needs. Of course not everyone working at Giroscope classes themselves as political. All share criticisms of current society and the way it's organised – but their motivation for working is that they learn skills, are better off (just) than they would be on the dole, often can have good housing and of course a social scene and so on rather than wishing to make a living example of anarchist thought and action.

The following is based on an article by Eddy Bewsher ex-Giroscope and Director of People's Trading Company.

It was in the mid 1980s that the Giroscope Workers Co-op set out on the path of radical change. By the early 1990s it had acquired 19 properties, that is to say run ex-derelict buildings, which included a self run creche, a corner shop which had been leased to another co-op, a joint project with MIND and an alternative energy house. By this time it was housing some 60 people.

Of course it wasn't seen as radical change by the pioneers who simply wanted some decent housing in the so called 'boom' years that passed by places like Hull and the North in general. In this sink or swim atmosphere some decided not to take it lying down. They headed off for the Welsh valleys or hit the road in old buses. Meanwhile in Hull a bunch of folk, complete with their dreadlocks or shaven heads, started pooling their giros to make eating cheaper. It was felt that this mutual aid could extend further.

Property was cheap – about £5,000 would buy a house – and by various means, some verging well on the dubious, a small house was secured and rented out to some homeless people while the initial crew squatted another. A co-op was formed. The squat was up for sale with a lowered price due to the presence of the squatters and was sold, unbeknown to the estate agents, to someone who just happened to be one of the squatters. Another property was secured and housing benefit was claimed by those on the dole to pay the mortgage.

The basic process then was get a cheap house, probably in a near derelict state and renovate it collectively involving directly the folks who were eventually going to live there. Members of the Co-op would put 30 hours work in each week or less if they had commitments such as a family.

The whole process engenders a feeling of community which is very important. It's hard to define as all you have to do to be in a community is hang around here, work here, live here, be friends with people here, play football here or even be in a Co-op! Many other ventures were set up in the early days. These include Privvy Press, which is a women's print and design Co-op, and Big Table Housing Co-op. This is now registered and soon hopes to start buying houses, using this structure, around the same area Giroscope is based in.

Giroscope and People's Trading Co. are now networked around the country as members of Radical Routes Secondary Co-op – a co-op of co-ops and formed of both worker and housing co-ops with members all over the country. The network helps disseminate ideas as well as helping to raise collective finance. With this we can make loans to help Co-ops starting up or expanding. It also gives us a chance to visit other places doing similar(ish) things. Links have also been formed with others in Europe including a communal squat in Frankfurt and other projects in Belgium and Portugal.

The group hope that their experiment will serve as encouragement to others. They say: "The best way, we believe, to change things in this greedy society we live in is to work at showing the alternative works. Along the way you can liberate housing and jobs and create a boss free system that will work for communal need not greed. In doing this we are creating a society that will be naturally 'green' and can do without ripping off the rest of the planet. It is possible, but only action will cause re-action and a lot needs doing. Take control."

Power lies with the people

Anarchist Jacob Dales of Combe Down explains his reasons behind his distrust of 'democracy' in *Bath News*, 12th April 1995.

As the local elections draw near, you may find yourself considering who is going to get your precious vote. We do after all, I am told, live in a democracy.

I beg to differ, for you see I am an anarchist – this statement doubtless triggers off a number of thoughts based on your assumptions about anarchists, anarchy and anarchism. I think the best way to explain why I am an anarchist is to explain what I think of democracy.

Democracy means rule 'by the people' and comes from an ancient Greek work. The democracy of ancient Greece was not something we would recognise today, however, for although every 'citizen' had a vote, there were very few people who could be citizens. Women and slaves, who made up the majority of the population, were not citizens and therefore had no vote.

In Britain in the eighteenth century, the idea that all men should have a vote (women weren't even considered) was called 'Mobocracy' – rule 'by the Mob', a demeaning term applied by anybody who didn't own vast areas of land and a couple of mills. Meanwhile, Old Sarum with its population of nil sent two MPs to the 'Mother of Parliament'.

The use of the word democracy has had many guises up until today. None of them we would reasonably describe as democracy, so why should the current application be any different?

For a democracy to be really democratic everybody should be able to play a meaningful role in the functioning of society and the decisions that will affect our lives. For us to play a meaningful role it seems we should all be equal.

Can a society which discriminates to greater or lesser degrees against people on the grounds of race, sex, religion, nationality or age – to name a

few – really say these people are able to play a role in democracy on an equal footing? Can their views be fairly reflected? Can anybody's views be reflected when a tiny minority controls vast wealth which greatly affects their power and influence?

Even if this were not so, can an 'X' in a box every four or five years really be considered as active participation?

It seems to me that our notion of democracy is based on two fundamental flaws; the first is that we are not fit to govern ourselves and the second that we should trust somebody else to rule on our behalf – someone who in all probability we have never and are unlikely ever to meet. The truth is if we really are so stupid why should we be allowed to 'choose' our rulers?

Anarchists see the role of society as being to maximise the range of individual choice. If you are isolated, you would still be able to make decisions but your choices would be very limited. In an effective community, however, your range of choices can be extended.

Democracy claims to offer a choice also, but in practice you cannot pick and choose those policies of which you approve or disapprove, and parties seem apt to change them once in power in any case. At elections there may be many candidates but in reality only two of them – and in some cases only one – have any chance of being elected.

Many of you will have a vision of anarchy as meaning rioting mobs and the civil war in Bosnia. It is after all a standard 'Newspeak' term for chaos. In fact anarchy is another Greek word meaning 'without government'. It cannot have escaped your notice that, as elsewhere, Bosnia does have a government (several in fact) and it is these governments that have proved the main obstacle to peace.

Riots do not just happen, they have causes. Martin Luther King, the American civil rights activist, said: "Riots are the language of the unheard". They

are the product of the failure of so-called democracy.

China's dictator Mao Tse Tung said: "Political power springs from the barrel of a gun". It is not just in China that this is so, for behind their reasonable veneer all states rely on violence or the threat of violence.

You and I do not have access to shields, extending batons, riot vans, rubber bullets, tear gas, guns and tanks. The difference between China's threat 'do as I say or I'll kill you' and a democracy's threat 'persons guilty of non-compliance will be liable to a term of imprisonment' is different in terms of level of coercion, but this is of less significance than the similarities.

Under the guise of promoting 'law and order', states perpetrate all manner of brutality, not just against humans in terms of war and oppression but also in destroying our environment in a mad lust for profit.

Real law and order is in fact the everyday commonsense actions of ordinary people, in spite of governments rather than because of them. You don't, I hope, need a government to tell you not to let your children play on a busy motorway.

Anarchists see 'democracy' as a sham because we are not all able to play a real role in the decisions that affect ours and others' lives. It's a sham because the choices we are offered aren't really choices at all. It's a sham because it's based on coercion rather than cooperation. And it's a sham because it pretends all the above is untrue, that 'the people' really do rule and it's not really to protect a group of people and an economic system – capitalism – that this sham is maintained.

Anarchists want to see an end to all this, for only in a society free of inequality and coercion can people really play a role in their communities that is meaningful.

It is this, not war, bombs, riots and suffering – all offered in plentiful supply by the state – that anarchists strive for.

A final thought. Is a democracy in which one may not say that it is not a real democracy really a real democracy?

Government to give millions for huge university expansion

No, I do not mean the universities where they teach useful arts and sciences and carry out research, I mean these other academies, the prisons, the universities of crime. Many fairly harmless and inadequate people enter them, as well as the unfortunates who are mentally ill and have been turned out of the hospitals for the mentally sick into 'the care of the community'. They serve their first sentence, and after they have graduated they are set on a criminal way of life and truly anti-social. They apply both the skills and the attitudes of mind that they have learned in prison to a continuing parasitism on society.

