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FIFTY PENCE

*"The proper memory
for a politician is
one that knows what
to remember and
what to forget.*

John Morley

SCOTT REPORT: SHADOW OF A GUN-RUNNER

Parliamentary cliff-hangers and scholarly official reports have become the bread and circuses of British political life at the top. They arouse little or no interest in the general public, except in so far as they confirm the foul smell to people who already suspect that politics is a dirty business.

What must be striking to anarchists is the evidence of deeply-rooted cowardice in the English when confronted with a legal opinion: this

is reflected in the actions of the Ministers who cheerfully signed the gagging orders or 'Public Interest Immunity Certificates'. Some, perhaps like Michael Heseltine, had qualms but all of them signed in the end. When Peter Lilley was asked to sign an amended gagging order a note was attached which declared: "Leading counsel is of the opinion that the changes will reduce the risk that the judge will call for copies of the documents".

If the judge had accepted the gagging orders without reading the documents, the documents would not have been released to the Matrix Churchill defence and three innocent machine-tool manufacturers may have gone to jail.

'Innocent' must be considered a relative term in this context, because everyone involved seemingly knew that the machine tools would be used to make ammunition. Indeed when Matrix Churchill came to fill in the application to sell the tools to Iraq, they had to define the 'precise purpose' for the use of the tools: their response was to write "manufacturing of general engineering products". Scott claimed this was the opposite of a 'precise purpose' yet the Foreign Office duly approved the licence.

PAGING MEN AND WOMEN

A letter received at Angel Alley this week asked why there are so few women writing in *Freedom*. Two quick answers spring to mind. Firstly, without inside information how does this reader know this to be the case as all the editorial comment is unsigned. Secondly, as *Freedom* does not 'employ' writers and journalists (i.e. writers are not paid) then the content of *Freedom* is dependent on the gender of the readers sending contributions. Positive discrimination couldn't be put into operation or there would be no paper.

A quick browse through the *Freedom* subscription list reveals that a large majority of readers are men. It is not surprising therefore that most contributors will be men. Readers of the *Raven* no. 21 on 'Women and Anarchism' may remember a *cri de coeur* from Mary Quintana calling for a women's page in *Freedom* and asking for readers to write in if they agreed. There was no response. The editor of the *Raven* on women intended to produce the issue with all the contributions written by women, but so few women responded that more than half came from men and there were no rejected articles by women. Would a women's page in *Freedom* attract more women readers and thereby more women contributors? Would men read it in the way teenage boys are said to read girl's magazines, to pick up tips about

what women want? Are men and women wanting different things? Is it true that women only become political through their personal circumstances and if so do men overlook personal issues because the women are dealing with those? Do you pass your *Freedom* on to a female friend? Answers on a postcard please.

BBC2 has been offering men the chance to get in touch with themselves this week in a season of programmes called 'The Trouble with Men'. These programmes claim to deal with issues that men are reluctant to discuss. Documentaries and short, pithy ten-minute slots focused on, amongst other things, the prostate gland, sexually transmitted diseases, impotence and - 'the last taboo' - male infertility. It would be interesting to know how many men watched these programmes, whether they watched them alone or in company and what sort of discussions they had afterwards. Women will have watched in large numbers, that's for certain.

The documentary on male infertility was particularly valuable as it acknowledged the existence of an ever-increasing problem which has always been seen as a women's issue.

In a week when the British Medical Council has announced that sperm counts are lowering in men born after

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PARLIAMENT: TO PERISH IN THE DARK?

In the *Guardian*, Paul Foot says: "The value of the Scott Report is its sustained proof that parliament is constantly by-passed and subverted". But isn't this naturally in the nature of high politics? Politicians will always seek to be seen to be following the letter of the law, even when it offends the public good. What Scott shows up is a lack of moral courage on the part of Ministers and bureaucrats, rather than legal finesse.

Parliament was misled by Ministers of the Crown. Some MPs, who wrote to Ministers about the concern of their constituents that Britain may still be selling arms to Iraq which was then murdering the Kurds on a mass scale, were, according to Scott, given answers which were "designedly misleading".

Is this lying or, as Alan Clark put it in court when confronted with the evidence: "It's our old friend of being economical with the actualité"?

The rigour and deference of Ministers like Mr Waldegrave to the law is only matched by their cavalier contempt for the public and, it seems, parliament. Mr Waldegrave told the Scott Inquiry that he did not have to tell parliament of new guidelines regarding sales to Iraq, because they

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SCOTT REPORT: SHADOW OF A GUN-RUNNER

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were only a new 'interpretation' of the existing rules. Later Sir Richard Scott says that it is "not remotely arguable" to claim that the guidelines had not been changed and that Mr Waldegrave's attempts to do so were 'sophistry'. ("Sophistry: specious but fallacious reasoning; employment of arguments which are intentionally deceptive"—*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.)