Britain currently has the largest proportion of its population living in prison compared with other European countries. Turkey comes next. The Home Secretary now proposes to greatly increase the prison population and plans a great programme of building more prisons, so we may expect that in a few years time the crime rate will soar and approach that of the USA. We will be living in a far more dangerous and uncomfortable society where the haves will increasingly have to depend upon security guards and systems of surveillance, and the have-nots be the victims of petty thieves and hooligans who have not the ability to prey upon larger game. I have given the details upon which this

prediction is made in *The Raven* (April-June 1993).

To have a Home Secretary planning a policy that will inevitably lead to more violence, theft and the abuse of the more vulnerable in society, may seem so absurd that it would be charitable to attribute it to sheer bone-headed stupidity and ignorance of the most elementary facts of criminology, but I am not in the least disposed to give him and his co-conspirators the benefit of the doubt. I think that they know perfectly well what is going to happen if this disastrous policy is carried through. Their immediate short-term aim is vote-catching, and they are appealing to the lowest form of gut-reaction in the mass of unthinking people in all social classes who are rendered fearful and uncomfortable by the present rate of crimes against property and the person. They fall for the simplistic argument that 'if they are kept behind bars these villains can't harm us'. Of course they can't when they are actually in prison; it is when they are eventually released that they are increasingly dangerous and parasitic. As all sentences are not literally life sentences, the prisons are constantly discharging their 'graduates', corrupted and scarred more of less by their nasty experience, to make the present situation increasingly worse.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century the penal policy was (putting ethics aside) far more *sensible* in some ways. They reasoned that one could effectively prevent robbers and petty thieves from continuing their careers by hanging them. This policy had the disadvantage that if the penalty for theft was the same as that for murder, one might as well kill one's victims even if the goods stolen were quite trivial, for then there will be fewer victims to bear witness. This drawback suggested the alternative of transportation to the colonies where convicts were used as

slaves. Neither of these alternatives is now being proposed by the Home Secretary; the policy proposed is simply hypocritical: it is pretended that it will lead to a more peaceful and harmonious society, while all the time it is well known that it will lead to the reverse. They are counting on a sufficient portion of the electorate being too stupid to realise what such a policy will bring about. The primitive desire for revenge is being played upon, the nasty wish that if one has been robbed or assaulted someone is being made to suffer and have his/her life damaged. 'Let the sentence be harsher! Let the prison conditions be even nastier!'

I am well aware that the major problems of our society are not caused by those we label 'criminals'. The distinction that Alex Comfort made between 'criminality' and 'delinquency' long ago in his *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State** is highly relevant to the issue. The bare-faced robbers who hold the community to ransom by seizing monopolistic control of the necessities of life are a far greater social evil than those who merely rob banks and houses, but they cannot be called 'criminals' for they do not break the criminal law. What I am concerned about in this article is a smaller problem that should not be allowed to obscure the greater – the delinquent basis of our society. I am drawing attention to an immediate and pressing problem, and all people of sense and goodwill, whatever their political stance, should be aware of it. It is they, their children and their children's children who are going to have to live in the increasingly violent, anxious and debased form of society of the future which will be the inevitable outcome of the penal

* Alex Comfort, *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State*, Routledge, 1950.

McLibel Trial Resumes

The McDonalds libel trial was due to start again on 26th April, after the Easter recess. Before Easter the court heard Marja Hovi, a vet who had been sacked by a McDonalds supplier, Jarret's slaughterhouse in Bristol, after refusing to testify that beef intended for McDonalds, which had not been fully examined, was free of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or 'mad cow disease'.

For the next few weeks the judge will hear evidence about McDonalds employment practices. From the opening remarks last summer, the defendants will seek to show that McDonalds offer poor wages and conditions and are anti-trade union, while McDonalds lawyers will seek to show that wages and conditions are commensurate with others in the fast food industry and that there is no hindrance to staff joining unions if they so wish.

The defendants intend to call former McDonalds employees from round the world, and a couple of trade union officials from Lyons, where five McDonalds managers were arrested last June accused of trying to rig a union election.

The first McDonalds Corporation store opened in Des Plaines, Illinois, on 15th April 1955, and the fortieth anniversary was celebrated this year. In Britain, McDonalds own publicity was overshadowed by the anti-McDonalds campaign. The defendants in the London trial, our comrades Helen Steel and Dave Morris, were invited to Des Plaines by the Chicago anti-McDonalds group. They took part in a demonstration of several hundred outside the Des Plaines McDonalds and gave a press conference.

The trial started in June 1994, and now looks likely to go on until January 1996, making it the longest libel trial ever in this country. McDonalds may well win the verdict (though that is not certain), but they will lose a lot of money: £5,000 a day court costs, plus about the same in fees to their own lawyers – the defendants have no money at all. And the adverse publicity will not be doing them any good.

Further information from McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX. Tel: 0171-713 1269.

MUM'S THE WORD?

The recent British Family Formation survey findings that fewer women are having babies and are having them later in life have been greeted by many differing interpretations. Ardent feminists welcome the findings as a cause for celebration, as women claiming responsibility and choice over their reproductive lives. A slight shift from the feminist message 'women can have it all' to 'women don't have to have it all'. Those interested in population control see the trend as good news as any drop in the population is good for the future of the planet, the argument being that we in the West cannot concentrate birth control solely in the Third World as this would echo the British middle classes of the past who were frightened that the lower classes would breed uncontrollably and the resulting rabble would swamp the privileged few.

Demographically there is the fear that there will be too small a workforce to support both financially and physically an ever-growing ageing population.

Traditionalists are worried that women who delay having children for the sake of careers are finding it increasingly difficult to conceive when they make a last minute attempt. The survey does not tell us the reasons why women are not having children so frequently, so we can only surmise. Could lack of adequate childcare be a factor in women's decisions, perhaps women watch the constant stress and ferrying of children by friends and decide it's better not to enter the arena. Perhaps the threat of AIDS has resulted in women remaining celibate in between serious relationships and thus avoiding unplanned pregnancies which some women then choose to go through with.

Perhaps, as some claim, there is no such thing as maternal instinct and that desire for motherhood is a social construct which is losing its grip. Or could it be that women no longer stay in unsatisfactory relationships long enough to have children.

It is very difficult to imagine being childless or even child-free, and it is almost impossible to explain to child-free people exactly what being a parent is like. I have found it fulfilling and character building, and never ending.

At a time when issues surrounding fertility fill the media daily, it is one of the ironies of life that those who can conceive choose not to do so and those who desperately wish to conceive often cannot, sometimes resulting in clinical depression.

The difference is that infertile women can still receive help through fertility treatment. For older women who have chosen the child-free life, there may well be no such help if they regret their decisions.

Silvia Edwards

— OBITUARY —

Joan Sculthorpe

We are sorry to hear that Joan Currie died on 20th April.

As Joan Sculthorpe, Joan was active in the Union of Anarchist groups in the late 1940s and 1950s, in Liverpool where she organised the successful Anarchist Summer School of 1949, and later in London where she was very involved in the running the Malatesta Club.

policy that is being proposed. Judges, magistrates and other members of the judiciary principally belong to the more affluent section of society, but they are human and subject to the normal aspirations of citizens who want to enjoy themselves in peace, and without the necessity of restricting their lives, and those of their families, because of the menace of robbery and violent attack. Are they really so blind as to implement a policy that will make life much more difficult for themselves and the whole community, after the American model?