In the end Parliament chose to swallow its pride and overlook the years of dissembling by Ministers and voted to support the government position on the Scott Arms to Iraq Report. It puts one in mind of Lord Selborne's speech in the House of Lords in 1910, shortly before that House had its powers reduced: "The question is, shall we perish in the dark, slain by our own hand, or in the light, killed by our enemies".

Short-term survival seems to be a strong motive for professional politicians, but being straightforward is alien to those who follow a political career. Their craft is such that they don't even tell a straightforward lie — they dissemble, they cover-up, they tell less than the full truth.

SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY

Perhaps lying in Parliament is not the most critical thing in this saga! Anthony Sampson has argued: "Everyone in politics or business knows that lies are sometimes inevitable and that (as de Tocqueville said) diplomacy can never be compatible with democracy". The question is why was the truth not told?

Mr Sampson, in the *Independent*, asks the basic moral question "How did a government set about providing weapons for a ruthless

dictator, who was already a potential enemy, and then give him funds with which to buy them?"

The standard reply is that we have an armaments industry, employing thousands of British workers, which needs to trade with foreign powers. This line was faithfully trotted out on Radio 4 by Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, this week. When asked about supplying Iraq and the monster Saddam Hussein, he said that there were bound to be 'grey areas' in any policy on the sale of arms.

The trouble with this argument is that Mr Hussein, among his other shortcomings, is a bad payer. He has this unfortunate habit of welshing on his debts. After the Gulf War he had run up £952 million of unpaid debts to Britain — many of them for military equipment.

What the government was doing was giving away military gear to our potential enemies. If this kind of thing was, as some have claimed, vital to Britain's economic future in that it served to create jobs, then to us it sounds like a classic Keynesian solution rather than standard Thatcherism. Mr Sampson states the obvious: "If the sales turn out to be gifts, there are much cheaper and more productive ways of making jobs than giving weapons to future enemies".

The Scott Report seems to deliver ambiguous judgements, but what is important for anarchists is that it shows up the processes of how bureaucratic decisions are made and how daft and immoral policies are put into practice. The truth was not told about supplying military gear to Saddam Hussein because no British government minister could admit to sleeping with the enemy.

PAGING MEN AND WOMEN

(continued from page 1)

1970, more and more men are likely to experience infertility in future years. On the programme men revealed their experiences, which ranged from sitting with packs of frozen peas in their boxer shorts to stimulate sperm production, to feeling isolated in a Welsh village because other men were calling out remarks like 'Are you a Jaffa?' (i.e. seedless) and crossing the road to avoid him in case the condition is in some way 'catching'. The lasting impression was that many of these men preferred to remain childless rather than to allow their fertile partners to conceive with other men's sperm.

Car adverts are now using children in their promotional films and the documentary maker used one of these as a backdrop to one man's regrets about being infertile. The producer commented that: "Children have become a fashion accessory and that's an added pressure for infertile men". The irony here is that the medical report on low sperm counts identified driving about in cars as one of the contributory factors to overheated testicles which results in low sperm production.

Dark Secret was a programme about men

seeking a cure for their impotence. It included graphic footage of the lengths men will go to achieve and sustain an erection. An operation where two pliable rods were inserted into one man's penis to give him a permanent erection was hand in-front-of-the-eyes stuff even for a woman viewer. He peed by bending his penis in the appropriate position and made love by bending it upwards. He did not reveal where he positioned it outside of these activities. The fact that he was a Scot and wore a kilt may explain why he chose this operation in the first place. All the men in the programme had their women by their sides throughout, supporting and encouraging but seeming somewhat indifferent to the problem. They talked about the choice of treatments (pumps, injections, operations, etc.) in a matter of fact way as though they were evaluating vacuum cleaners. It was an informative and sometimes touching programme, as were all the programmes in the series.

Now that there are so many new magazines for men (apart from those on the 'top shelf') and men are getting used to being less reticent when talking about personal problems, perhaps there will be a call for a men's page in *Freedom* — written by women, of course!

GULF WAR A COMPLETE FAILURE

The war against Iraq by America and its allies officially came to an end on 28th February 1981. Five years later, on 28th February 1996, there was a memorial service at St Paul's Cathedral for the 47 British members of the armed forces who were killed in that war. The Archbishop of Canterbury explained: "The gift of their lives for the freedom of others is what we commemorate today."

Freedom is a word meaning absence of something undesirable. To show that perfect freedom is impossible is not to argue against anarchism. Anarchy is not perfect freedom. It is only the absence of government, or coercive establishments. If someone offers you freedom, be sure to ask 'freedom from what?' But if freedom from anything, for anybody, was the objective of the Gulf War, it failed. It did not bring anybody the least bit of freedom.