Other countries in Europe with populations and traditions similar to the British deal with crime in a manner very different from here, and manage to have a far smaller portion of the population living in prison; why should we put up with being led by the nose along a road that will lead to a disastrous end that is perfectly predictable? A public outcry and a healthy riot led to the abandonment of the ridiculous poll tax, a monstrous imposition that parliament was apparently unable to remedy by debate. Perhaps we are heading for an era in which progress, or even a halt to further disintegration, is only possible by extra-parliamentary means.

Tony Gibson

Hampshire Special Branch on tour

In *Freedom* for 8th April we reported the raids by Hampshire Special Branch on three addresses in Oxford, the Inner Bookshop, and on 14th March the printer of *Green Anarchist* and the private address of the editor of *Green Anarchist*, from which they remove files, papers, computer discs and the computer.

After the issue had gone to press, we learned that Hampshire Special Branch had also raided an address in Camberley, Surrey, and the home of our comrade, the author Stephen Booth, in Lancaster.

Four officers of Hampshire Special Branch arrived at Steve's house on 31st March, accompanied by two officers from the local nick and a search warrant. They took away a cupboardful of magazines, a pile of anti-poll tax leaflets which Steve had not got around to throwing away, a typewriter, a briefcase, computer discs recording two years' work on a nearly completed novel, and a copy of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* which they apparently took to be a subversive work. Steve was arrested and held for some time in the local nick, then released without charge on police bail, to report to Hampshire Special Branch HQ in Southampton, 225 miles (360km) from Lancaster, some time in June.

We do not yet know the cause of this activity, other than the generalisation that Special Branch is short of cases and anxious to justify its existence.

As readers in the United Kingdom will know, Special Branch is the arm of the police force dealing with political subversives. There is also an anti-subversion office called MI5, formerly a branch of Military Intelligence but now answerable only to the Prime Minister. It was originally set up to look for foreign spies, but after the 1914-18 war it also made responsible for Marxists, considered (with justification) to be directed from Russia. Special Branch was the visible arm of MI5, arresting and charging spies and subversives whom MI5 had tracked down, and retained responsibility for anarchists and Fenians (i.e. Irish Nationalists).

With the end of the Cold War, MI5 lost most of its clientele and applied to take over responsibility for the IRA on the ground that Special Branch was not dealing with it very well. This left Special Branch with nobody but anarchists to keep tabs on. But they seem to define anarchists very broadly to include all direct action protesters, whether of the anarchist persuasion or otherwise.

Recently there has been talk of both Special Branch and MI5 spying on illegal drug importers and whatnot. With the Cold War over and the Irish conflict approaching settlement, they are both worried about their grants.

What the Special Branch from Southampton is doing in Oxford, Lancaster and Camberley we do not yet know. Another Hampshire police branch, the CID, is also touring the country investigating footballers accused of fixing matches for Malaysian gambling syndicates, but we presume this is just coincidence.

Through the Anarchist Press

Warily the anarchist watches as the pent-up emotions come to the fore. Individuals and communities suddenly see a chink of light. The poorest of the poor among us band together, find comradeship, shelter, food and good company. It is unbelievable that side by side of ostentatious wealth and riches such a layer of consistent poverty should exist in this advanced capitalist country. That the self-appointed, or even anointed, executive is making heavy weather of the distribution of undoubted wealth, surely the easiest task of all, has resulted in pitiful lives overall of individuals and communities. This is a world of infinite surplus, renewable through harvest and birth both of working power and materials. Everything is usable and adaptable. But the system, the ruling system vaguely described as capitalism, whether private or of the state, is in itself an incoherent concoction with its built-in crises and unavoidable wars and contradictions and confrontations. Everything is free, but the false rhetoric enforced by the clubs, the enormous clubs, of the law ensure that everything has a price. This is all engineered by the self-appointed executive with their sham elections, for the rules of the elections are laid down by the executive and the rules are so constructed that only the people who are in power stay in power. So why hasn't the whole caboodle been sent packing a long time ago? The problem is that however absurd the system, once it is foisted on a population which has no choice but to endure living under it, worse through the efforts of the same population, will totter on indefinitely. In this world of persistent surplus no system, however incoherent, however despotic, however vicious, can or will be seen to fail completely. The four year old children weaving your carpets for a rupee a day, the thousands of

unpaid mining your copper at gunpoint are, in terms of capitalism, only an economic entry and signal that the system works, even if the soap is made from the bones and skins of the holocaust victims. The shareholders ought to be pleased.

A certain kind of elation is however observable which seems to permeate the whole of society from Brightlingsea to the Orkneys. Communal experiments are entered into with tremendous energy and are seen to

succeed on an ever-increasing scale. In my own locality alone anarchist ideas are becoming common currency. How it is happening nobody quite knows, for the formal copybook anarchist is practically non-existent.

It is nonetheless a very dangerous period and our best hope still remains that by now, through some curious system of political osmosis, there are enough anarchists in place in all professions, trades and interest groups

whose combined wisdom and weight as citizens of influence can stand up to the counter-weight of the doctrinaire executive.

There are no difficulties unsolvable in a functioning anarchist society. The only requirement remaining is the need for sovereign individuals, in Lionel Bart's immortal words: "Consider yourself part of the furniture", to accept the simple tenet that the welfare of the community is all inclusive.

In this material world human beings are beginning to realise that co-operation and mutual aid and a say in what is needed to produce is a thousand times more efficient than the hit and miss methods of capitalism. Yet of course only the highest and most advanced societies practice mutual aid. Without such wisdom the population perishes.

Nevertheless, there are enough hidey-holes for those involved in purely their private pursuits, and these might not wish to abandon these same pursuits just for the sake of an abstract idea: the good of the community. Let the anarchists remind others and themselves that nobody can survive the first years of their childhood without the constant care and attention, dare I mention love, of their fellows.

Group thinking has always been difficult. As you know to your cost, most models of organisation have the smell of prison about them, and the simple and the innocent, the person of good will, is always proved to be wrong. Times are a-changing. At the push of the button you may now switch off the system. Fair enough. As long as you push the right button. Philip Sansom used to say that you cannot have an anarchist society without a society of anarchists. There is no fear, except the word fear itself. We live in a world of free materials and of free labour. We have made this country at best described as an open prison. The population is groping towards anarchy. Don't let them be fobbed off with some capitalist lookalike.

John Rety

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As a punishment for being the kind of anarchist who would rather address the outside world, when I have the chance, than argue with other anarchists, I get sought out for a 60-second comment on a variety of issues. I serve, however unworthily, as a token anarchist in the same sense that others have to serve as the token woman, black or disabled person, and have the same dilemma of finding the right few short sentences that will win a sympathetic hearing.

The other week, for example, the British government's Foreign Office paid for a conference in London on 'Britain in the World', addressed by John Major, Douglas Hurd, Prince Charles and Henry Kissinger. They were all parodies of themselves, exemplifying the universal rule that when a government is in trouble it starts waving flags.

Before any of their observations were reported, I was asked to comment from our local BBC studio for the World Service on the idea of such a conference. So I loyally spouted the right sentences from my contribution to the symposium on Englishness in *New Statesman & Society* (24th February 1995) about 'Pride and Prejudice'. I learned from the media the next day that the addresses from all those posh speakers were as abysmal as we would imagine. Taxpayers footed the bill, of course.

Indeed, the Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd actually cited the BBC World Service, which is directly paid for by his department, as one of the shining lights of Britain in the World. I just hope that their producer included my minute of dissent.

My next appearance as a token anarchist was more rewarding. A symposium was held in London of members of the confusing variety of 'think-tanks' of the political left and right, and of community activists, and I was one of four speakers asked to talk for ten minutes each on the topic of Self-Help.

Needless to say, I recycled comments already made in this column, but this endless reiteration of some basic ideas was new to that expert audience, so I'll reproduce them yet again.