The Kuwaiti ruling family are the most obvious beneficiaries. They got their palaces back, giving first priority to the restoration of the gold taps in their bathrooms. But had they been unable to return, they could have used their enormous wealth in foreign banks to acquire new palaces in Hampstead or Fort Lauderdale, where their princesses, at least, would have been somewhat freer than they are in Kuwait.

The ordinary citizens of Kuwait continue to labour under a version of Sharia Law. Rulers who impose this harsh system claim that it is required by the Muslim religion, but other Muslims dispute this. It is not directly required by the Koran, but arises from fatwas (authoritative opinions) issued during the Caliphates and influenced, some allege, by a desire to please the Caliphs. Either way, it is not to be confused with freedom.

Before the war, Kuwaitis were free of drudgery and those Palestinians who worked for Kuwaitis were free of penury. After the war, Palestinians who were not killed or imprisoned were expelled from Kuwait, so that's two lots of comparative freedom lost.

Several hundred American and British service personnel were free of illness before the war, and are now ill. Whether their illness ('Gulf War syndrome') is the result of the war is disputed, but there is certainly no increase in freedom there.

The Kurds in northern Iraq have been since the war under American Air Force protection from further poison gas attacks, and are to that extent free. We do not minimise this freedom, but the United Nations could have instituted this protection immediately after the first gassing was proved, without having a war. Let us not confuse *post hoc* and *propter hoc*. Protection for the Kurds was instituted *after* the war, but not *because* of the war.

In Iraq President Saddam Hussein's freedom of action has been curtailed, but the war has not brought freedom of any kind to his subjects. Indeed, ordinary Iraqis are a lot less free than they were of hunger and disease, because of the trade sanctions.

The United States, or if you prefer the United Nations, might have toppled Saddam's military dictatorship by assisting one or several of the various Iraqi opposition groups, but this would have disrupted the balance of power in the area and caused unpredictable international results. The diplomatic aim is not to topple the dictatorship but to replace the person of the dictator.

There appeared to be some hope of this six months ago, when two of Saddam's close associates, the brothers Hussein and Saddam Kamel, turned up in Jordan claiming to be refugees. The idea was that they would form a focus for Saddam's opponents, rather as if Himmler had fled Nazi Germany to Switzerland and tried to rally the German anti-Nazis to his cause as a replacement for Hitler. After six months of no success, they accepted President Saddam's generous offer of forgiveness and free pardon.

They flew home on 20th February, to be greeted at the airport with tears of joy by the President's eldest son. On 21st February both their wives, President Saddam's daughters, applied for permission to divorce, which was granted on 22nd February. On 23rd February the brothers, their elderly father Kamel al Masari, and all the male members of the Kamel family were shot dead.

The story is that they were all killed in a shoot-out between the brothers and their relatives who had come "to cut off the traitors' heads to extirpate this treasonous branch of the family tree". A likely story.

THE END OF THE PEER

This week saw the death of the Duke of Atholl (who he?) — and why is a tribute to a peer being made in an anarchist newspaper? Here's why.

He passed on after six decades of blameless obscurity, being chiefly famous as the only person in Britain allowed to maintain a private army recruited from amongst his workers on the estate. This privilege had been granted to one of his forebears by Queen Victoria.

Nothing became him, however, like his parting because, according to his will, his entire estate — all hundreds of thousand of acres of Scottish landscape and all contained thereon — will be perpetuated as a charitable trust in order to ensure that these workers would have their jobs safeguarded.

Because he had no children the title passed to a cousin living in South Africa who promptly rejected it and expressed no regret at not receiving the more tangible inheritance.

With more luck and good sense of this sort, more hereditary peerages and land ownership could fade away.



— OBITUARY —

Niall MacDermot

My one contact with Niall MacDermot, whose death was reported last week, was as PRO for Stuart Christie's Defence Committee in 1964, when that picaresque individual was arraigned in Spain on a charge of trying to blow up Generalissimo Franco. Convinced that this was some sort of fit up — on the surface it was unlikely that a conspicuous individual with beard, flowing locks and wearing a kilt, would hitchhike to Spain with a rucksack full of explosives — we felt some sort of presence at the trial was probably necessary to save his life. The death penalty at that time, so we believed, being by garrotte. Through solicitor Ben Birnberg we contacted Niall MacDermot who flew to Spain without fees to observe the trial and report back to us in Britain.

He returned with Stuart's mother and I will always remember the skill and tact with which he handled a particularly unpleasant tabloid rat-pack at the airport. They were revelling in being able to trot out old clichés about anarchists and bombs at a time when many anarchists were prominent in the anti-war movement.