Think-tank talk about self-help

I must make two preliminary observations. The first is that it is useful to talk about Self-Help and Mutual Aid in one breath. The two phrases belong together because they are the titles of two famous books which have been in print all our lives. But

one of the problems with Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* which he regretted as he saw himself as a radical thinker, is that it is often thought to be a recommendation of helping yourself to the fruits of other people's labour. The current Penguin Classic edition is introduced by the late Keith Joseph.¹ But in fact the two concepts belong together.

My second point is that I speak not as someone wanting to help the Labour Party or any other party win control of the state machine, but as an anarchist, and to save discussion of this I will quote the definition written by Peter Kropotkin, the author of *Mutual Aid*,² for the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Anarchism is, he wrote:

"... the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government - harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilised being."³

Sharing this view, not merely of an ideal society but of the trends to be supported in any society, I am interested in the 'community content' independent of the state, in society, as defined by Martin Buber,⁴ and I need to stress that this has no connection with the ideas about 'communitarianism' currently propagated by Amitai Etzioni, which from the publicity they have attracted seem to me to be built around a punitive, unilateral view of how the poor and helpless should pull themselves together and stop being a burden on the conscience of the culture of contentment.

I have repeated endlessly, in every journal accessible to me, the same account of British history, on the simple facts of the growth of self-help and mutual aid in our society in and after the industrial revolution.⁵ Ignorant peasants, displaced by rural enclosures and herded into the new manufacturing slums, put aside pennies to set up sick clubs, coffin clubs,

provident and friendly societies of every kind, penny banks, penny schools and penny doctors. They subscribed to, and used, building societies and mechanics' institutes, and in the course of the nineteenth century built up not only productive and co-operative societies but the vast structures of the retail co-operative movement and the trade union movement. This communitarian ideology developed as a counter-culture in opposition to market forces and capitalism and was still alive in non-metropolitan Britain in my own adult life. For example, as a conscript in the Second World War I found myself in small-town Lancashire - places like Clitheroe, Burnley and Nelson - and learned that outside work everything from cradle to grave, literally, revolved around the co-ops. Evenings were spent in the co-op dance hall, cinema or evening classes, and people went on a co-op coach to a co-op holiday.

Similarly in the first instalment of Channel 4's series *What Has Become of Us All?*, Peter Hennessey was talking to retired miners on the hillside above Tredegar in South Wales. They explained how on the day in 1946 when signs were put up outside the pit saying 'This colliery is managed by the National Coal Board on behalf of The People', they thought this would mean miners running the pit, not new jobs for the same old managers. And they told him that when their MP was the man in charge of the National Health Service in 1948: "We thought he was turning the whole country into one big Tredegar. He was taking the message of Tredegar to everyone."

What they meant by this was the fact that under the old system of National Health Insurance introduced by Lloyd George in 1911, only employed people qualified for medical care through an 'approved society'. So in Tredegar the miners themselves introduced universal care by subscribing weekly to guarantee free care for wives, children, the old and the unemployed. As I put it recently in the anarchist press: "It was

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

A TOKEN ANARCHIST

Coca Cola Cuba?

The Victorian nouveau riche, in common with the computerised superior working class haunting the bookshelves for the revolution that will not interfere with their BUPA, personalised pension and mortgage, had little use for art as an end in itself. They paid for the well-stacked nude in marble or in paint, bonded for puff the dragon, and demanded – Marxist economics – that every painting should be a staged set homily expounding the virtues of hard work by the labouring classes and Christianity as the first step up the cross to the big bank balance. Among the many lasting favourites of the Victorians was that of the reckless fool in 'The Last of the Old Home' as surrounded by his weeping family, aged parents, avaricious money-lenders and empty wine bottles, he sells off the last of the family silver. It was left to Ma Thatcher to take what had always been an economic cottage industry geared to the rakish gaming rooms and elevate it to a method of financing a political manifesto based on an honoured promise to reduce and reduce the taxes of the rich and the parasitical middle class. This she did, with the full approval of her rubber-stamping acolytes that formed her political circus, by flogging off everything that the wide boys in the City of London could borrow the money for. She sold a people's birthright so that Harold Macmillan gazed up at the carved ceiling of the House of Lords and wept that Ma Thatcher "was selling off the family silver". Coal mines, water, oil, railways, mail, name it and it was to be sold off the barrow by people who deemed office more worthy than honour. Get rich quick schemes from the South Sea Bubble to the naming of Lloyds Names, even the Three Card Trick, has always been the prerogative of the private sector, but when politicians in office resort to it to finance their corrupt ideologies then one has an obligation, nay a moral right, to lift up the hem of one's toga and brood over the bacon sandwich and try to read the future in the dregs of one's gutted teabag expiring at the bottom of the 50p plastic cup. In times of national necessity governments have had to sell off land, national rights, as in Britain's

American deal, and as with the Lenin Bolshevik government major works of art, but always they would hold for the greater need, not for gerrymandering vote-rigging.

I have never been one to adopt a moral or historical cliché solution based on hindsight, for I leave that to the Real Ale academics trapped in the index of recorded history and the clean hands collectives who can state, with a weary raising of the tired eyes, that 'what should have been done in that battle, that barricade, that political, social or economic situation was ...' And then to lay the book aside with a cultivated air of weary resignation at the foolishness of men and the understanding of women. When Castro and his small group began their revolutionary takeover of Cuba I held that they were right and still hold that they were right, but history, mass poverty and the American government has once again pulled the rug from under the dream of a free, just and humane society. As in Russia, as in China, as in Ma Thatcher's Britain, American Coca Cola capitalism dictates our daily way of living and the American hard sell has now moved into the Cuban art market. But with a curious twist in that while the Cuban authorities are hawking off major works of art to the West, Castro is also in 'falling off a lorry' deals in that he is buying works of art from major London auction rooms, yea even to the Dutch auction rooms. Down to the gentleman at the back with the bushy beard and the rifle. Last year the Museo de Bellas Artes in Havana picked up 169 major works of art, while at the same time Castro can pull out his empty pockets crying 'skint' comrades. It is a simple ploy, comrades, in that the works of art purchased from 'abroad' are paid for by exchanging them for works of art in the National Museum and is achieved by a complex dealing with New York commercial art galleries. Not a dollar, not a peso and, to quote Rudolfo L. Gil

Brotons, top brass of the Museo de Bellas Artes in Havana, "I always compare this to administration of one's domestic economy, one must sacrifice something for the greater good of the family". But as long as it is not me, comrade, as Mark Thatcher, twig of Ma Thatcher, could have, would have, might have said. But, unfortunately, there are cries of 'betrayal of socialism' and plain and good honest-to-God stealing, for many of these major works of art were left hanging on the walls in 1958 when Batista and the wealthy top brass took to the good ol' US of A. Cuba has bought an Erasmus Quellinus and a Dirck Vellert's triptych plus a Van Dyck, and all in barter, friend, barter, no money, no money.

The paintings that the Museo de Bellas Artes claim first-claim to were, in the primeval beginning, bought these forty years ago by the Caribbean sugar plantation barons and the suntanned sweet-tasting entrepreneurs were



well advised by their European agent for when the sweet-tasting sugar barons pre-dated the Miami exodus by following in the steps of Batista, bank balance in the back pockets, they left behind paintings by the European masters such as Canaletto, Truner, Memling, Corot, Carpaccio, Cranach and Rubens. There are cries of 'Stop, Thief' and a Señor Arquimedes Matienzo Davino is now talking to his lawyer but, as Ma Thatcher demonstrated, if the treasure house is not guarded then it is a buyer's and a seller's market for what falls off the back of a lorry does not contain Marxist surplus values just an 'I swear to God officer I found it' and I know and you know, comrade, that only the Cuban labouring class in their ancient poverty will be robbed.