A barrister and former Labour MP, Niall was one of those middle of the road political figures whose gut anti-fascism and concern for social justice made him a victim of Cold War hysteria. As a student he had flirted with syndicalism but this seems not to have survived his counter-intelligence work during World War Two. His relationship with a half-Russian refugee from Soviet terror, and known fighter in the anti-fascist resistance in Mussolini's Italy, brought him into conflict with an increasingly paranoid MI5. This rather right-wing politician and barrister, a close friend of James Callaghan, came to be classified as a security risk by those deemed our protectors against totalitarianism.

Niall MacDermot did not, as far as I could tell, have a lot of sympathy for the anarchist position. Stuart Christie has written somewhere that he had no understanding of the class struggle. That is very probable, particularly as Stuart Christie conceived it at that time. However, his sense of justice ensured a fairer hearing for Stuart Christie, and a better press coverage, than might otherwise have been the case.

John Pilgrim

TECHNOLOGY FOR LEISURE AND NOT FOR PROFITS

Who do the government really think are so naive as to believe the monthly figures for the unemployed in receipt of the dole, showing yet another substantial decrease (some 28,000) last month?

Tribune's correspondent John Blevin (23rd February) is of the opinion that: "A Labour victory at the next general election could be followed by the immediate unveiling of unemployment figures a quarter of a million higher than those previously announced."

A Labour government committed to *full employment* is more than concerned to present the *real figures of unemployment* on taking office, in order not to be attacked in due course for not having been very successful.

Full-time jobs are being replaced either by machines or by the results of investments in the Far East. A few examples in the past month or so: 20,000 jobs go as electricity shops close (*Guardian*, 3rd February); Privatised railways plan to close 4,000 jobs (*Guardian*, 29th January); 850 go as Amstrad and Scottish Widows wield axe (*Guardian*, 6th February); GEC cuts 650 jobs at Yallow shipyard (*Guardian*, 3rd February); Job cuts in £225 million Unilever shake-up (220 jobs involved); 550 building jobs at risk from deal in Tarmac swap £600 million of assets with Wimpeys, and so on. The building industry

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

THE MINERS AND MINING ARE BACK IN THE NEWS

Three items are of burning interest, and I can only briefly refer to them here since they need treatment in depth. Both the *Guardian* (23rd December) and the *Independent* (12th January) had features on the Tower Colliery, the only Welsh colliery to survive the wholesale destruction of the industry by Michael Heseltine, President of the Board of Trade at the time.

Tower Colliery, though included in the mass slaughter, was purchased by the miners of that pit and at the end of their first year of operation were able to announce a success story.

More or less at the same time Coal Investments, the second largest coal mining enterprise under privatisation, has already gone into administration (in other words, gone broke) owing millions of pounds to the banks who won't lend them more money. The boss of Coal Investments is Malcolm Edwards, the former director of British Coal.

The third item is that British Coal, which hasn't any more mines to dump or to give away, is now proposing to flog a very important asset: the pension fund! According to the *Independent* (28th February) it has appointed its "secretary and director of legal affairs" as Chairman. He moves in after the chief executive was pushed out (with a reported "six-figure handout") by British Coal bosses anxious to push ahead with the sale and complete the privatisation. "But yesterday's management shake-up threatened to deepen the split between British Coal and the trustees of the £16 billion in pension funds, which has already reduced the sale to chaos. Trustees threatened to use their authority to block any attempted sale that did not meet their conditions. 'Those assets are not British Coal's, they are the trustees, and we will only permit a sale to a bidder with which we are happy', said a source."

The problem, as always, is *money* and the crooks that money automatically attracts. 500,000 miners depend on this £16 billion gold mountain to which they contributed throughout their working lives but have no say as to how British Coal is proposing to dispose of it. Years ago I recall that Arthur Scargill, the miners president, argued that the miners should have greater control, but nothing came of it. Now British Coal is prepared to flog it to Friends Provident for £70 million. Apparently

the only objection comes from the pension fund's trustees who demand that any purchasers must retain "the bulk of the existing management". Haven't they yet realised that take-overs — and this is all that it is — are to get half the staff to produce twice the output of paper and the real paper-profits.

RESPECT FOR THE WARNINGS OF NATURE

One anarchist who never looked upon nature as being benign was old Malatesta. As he pointed out, even Kropotkin when challenged about the unpredictability of nature would rely on science being able to provide all the chemicals and technology to challenge nature's shortcoming. In reality half of mankind has lived in poverty or starvation not because of the perversity of nature, nor Malthus's predictions, but of human perversity: greed, exploitation and, in the late twentieth century, *consumerism* equating with *waste*.

It's only when a massive oil tanker gets caught on the rocks and starts spilling thousands of tons of oil that the media make the public aware of ... yes, all the *wildlife* that is the victim of this disaster, and pictures of the RSPCA trying to save those innocent lives. There is no limit to human hypocrisy. Every moment of the day the majority of those of us living in the prosperous western world are polluting the planet whether we are aware of it or not.