It is not the Cuban lottery that I find so depressing, for I have lived through the Maxwell, Lloyds and Barings Bank circuses, but the exhibition of New Art from Cuba within the Whitechapel Art Gallery, a minute's walk from Freedom Press, for here is work done by nine young Cuban artists "who address Cuba's current social and economic problems with frankness and wit" and, comrades, I'm afraid they don't. As naive or primitive offerings they might pass muster, and to say that it is 'kitsch' is begging justification. They are young and they have access to art history's master of their craft. The work on display is so 'old hat' and uninspired in relation to their training that even as sympathetic propaganda it must fail to raise a cheer. But there is Kiki Smith within the main gallery, and here indeed is magnificent work, and despite Brian Sewell's 'critic of the year' public protest against "papier mâché painted to resemble excrement", New York 1964, what cannot be faulted is Kiki Smith's magnificent modelling of the female figure for within those moulded figures she catches what is so rare in sculpture, the transmitted sense of human emotions, agony and human bewilderment. The blood, the shit and the piss wears away with time, but Kiki Smith's figures will remain worthy of our attention.

Arthur Moyses

ST'S WEEK

local, voluntary, universal, and the health professionals were directly responsible to the population that employed them. As that miner saw it, it was a model for the nation and was not at the mercy of the politicians and financial policies of central government".⁶

In other words, poor people made for themselves a community of self-help from the bottom up, and it was destroyed not because of the destruction of traditional industries in the examples I have given but because politicians, bent on imposing the agenda they had chosen, ignored it. Revolutionaries of every kind despised what they saw as 'coffin club socialism' and wanted to turn every industrial dispute into part of the final struggle against capitalism, with 'No Surrender' on their tattered banners. But members of the political class, also of every kind, thought that the patchy and geographical distribution of self-help and mutual aid should be replaced either by state provision of everything, or by the magic of the market.

By the end of the twentieth century we are seeing a re-run in urban Britain of the situation in rural Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A significant proportion of the population have become superfluous people, with no income-generating activity open to them. And there aren't any colonies to ship them off to. Government, as the supreme, once-trusted body gathering statistics, continually shifts the criteria so we don't know how many superfluous people we have. But we do notice that their numbers are increased every day by those who we simpletons would see as useful people, from milkmen and postmen to teachers.

But we also notice that in today's urban wastelands there are people around, just as there were in the industrial revolution, trying to build networks of self-help and mutual aid among the dispossessed. In the decade when, for example, insurance companies and building societies and even the co-ops have been busy getting rid of their embarrassing inheritance of

mutuality, self-help and mutual aid so as to compete in the capitalist market on equal terms, a variety of people in the Britain that the politicians have ignored have had to re-invent credit unions, food co-ops, the community industry, housing co-ops and self-build housing societies for the young, poor and unemployed, as well as local exchange trading systems.

They are all struggling a world away from the preoccupations of politicians concerned with the last voter in the last marginal middle-class constituency upon whom their livelihood depends. But if I were seriously investigating the future of self-help and mutual aid, I would be focusing my attention on the activists struggling in the margins of contemporary political life. In 1886, Fabian Tract No 4 declared that "English Socialism is not yet Anarchist or Collectivist, not yet defined enough in point of policy to be classified. There is a mass of Socialistic feeling not yet conscious of itself as Socialism". To my mind the dominant, centralised, governmental version of socialism, throughout the world, whether Fabian or Marxist, has set back socialism by a century. We need the re-emergence of self-help and mutual aid starting, as it did two hundred years ago, from the bottom up.

1. Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (1859), Penguin Classics, 1992.
2. Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid* (1902), Freedom Press, 1987.
3. Reprinted in Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism*, Freedom Press, 1987.
4. See the chapter on Buber in Colin Ward, *Influences: Voices of Creative Dissent*, Green Books, 1991.
5. Colin Ward, 'The Path Not Taken' in *The Raven*, number 3, November 1987; 'Building from the Bottom' in *Chartist*, April/May 1988; 'A Confederation of Confederations' in *Samizdat*, May/June 1990; 'State of Poverty' in *New Statesman & Society*, 16-30th December 1994.
6. Colin Ward, 'Simple Men and Complex Realities' in *Freedom*, 28th January 1995.

Some anarchist afterthoughts

Two things stand out for me at that meeting of the big thinkers. The first was that some had never before encountered that particular version of the history of social welfare in Britain. The second was that on the same day (3rd April) I had bought *The Independent*, which had a report by Tony Heath on the final demise of the self-help and mutual aid body which I had mentioned and which was run by generations of volunteers.

The current and last chairman explained to him that "long before the NHS came about we had our own national health service here in Tredegar". And Tony Heath described how:

The Tredegar Medical Aid Society was founded in 1870 and sustained through the years by voluntary contributions of 3d in the £1 from the wage packets of miners and steelworkers. The novelist A.J. Cronin was one of the society's GPs in the 1930s and his novel *The Citadel* is based on his experiences. But the demise of the foundries and collieries means membership had dwindled from a peak of 20,000 to under 100.

Legislation requiring friendly societies to submit to expensive annual audits hastened the end. Cash dried up from a torrent to a trickle and the £7,000 left in the kitty is being used to buy equipment for Tredegar's 58-bed hospital. At one time the society employed five doctors, a dentist, a chiropodist and a physiotherapist to care for the health of about 25,000 people."

His account goes on to explain how in the years since the nationalisation of health services the dwindling society has used its funds to top up NHS provision, but of course the important thing about Tredegar historically is that it provided a model for a user-controlled, federally-linked system of health management. In our anguish over the introduction of market values in the NHS, it is important to remember that the NHS has had an endless series of organisational crises ever since its formation. Long before Thatcher it had continual re-arrangements at the bidding of one expensive firm of management consultants after another.

In the days when employed people in Tredegar taxed themselves three pence in the pound, the threshold of liability to Income Tax was above the earnings of skilled industrial workers. Ever since the Second World War, government has creamed off that income to the Treasury. If the pattern of local self-taxation on the Tredegar model of self-help and mutual aid had become the universal pattern, universal health provision would not have been the plaything of central government.

Tredegar represented precisely the trend that Kropotkin envisaged in the optimistic concluding chapters of his *Mutual Aid*, and this is why it is actually useful for all those think-tanks to gather evidence on alternative modes of social organisation for the twenty-first century.

Colin Ward

— PART TWO —

FOCUS ON ... THE FORMER SOVIET EMPIRE GO WEST YOUNG MAN!

The ex-communist countries of Eastern Europe are experiencing union struggles once again which are, as always, meeting with various degrees of success: against the new work code in the Czech Republic, sectoral wage related strikes in Romania and several significant conflicts in Poland (steel, mines, automobile industries) and, perhaps as significantly, affecting foreign owned companies (Lucchini, Fiat). Little support comes from the former communists whose attitude is ambivalent to say the least ...

To give one example. The Hungarian government under Gyula Horn, which is held up by former communists, announced, half way through last year, in a trail-of-publicity (or so the saying goes) a good old fashioned Austerity Programme (along with the neon lighting) and a need to get the budget deficit down (over 7% of GDP) as part of the plan to go West ... and join the European Union. To achieve this wage freezes are on the way ('if necessary').

All around the region ordinary people are paying the price. The tables printed on this page give something of a breakdown of the growing pool of poverty partly due to the decrease in spending power of the workforce which varies (between 20% and 30% since 1990) depending on the country in question.

Capitalism, for sure, is not in crisis but the future is less rosy than it has been for centuries.