Farmers are among the main culprits, yet apparently in spite of their efforts to increase production of grain with more and more fertilisers, herbicides and insecticides, nature has been more destructive by holding back rainfall and thereby contributing to other problems, including one of the hottest seasons in living memory.

The media have pin-pointed the shortage of water in Yorkshire, of all places, and blames the privatised water company, rightly or wrongly, but the fact is that there has been a rainfall shortage worldwide for at least the past two years. Don't blame nature. Mankind has never been in touch either with 'God' or 'Nature', which explains why simple people in the distant past stored food surpluses in

order to cope with disasters of nature.

Not so for arrogant, scientific, prosperous western mankind. There was no limit to what we could produce and store. At one time in western Europe more than twenty million tons of cereals were sold into 'intervention' (half the world was still starving, nevertheless) and more than a million tons of beef. As I write, the *Sunday Telegraph* (18th February) has a three-column three-line heading *Poor grain harvest worldwide brings threat of £1 loaf*. Forget about the journalist hype but concentrate on *the fact* that the intervention stocks of cereals are down to nil, and in a capitalist world the 'poor' cereal farmers are laughing. More so since the devalued pound means that their subsidies have been further increased.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FARM WORKERS?

Recently wage increases for workers who provide public services — teachers, doctors, nurses and others who provide the services we could not do without — were announced, but percentages fail to explain how much more or less in pounds and pence that represents. A doctor getting 3% on £34,000 p.a. means another £20 a week. But for farm workers, even if they have a generous boss and are employed full-time (most of the dwindling labour force are either part-time or casual and earn much less than the union's demand for a minimum £4.15 per hour), an increase of 3% is, by comparison, derisory. Assuming a full-time (39 hours) at that rate, a 3% increase which barely covers the official inflation rate gives them about £5 per week on their £160 a week, compared with the doctor's £20 a week extra on his £650 a week. Is it not the farmworkers who provide that which even doctors cannot live without, and yet they are entitled to a little more than a quarter of the doctor's salary? And when it comes to the rises the doctor gets another £20 and the 'peasant' who ensures that the doctor has his next meal gets at most £5.

I am always arguing against percentages since they invariably accentuate the unequal and unfair capitalist society we live in.

Libertarian

THE LAST PEACE CAMP

Here in Scotland lies a living monument to the peace movement of the 1980s. That doesn't sound very alive, yet it is — this is the last peace camp. Once upon a decade ago, there were many such camps scattered around the UK near various military establishments.

This one, Faslane Peace Camp, was set up in 1982 by Clyde Submarine Base which is home to the UK's Trident system. The survival of this place has been its ability to change with the times and the new ideas and energies that have constantly arrived with new people.

The camp doesn't provide a home to aged hippies and no one here wears rainbow jumpers and peace badges. Although we campaign on the issue of nuclear weapons — through direct action and education — we also focus on other issues.

The camp itself provides an alternative life-style. We rely on alternative energy, are cruelty-free, hold non-violence as a top priority in both protest and daily life and operate communally by sharing workload and responsibility. The people here have been involved in many other events and campaigns around the UK such as road protests, super-quarrying, civil and land rights.

Many people visit here from all over the world, either to attend actions, to stay or simply to use as a networking and education resource. The next series of events we are holding will be from 22nd to 26th April to highlight the anniversary of Chernobyl. The week will include actions, film evenings and theatre taken to the streets.

Crucially, the camp is under threat from a new council authority and this change-over

takes place on 1st April — aptly named Fool's Day. We have been promised an eviction and will not go quietly. After thirteen years of continuous resistance, the powers that be simply can't take it any longer.

We will have our sympathetic 'no-nuke' Dumbarton District Council, which is Labour controlled, replaced with Argyll & Bute through re-zoning. This council is controlled by independents that can only be described as being further right than right. They have vowed to "get rid of the so-called peace camp".

What threat do we pose? We are very active in the direct action way, are organised and lead an alternative lifestyle — and therefore intolerable lifestyle. Critically there is also residential development planned on land adjacent to us and our colourful caravans are considered less attractive than the nuclear weapons base. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, our new council is shortlisted.

So what is our response to this new threat? To continue as we always have — after all, we do live next to what we consider to be 'an accident waiting to happen'. We have decided to put all the necessary defences and administration in place to resist the eviction and will be relying on the hundreds of folk who have ever lived or visited here. We can only hope that enough energy will be generated to keep this place alive. Being the last peace camp, it isn't easy to accept that the whim of a council can bring an era to its end.

Faslane Peace Camp,
Shandon, Helensburgh
(30 miles north-west of Glasgow)
Tel: 01436 820 901

Finally, after over a year of ceasefires by both loyalists and republicans, the British government has started to move on the Northern Ireland issue, has faced up to (some) unionists, and has agreed, with the Irish government, on a date for all-party talks to begin. A few days before the announcement that talks would begin on 10th June, the consensus in Parliament and in the mass media was reported as being one of total despair – that the peace process was irrevocably damaged and that we were back to war.

David McKittrick, the best-informed journalist writing for a British newspaper on these issues, wrote in the *Independent* on the day after the premature explosion on the Aldwych bus: "The mood is closer to despair than to mere dismay ... It is all happening with the inexorability of a nightmare". He predicted a resumption of IRA violence in Northern Ireland, a response from loyalists, and the cycle of violence would re-establish itself. There was no way of stopping this progression, wrote McKittrick, because: "Offering concessions to Gerry Adams at this moment, in the hope that he could dissuade the IRA from more bombings, would amount to blatant appeasement of terrorism and would undermine democracy". Offers which might have been made "are now impossible because of the nakedness of the IRA's political blackmail".

Well, the impossible has been made possible, the 'inexorability of the nightmare' has been de-railed, and concessions have been made. I suggested in these columns a few weeks ago that it did seem, however much it might be regretted, that violence was the only language that the government seemed to understand – regarding Northern Ireland. The behaviour of the government (and indeed of the media) has borne out this perception and reinforced this way of thinking in the IRA and elsewhere.

With the setting of a date and the fusion of Dublin's insistence on 'proximity talks' and the Unionists' insistence on elections, and possibly even John Hume's insistence on a referendum, a whole host of dangerous and potentially lethal questions have been raised. But in the midst of all this confusion and turmoil, one thing is clear: the Mitchell Report is moving back to centre-stage. It becomes increasingly important, then, to find out what Mitchell and his 'International Body' actually said.

The Body was asked to "report on the arrangements necessary for the removal from the political equation of arms silenced by virtue of the welcome decisions taken last summer and autumn". In particular, Mitchell was asked to identify a method for "full and verifiable" decommissioning (that is to say, a surrender of arms), and to discover whether there was "a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve that" – to achieve decommissioning, that is.

On the first point, Mitchell said that the decommissioning issue was "a symptom of a larger problem: the absence of trust". That was the critical factor, not the weapons themselves. In order to remove paramilitary weapons from the political equation, said the Report, there would, ultimately, have to be "an agreed political settlement" as well as "the total and verifiable disarmament of all paramilitary organisations". Negotiations towards an agreed political settlement should begin without prior decommissioning, in order to make total decommissioning possible. Instead of prior decommissioning, "there must be commitment and adherence to fundamental principles of democracy and non-violence" – the famous six principles, which we return to.

On the second point, the method of decommissioning, Mitchell suggested that "some decommissioning would take place during the process of all-party negotiations, rather than before or after as the parties now urge". Notice that 'some'. The Mitchell Report certainly does *not* say that total decommissioning should take place before the

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Rocky Road to 10th June

end of negotiations. The Report says the details of decommissioning, "including supporting confidence-building measures, timing and sequencing", should be worked out by all-party negotiations. This is a very important part of the Report, for reasons we discuss below.

Mitchell also set out some principles for decommissioning, including an amnesty for people involved in decommissioning, both North and South. The first point in these principles is that: "The decommissioning process should suggest neither victory nor defeat ... [and] should not require that any party be seen to surrender". Decommissioning should also be 'mutual', with loyalist and republican weapons being disarmed in parallel. The most important of the other points are that decommissioning should be overseen by an independent body, and that "Parties should also have the option of destroying their weapons themselves".

On the third point, the commitment of the paramilitaries to disarmament, the Report found that there was indeed "a clear commitment on the part of those in possession of such arms to work constructively to achieve full and verifiable decommissioning as part of the process of all-party talks". This seems to include loyalist as well as republican forces.

The central focus of the Report was the set of principles. Parties should "affirm their total and absolute commitment":

- To democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues;
- To the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations;
- To agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission;
- To renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations;
- To agree to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree; and,
- To urge that 'punishment' killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.

There is a great deal here, but I would like to focus on two particular issues, involving d) and e). The fourth principle has been worded so that Sinn Fein could not simply use its normal (and quite justified) answer that it, as a political party, has no weapons and has a commitment to using only political methods. If Sinn Fein accepted d), it would be duty-bound to 'oppose' any violence or threat of violence by the IRA if there was a further breakdown in the ceasefire. Gerry Adams would have to condemn the IRA. This would split the republican movement, and split Sinn Fein, I presume. Not an easy principle for the republicans to swiftly adopt, one feels.

But the main point I want to make in relation to d) is that it applies with equal force to unionists. Ian Paisley was quoted recently as saying that of course the legally-held weapons in the hands of Protestants would never be handed in, because they were insurance against being forced into a United Ireland. This threat is no aberration. Paisley has long flirted with paramilitary organisations. He helped, among other things, to set up the shadowy 'Ulster Resistance' paramilitary grouping (which he later disowned). So unionists will also have to think hard about fully accepting all six principles – if they are honest.