Apart from a visible and affluent minority in the cities conditions for most people in Eastern and central Europe have deteriorated sharply since the wall came a tumbling down. Once again in part this is due to the desires of the 'winners' to seek ever closer ties with West European capital and, perhaps, the chance to join the European Union. For electoral reasons, the Hungarian administration is making noises about going more slowly, but they know only too well which side their bread is buttered and that they must satisfy foreign investors unless they want to follow the path Mexico is now on (preceded by others for example Algeria and Yugoslavia with the Ukraine being one of the next in line). Indeed Hungary's external debt (67% of GDP) is worse than that of Mexico (46%) but there the

similarities end and it is indeed a question of confidence which the Hungarians still seem to enjoy.

Ultimately this could be the problem rather than the solution. As economic integration continues throughout the capitalist system the possibility of a domino effect or chain reaction of defaulting economies becomes a growing possibility. Capitalism, for sure, is not in crisis but the future is less rosy than it has been for centuries.

It is perhaps the Poles and the Hungarians who are setting the pace in the race of the Eastern 'lemming' economies. Back in early 1990 it was Leszek Balcerowicz, the Polish finance minister, opened the doors to the IMF and announced a programme of rapid shock therapy. Budapest was lucky enough to secure a more 'progressive' package given that they successfully argued that the communists had already started well down the capitalist highway back as far as 1980. Poland, and then Hungary, last year, both put their formal applications on the table to join the EU. Now they want into NATO as well. The Czechs will

be joining them in the front carriage probably to be followed later by a group comprising Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania.

The integrationist race is on. Lech Walesa told the French Prime Minister in June last year that, "If we don't join the West in time the East will get hold of us again". We think he will get his way. Europe is of course wary of allowing *lesser developed* economies into the club ... or so she says. This however, is empty claptrap. The Polish, Czech and Hungarian economies, though behind the Western Europeans, are not as far behind as many would think, not because they are performing well but because the EU is performing so badly. Few countries over here, come up to integrationist scratch. We are having our own problems with meeting the economic demands of convergence (the route we are going down even if it is a sort of slow, slow, quick, quick slow dance we are making as we also go down the track).

The real reason the EU is careful is of course not so much the weaknesses of the Eastern economies but fear of what may be their relative strength ... agriculture.

Protectionism has always been the name of the game

And herein lies the danger for the EU, particularly the Central European members, given that the East European states we are considering have habitually proved to be dangerous competition in this sector. Protectionism has always been the name of the game. For example in April '93 meat and dairy imports from Eastern Europe were banned due to foot and mouth disease or some such excuse. We seemingly never tire of the free trade hymn sheet whilst the reality, rubber-stamped by a GATT, is one of quotas and restrictions to keep the Slavs (and indeed the rest of the world) at bay.

The economies in the East are more agriculturally based than ours ranging from 8% of the population in the Czech Republic to 19% in Poland (a UK figure would be around

some people from IREAN headed to the Stalinist-lead 'Student Defence' 'trade union', where some monarchists and other miserable creatures were also involved. Anarchists wrote some 'cool' articles for the Young Communists' paper giving these bores some brand new ideas and images - some class war, some poorly-digested feminism, etc. 'Student Defence' managed to organise some 'cool' protest in April last year with some occasional 'anti-capitalist actions', which were afterwards disproportionately blown up in their papers. After that the concept of 'spectacular revolution' was given final shape with statements like "to make a revolution today... it is enough to

3%). Developments since 'decollectivisation' carry the old good news and bad news aspects. The good side was that land was parcelled out in small blocks to individual peasants preventing the kind of capitalist agribusiness concerns familiar over here. In Poland in particular the plots of land were particularly small giving rise to the possibility of individuals being more directly in control of their production and consumption. Such potential is of course not in the masters scheme of things and so, of course, the downside is now taking over.

As the states of Eastern Europe look West, and impose deflationary policies, the people are finding it more and more hard to survive within the emerging economic regime. Hungary (as well as Poland) has seen major problems in this sphere. With farmers going out of business, and those left behind prey to the sellers of pesticides and feeds which never come up to the promises on the advertising, bankruptcy is growing fast in Hungary (Eastern Europe's South Korea in the real sense) and the outcome will be land being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands as the mirror image takes shape. As the market towards Russia collapses the logistics of integrationism are building up and despite both a fall in agricultural production and Western protectionist measures all these factors build up to a picture of economies more and more going West ...

If Tessa Gorman finds paying for Iberian fishermen a little hard on the pocket she'll have to dig deeper into her handbag for Hungarian worm farmers

It will of course prove to be 'tears at bedtime'. The CAP, which already is under pressure to change, will somehow have to be adapted to take account of the new Status Quo and it is bound to be the little person who will lose out. After the inter-governmental talks later this year decisions will have to be made. Have no doubts - these developments will be important throughout the continent. If Tessa Gorman finds paying for Iberian fishermen a little hard on the pocket she'll have to dig deeper into her handbag for Hungarian worm farmers and both she and noble Essex will squirm as much as the farmers product. The political fallout in establishmentarian terms could prove hard to mollify especially if protection for agriculture comes under threat ...

Five years ago the wall came tumbling down and the East picked up the capitalist baton. But the race is proving tough as the first couple of laps come to a close. Ethnic strife is there for all to see as the failed policies of neo-liberalism begin to bite. There are more explosions to come ...

film the moment of rebellion and make a videoclip".

On 17th January 1995 Young Communists organised a "theoretico-practical conference on New Revolutionary Communism", where they talked a lot about the need for a new ideology. Also they spoke a lot about the 'similarity' between the new left and new right and the necessity of acting together on some concrete issues. The reason for that was found in the "numerous historical examples of Communists acting together with {left} fascists". However, the reasons for such activities and their possible outcomes were not analysed at all - it seemed that analysis of any kind is out of their reach. These tendencies were rather well articulated in the papers of IREAN, RKSM and the National-Bolshevik Party recently and thus it became possible for the Russian Section of the Last International and the Clandestine Committee for the Eradication of Professional Revolutionaries, Militants and their Sympathisers to go to considerable lengths denouncing all these stupidities of these self-proclaimed 'radicals'. The communique of these organisations called *A Good Cure for Obsolete Communism: An Appeal to the Victims of the Theoretico-practical Conference...* attacked the superficial claims about putting the spectacle to the service of revolution, the discovery of the similarity between the new left and the new right that we should somehow 'use' and the general stupidity of the above-mentioned tendencies.

Mikhail Tsovma is one of a growing group of individuals who put out e-mail 'zines on the Internet bringing people information about their own localities. Most such 'zines are written by just one or two individuals. They do therefore much reflect the person behind them rather more than having an identity of their own. When we wrote and asked him to provide us with some information for *Freedom* Mikhail wrote back saying he was "a bit of a cynic and pessimist" but that "... these two features keep me afloat and occasionally doing something for the anarchist cause". We thought that that summed up plenty of our readers so, with this issue, we bring you the first of an occasional offering from Mikhail. We hope to bring you further examples of e-mail 'zines in the future.

UKRANIAN ANARCHISTS RE-GROUP (WHAT ELSE CAN THEY DO?)