Together, d) and e) are very powerful limitations on the traditional threat-strategies of 'Ulster Unionism'. One can reasonably expect the unionist parties to pay lip-service to the six principles in public but to reserve their position in private. One can also reasonably expect the British media to ignore the question of unionist and perhaps even loyalist military resistance to any proposed settlement.

Final point in this connection: it is generally acknowledged that without the threats and road-blocks of loyalist paramilitaries the Ulster Workers Council strike would probably not have been successful, and would not have brought down the power-sharing assembly set up in the early 1970s. Even 'non-violent' tactics such as strikes often have military undertones in the North of Ireland.

On to point e): There are very dangerous implications to this principle. For two years or so now, I have been in a group called 'Negotiate Now', which has urged all-party talks without preconditions and without a pre-determined outcome. The basis of our argument has been two-fold: not talking costs lives; talking costs little. What is there to lose by sitting down with your enemies and discussing how to move out of war and into peace? If you aren't satisfied with what is coming out of the discussions, walk away, but at least try it.

The fifth Mitchell principle undermines this line of argument radically. Because now agreeing to take part in talks *does* cost something. You can no longer walk away from the table. By sitting down at the table, even for a day, you commit yourself to accepting whatever comes out of the talks, *whatever* comes out of the talks. Obviously, there are questions about the decision-making process, and whether agreement will be reached by consensus among the parties or by majority voting, but the fundamental point is that acceptance of this principle is potentially very dangerous. And, again, the dangers are as much for unionists and loyalists as for republicans and nationalists.

One last point for now regarding the six principles. Point e) also implies, as Eamonn McCann has pointed out, that there will be a referendum on the outcome of the negotiation within the six counties of Northern Ireland. The final decision will be made by the people of the North alone. All other parties to the negotiations except Sinn Fein accept that this will be the case, and so if Sinn Fein accepts

this principle, it also accepts this version of the Unionist veto. McCann thinks that the republican leadership might be able to sell this to the grassroots. If so, it means that the plan all along has been based on being able to win a referendum in the North with a compromise package – with all Nationalists and some Unionists voting for Sinn Fein's 'interim arrangements'. But this plan may not have been communicated to the grassroots. In fact I would be very surprised if the rank and file have had any notion that such thinking was current (if it has been current) in the upper reaches of the movement.

The fatal flaw in Mitchell, which may prove its undoing and the eventual end of this peace process, is that the Report accepts the rigid distinction made by the British Government between 'paramilitary weapons' and all other weapons in Northern Ireland. One does not need to accept the notion of 'moral equivalence' between IRA rifles and RUC machine-guns to see that 'mutual disarmament' needs to encompass more than simply IRA/UDA or INLA/UVF trade-offs. There has to be 'parity of esteem' for the different communities' fears. Nationalists remember the beginning of this round of the Troubles in 1967-69, when loyalist mobs with legally-held weapons stormed into Catholic ghettos and the RUC sprayed tower blocks with heavy machine-gun fire. The idea that nationalists should totally disarm themselves while leaving all weapons in the hands of unionists and the British Army will never be accepted.

Earlier I highlighted the notion of 'supporting confidence-building measures' that Mitchell said could assist in the process of decommissioning and the building of trust. These are spelled out in Chapter VII of the Report, including steps that paramilitaries could take, such as providing information on people 'disappeared' by them. The election idea is also mentioned in passing. But the most interesting of these 'supporting measures' are ones that the governments could take, including "Continued action ... on prisoners ... early implementation of the proposed review of emergency legislation ... [and] the commitment of the governments, as stated in paragraph nine of [28th November 1995] communique, 'to continue to take responsive measures ... as the threat reduces'."

In other words, while Mitchell accepts that "there is no equivalence" between paramilitary weapons and those of the security forces, the Report does suggest that it is important for the peace process, and for decommissioning to take place, that the paramilitaries disarm with reductions in British military force. The next paragraph makes clear that it would be useful to carry out a 'normalisation' (i.e. decommissioning) of the currently paramilitary police force, as well as "a review of the situation regarding legal registered weapons and the use of plastic bullets".

These are very important aspects of the Mitchell Report, which will receive no attention in the mainstream debate but which could well determine the success or failure of the peace process. The fatal flaw in Mitchell is that these are additional suggestions, very mildly put, rather than forceful interventions in the debate, of equal significance to the six principles of 'democracy and non-violence'.

The Mitchell Report will suffer the same fate as the Scott Report in that it will be twisted and used for political purposes by the different parties, and its actual content will lie unread and unremarked by the majority of people. We can rest assured that the government's interpretation of Mitchell will win the day, and that any protests from the republicans that the text of the Report is being ignored will be met with a wall of media hostility.