In September-October last year some Ukrainian anarchists, tired of sectarian fights between KAS and FRAN and the absence of any workable anarchist network in Ukraine itself, decided to launch some kind of an all-Ukrainian federation. Although not all the Ukrainian anarchist groups participated in the gathering, the organisers (the Donetsk KAS group) got positive responses from various groups and activists from Lvov, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, Nikolayev and some smaller towns. As a result of discussion at the conference they decided to put an end to sectarian debates (that were mainly 'imported' from Russia anyway) and quit all the federations they were part of - KAS, FRAN and ADA - and form the Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists (KRAS). (In fact the Donetsk KAS group proposed to create the Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists with a more traditional, IWA-type program at the last KAS gathering in Moscow, but this proposal was declined partly because of the lack of substantial reasoning behind it and some rather bureaucratic proposals for how this new federation should be run.) The new all-Ukrainian federation adopted a traditional anarcho-syndicalist program modelled on the one of the IWA. The latter seems to arouse a lot of comradely interest for KRAS, although their position on the possibilities of affiliation with the IWA is different from that of the 'Friends of the IWA' in Moscow - KRAS feels that the question of affiliation is still not on the agenda and it won't be in 1996 (the planned date of the next IWA Congress) due to the obvious weakness of anarcho-syndicalists in the former USSR and the absence of the 'critical mass' for a syndicalist union. And it's true - none of the syndicalist groups in this country can be called a union, because of their minuscule size.

Although the anarchists of Donetsk region who were the motor behind the creation of KRAS are

rather optimistic about the future of this organisation, they obviously will face some serious problems - like the one they had last year when the officials warned them that they can't be an 'anarchist federation' and publish a paper of this 'federation' since it is not legally registered with the state. In case they will try to violate this, they were promised to be charged several hundred dollars worth of fines. This was one of the reasons why the second issue of their *Anarchy* paper wasn't published (the other reason was the primitive stage of capitalism in Ukraine and virtual unavailability of accessible printing places). Anyway, Ukrainian anarchists didn't abandon their desire to continue their publication. So far they launched a small internal discussion bulletin that aims at creating a discussion about the activities and principles of their organisation.

REVOLUTION OF THE SPECTACLE IN THE SOCIETY OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The lack of appeal of 'radical' ideas and actions to the general population forces 'radicals' to think of new ways to seek popular support. The latest frenzy in the anarchist, communist and proto-fascist circles is the concept of being 'cool' and presenting your ideas and activities in the most spectacular way. The first to dive into this marketing strategy was Edward Limonov, a scandalously-famous Russian writer, founder of the spectacular-extremist National-Bolshevik Party. That Limonov, this re-incarnation of Malcolm MacLaren, decided to gain some popularity and money on the scandals surrounding his 'political' activities was quite predictable. What was hard to predict was the recent obsession of pretty traditional Young Communists (RKSM) with creating a new image of communism, which is to be marketed to the youth.

I doubt that they would ever have arrived at such a 'modern' concept, had they not been surrounded by some 'anarchists', who were in fact the main orchestrants of this frenzy. Already a while ago

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Justice and Peace in Ireland

Dear Freedom,

Reading Milan Rai's dismissive mention of the Peace Train Organisation in Ireland in your issue of 8th April, I cannot help wondering if he ever bothered to go on one of the Peace Trains or to discuss seriously with anyone involved. His insinuation that the Peace Train is British government funded is totally unworthy.

I have the minutes of the last meeting of the Republic of Ireland section of the Peace Train Organisation before me: we have just £110 in hand, all collected locally. All our funds are collected in the Republic *ad hoc* as activities require. What Rai did not bother to find out (or record if he did) is that in recent years, under pressure of events, the authorities of the North have been forced by exposure of their neglect of the area to launch a multiplicity of schemes to help finance every kind of socially or culturally oriented body. People campaigning for the advance of the Gaelic language are among many taking advantage, and they can hardly be accused of being anti-nationalist. I see no reason, except malice, for accusing the Northern section of the Peace Train Organisation for doing the same.

In the Republic, our supporters are naturally in the great majority. What are (very inadequately) called 'nationalists' in the context, and in the North they come fairly evenly from both traditions. Among the most active is a group drawn wholly from the 'nationalist' population, FAIT, the courageous body set up by relatives of victims of sentences of compulsory exile from Ireland or fiendish limb-breaking 'punishment beatings', imposed by the IRA on people annoying them, without the right to defend themselves against accusations, still less appeal. Rai

must know that this barbarity is still going on and should have mentioned it.

The Peace Train Organisation was set up on 14th July 1989 in a Dublin hotel, to which I hurried from a big public meeting (unfunded by any government - it took years to pay the debt) to commemorate the French Revolution of 1789, both in its great liberating aspects and those more sinister. I have never in a long life seen such a large cross-section of Irish opinion so united for a progressive cause.

In 1989 the IRA was systematically attacking the only rail link between Northern Ireland and the South (so intelligent for people allegedly fighting for national unity). This caused hardship and real terror for people having to use the railway, as anyone who had to do so at the time can testify. It put the lives of railway workers at risk. It damaged the island's economy. It was a boon for fly-by-night money-greedy lorry owners. Well before last year's ceasefire (the credit for which goes not to Hume, Adams, Major, Reynolds or any other political personage, but to the ordinary people of both Northern traditions) the attacks on the line had ceased. This, I am sure, was largely the result of the publicity aroused by the Peace Trains, which induced the IRA to see a bit of sense. Now, instead of the threatened closure of the Belfast-Dublin line, there is a firm promise of massive modernisation of what is one of the world's most picturesque railway routes. Peace Train officials are now on speaking terms with both members of Sinn Féin and of 'loyalist terrorist' bodies.

As one who was a passionate nationalist in the late '20s and early '30s, I had the luck to get to know Big Jim Larkin, and slowly and gradually learned

that nation-states and national chauvinism are lethal obstacles to human progress, a lesson reinforced by a lifetime of involvement with maritime affairs.

I welcome the drawing together of people with diverse viewpoints to protect the rail link between two parts of my native island. Very much more has to be done to achieve sane conditions in Ireland, but the same is true of everywhere.

Let me end with a tribute to Larkin, the one great political figure my country has produced in this century. When he died 48 years ago, he had precisely £4 15s 6d to his name, and got, as he deserved, the most spectacularly-attended funeral in modern Irish history.

**John de Courcy Ireland
President, Peace Train Organisation,
Republic of Ireland Section**

Internet

Dear Freedom,

Greetings again from the hard shoulder of the information superhighway. Your recent article on the Internet ('Science News', 8th April 1995) has prompted me to put pen to paper (stuff E-Mail) and introduce a few cautionary notes into this rather one-sided critique. Firstly the Internet exists because of and for the capitalist system. The technology that allows the Internet to exist at all is only there to allow the functioning of the whole rotten pile. Without the 'x-border' transparency of the international telecommunications industry global capitalism would wither, cut off from its lifeblood - information - the Internet merely sits precariously alongside this flood like a footpath alongside a 48-lane motorway.

Secondly the 'universal accessibility'

of the Internet. As an anarchist I have deep misgivings about using charges of utopianism, but come on! If we reach the stage where access to a computer terminal is free and open to all, we will have had the bloody revolution already. A computer system, modem and phone hook-up is still an expensive luxury in our own 'developed' society. I would suggest that such equipment will not be included in UN relief flights to Rwanda or Somalia or Sudan or Bosnia or ... etc.

Thirdly, lack of government control. Don't bet on it! If there is one thing governments know about it is how to control things, that is what they are for, after all! Recent events such as the 'cyber-rape' trial in the USA, the police raid on the premises of the 'anonymous refiler' in Finland (at the request of the Church of Scientology no less... now for five bonus points, can anybody tell me who they have reported links with?), the recent press coverage given to the hunt for and arrest of the 'USA's number one hacker', and the recent press coverage not given to the massive funding awarded to the FBI to develop the means and methods to intercept, eavesdrop and otherwise bugger around with high-tech digital communications, including the Internet. All these and more smack of government control.

Lastly, consider this. Your group, club or collective has a computer. Your mailing lists, accounts, contacts lists, the copy of your next newsletter, all is stored on your computer, and jolly useful it is for all that sort of stuff. You may even shake your head wonderingly at how you managed without this wonderful little tool. You then buy a modem and plug into the great wide world of the Internet, where you have seemingly instantaneous access to anywhere in the world. Unfortunately anywhere in the world how has seemingly instantaneous access to your computer and all the data, lists, copy, etc., contained thereon. Not only can this be read, copied and transmitted around the world, it can also be altered, edited, distorted or deleted. Would you like to retype your copy again from scratch? Can you remember your mailing list off the top of your head?

The computer is a tool, nothing more. It is useful for some things, crap for others (try playing cricket with one ... waste of time, I know, I've tried). The computer is not an answer or a solution to our problems. Putting faith in a network of computers to bring about a change in society is as pointless as voting for Blair or alcohol-free beer. A change in society will only come about, as *Freedom* relentlessly reminds us each issue, when we all rise and take control of our own lives and reject the lies and empty promises of those who would oppress us.

Not priest nor politician, nor processor.
K

Violence & World War Two

Dear Editors,

I go along with nearly everything that Nicolas Walter says about violence (*Freedom*, 8th April) and take issue only with what he leaves out - two things in particular.

Firstly he avoids the discussion of war itself, simply remarking that "we attack one another". That is hardly good enough. There is a most important distinction to be made between 'fighting' and 'war'. We have always fought as individuals and small groups and doubtless always shall: over possessions, territory, mating, liquor and the rest.

War is something else. It is institutionalised violence conducted by professional warriors at the behest of priests and kings. It is essentially about making empires and a refusal to submit on the part of the victims. And especially it is about contests between rival empires.

It follows then that when empires end, international war ends. We are ourselves greatly privileged to live in an age when all the empires of Europe have vanished, save that of Russia, and we are currently the witnesses of what that means in Chechnia. The last international war in Western Europe has been fought - an amazing thought at the end of a ten-thousand year war cycle.

The second sick use of violence is as an instrument of political terror, i.e. a form of contained sub-civil war, small scale because the terrorists don't have the numbers or resources for full-scale confrontation. If they are successful in turning their exercises into open armed insurrection they may win the day, but then that usually puts another bunch of armed men into power and we are back to square one - as in Castro's Cuba.

Yet there are cases when war is, on balance, justified - made just because the only alternative is submission to tyranny, even to genocide. This happened when the Dutch fought their Eighty Years War against Spain from 1568 to 1648, in the English Civil War against Stuart absolutism from 1642 to 1648, in the

American Revolution of 1776 and when the French Revolution fought off its attackers at Valmy in 1792.

Even so, in all those cases the victorious leaders went on to undo their causes through imposing their own forms of tyranny and corruption, but they yielded comparative advantage in the process. In the real world that is commonly the best available option.

In these matters, as in so many others, the principle of justice as fairness is the yardstick. The best way to resolve, or at least comprehend, the contradictions involved in wars is to look at them historically, each one different to all the others, each in its own special context.

Peter Cadogan

The Raven ...

Dear Friends,

As the next issue of *The Raven* (29) is being heralded as a 'World War Two anti-celebration', may I dare to challenge the holy grail and ask if any views supporting anti-fascist armed struggle by European anarchists are to be included in the issue?

It has always struck me as a bit elitist for British anarchists to attack those anarchists who stood up to fascism when this country never suffered the occupation and terror that our European comrades did. It's rather like the argument we hear in some anarchist journals that workers going on strike for higher wages and better conditions are only playing into the hands of a capitalist consumer ethos or the argument that opponents of apartheid were wasting their time because liberal democracy was no better than apartheid!

Surely as anarchists we have to be prepared to stand up with the oppressed even when their goals may seem short-sighted to us? We really cannot afford to adopt a 'more revolutionary than thou' attitude when people are being imprisoned, tortured or shot, can we? I can't, anyway.

So in the interests of presenting a full and complete picture of anarchist responses to World War Two, can I ask you to consider including a piece which does look at anarchist anti-fascist resistance in World War Two?

Bill Wells

When did British anarchists ever attack "anarchists who stood up to fascism"? When did *Freedom* ever argue against workers going on strike or ever say that opponents of apartheid were "wasting their time"? See what we *did* say in reprint volumes such as *The Left and World War Two* (£1.95) or *Violence and Anarchism: a polemic* (£2.50), on these topics respectively, before you criticise. As for *Raven* 29, we have received articles from many points of view and would be pleased to consider a piece on "anarchist anti-fascist resistance in World War Two", but in the next few days, please!

Relevance of anarcho-syndicalism

Dear Friends,

I read with interest the letter by Jeff Stein defending anarcho-syndicalism as an attempt to keep anarchism relevant to modern life (*Freedom*, 25th March 1995). It is my intention in this letter to question the relevance of anarcho-syndicalism, in the modern world, and say that anarcho-syndicalism can only be kept going by taking on board other concepts that end up distorting its original ideas.

The first point to consider is the role of trade unions and anarchists at the workplace. There is, in itself, nothing new about this issue, indeed at the beginning of the century Malatesta was making basic points about this. Trade unions exist to improve and protect the conditions of their members. However militant they may be they have to be able to negotiate with bosses/management. This itself presents a dilemma for anarcho-syndicalists since although they are trying to create a libertarian society (with workers self-management) at the same time, to get many members, they have to be able to get improvements now. One essential ingredient for an effective trade union is to have as many members as possible. There is strength in numbers, a massive trade union is more likely to carry negotiating strength than a very small one. Obviously most workers are not anarchists, they remain to be convinced of the anarchist case so this creates a problem for anarcho-syndicalists. New unions formed either remain as very small militant groups or as they recruit they become more reformist. Obviously issues about day-to-day conditions at the workplace can be extremely important and there is no reason why anarchists should not be members of trade unions if they are aware of the limitations involved. My feeling is that rather than try and start new trade unions anarchists should remain cautious members of existing trade unions.

A point not considered by many anarcho-syndicalists is that even if they

did manage to help create workers self-management there would still need to be some mechanism to deal with problems in the workplace. I feel it is a bit simplistic to assume that if a factory committee was elected by a mass workplace assembly there would not still be many problems to deal with. There could be a conflict of interests in a syndicalist organisation.

Much of the anarcho-syndicalist literature is almost exclusively concerned with the factory as the place where social change was going to happen. Clearly this is an attempt to make sense of an industrialising environment (nineteenth century or early twentieth century Britain for example). If we consider Britain, many heavy industrial plants have and are shutting down. Much industrial production is multi-national with partly finished products going over the globe. In Britain much work is of a part-time or short-term contract nature. Trade unions find this difficult to deal with and many workers do not see what benefit being in a union could give. Why go out on a one-day strike which accomplishes very little except losing money? I have very little faith that syndicalist unions could do any better.

I feel that anarchist activity could just as well be community-based and concerned with the environment. If anarcho-syndicalists accept this I do not see why they are different from other anarchists. Clearly there is not just one single place where anarchists should be involved. Involvement in community groups, green/alternative technology and anti-war groups, to name some, are just as valid activities as workplace struggles.

D. Dane

*please keep sending in
your letters and
donations ...*

Anarchist Efficiency

Dear Freedom Press,

Thank you for the subscription reminder.

Unfortunately I don't really feel able to renew at the present. I am not an anarchist, being rather more of a free-market Classical Liberal/Libertarian (I'm a member of the Libertarian Alliance). What happened was that a couple of years ago, when I wanted to know more about anarchism, I was recommended *Freedom* as a publication which would give a 'taste' of it.

I would however like to take this opportunity to thank you for the efficiency and speed with which you have dispatched any books, etc., that I have ordered. Have you ever considered privatising yourself?!

With best wishes for the future.

Nigel Meek

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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,

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