Milan Rai

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —
ANARCHY AND THE POST

What can the ideology of anarchism have in common with postal services, which in Britain, as the Royal Mail, is almost the oldest government-operated industry? (Almost, because since war is the trade of governments, the army and navy have an even longer history.)

One anarchist approach was that of Francis Sedlak. He was a pioneer of the Tolstoyan colony at Whiteway in Gloucestershire, arriving there in 1899. "After working his passage from his native Bohemia through the French Foreign Legion in Algiers, he overcame imprisonment by escaping into the Sahara desert, only to be further imprisoned in Spain". At Whiteway he built the house where he lived with Nellie Shaw, and wrote an article on 'My Military Experiences', but feeling unable to lick the reverse side of a portrait of Queen Victoria and patronise the government's postal system, he set out to walk to London to deliver his manuscript. But "the weather was very clod with heavy snow and he was clad only in thin clothes with no shoes. Not surprisingly he was forced to turn back".¹

Peter Kropotkin, seeking a more creative anarchist approach to large-scale community services, found lessons in organisations for international cooperation which did not depend on allegedly representative government but on free agreement between functional regional bodies. One of his examples was the Universal Postal Union, first formed in 1875 to coordinate national postal services on a federal basis. After describing completely voluntary bodies like the Red Cross and the Lifeboat Institution, he turned to other such functional federations where it was not important whether the constituents were government departments, capitalist enterprises or interest groups:

"The Postal Union did not elect an international postal parliament in order to make laws for all postal organisations adherent to the Union. The railways of Europe did not elect an international railway parliament in order to regulate the running of the trains and the partition of the income of international traffic; and the Meteorological and Geological Societies of Europe did not elect either meteorological or geological parliaments to plan polar stations, or to establish a uniform subdivision of geological formations and a uniform coloration of geological maps. They proceeded by means of agreement."²

For Kropotkin, believing in universal access to community services, the Postal Union whereby every nation's post office, whether in a monarchy, a republic or a dictatorship, delivered the mail from anywhere in the world, was a triumph of the principle of reciprocity. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* explains that:

"The first basic principle is that all member countries form 'a single postal territory for the reciprocal exchange of correspondence'. From it is derived the principle of freedom of transit; every member country guaranteeing to respect the inviolability of transit mails and to forward them by the most rapid transport used for its own mails. Another important principle is that the charges for letter-post items are not shared. Since 1875 each country has retained the postage it collects on international mail. Although intermediate countries are paid for transit service, the country in which the mail is delivered receives no payment. This principle was adopted in order to minimise the need for complex international accounts and was justified on the supposition that a letter normally generates a reply. Certain developing countries, however, have found themselves at a considerable disadvantage under this rule, due to an excessive imbalance between incoming and outgoing mail. To remedy this, the 1969 Congress of Tokyo provided for compensatory payments in such cases."

Within nations the idea of carrying letters for a fixed charge, regardless of distance, was the result of long agitation. Henry VIII appointed a Master of the Posts to carry what was literally the Royal Mail, using the network of coaching inn-keepers as postmasters. And when Cromwell set up the Post Office in 1657, it was precisely to deliver government mail while excluding subversive material. As recently as the 1980s, the late Ian Mikardo, as MP for Stepney, complained in Parliament

that contrary to the International Postal Convention mail addressed to his constituents, the anarchist publishers Freedom Press, was being intercepted in transit.

The great leap forward of 1840, when Rowland Hill brought in pre-paid penny stamps to cover any distance within the United Kingdom, was the result of endless agitation to make the mail available to all, as was Anthony Trollope's introduction of post-boxes in 1855. The coming of the railways and the telegraph, precursor of the telephone, brought postal services within the reach of the whole population.

Coverage was, in fact, far from universal. If you lived more than three miles from the village post office you were obliged to pay a delivery charge to the letter-carrier or telegraph boy. Flora Thompson, who late in life wrote a valuable trilogy on English rural life, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, was the postmistress's assistant and letter-carrier in the 1890s, remembering the pain of charging pennies from the poor for the news of the death of a son at sea or of a daughter in childbirth. She recalled the long campaign for free delivery and for the establishment of an Imperial Penny Post, since everyone in the poverty-stricken countryside had children who escaped from it to win their fortunes in Canada, Australia or South Africa.³ It was not until 1896 that free rural delivery was introduced.

Working for the Post Office, a vital public service, was the opposite of an anarchist experience. As the price of job security in an age of widespread unemployment, postal workers submitted to military discipline and minimal wages. Spike Mays, from Glemsford in Suffolk, was another rural author reared in poverty, yet his father was the village postman.

"He wore a uniform and a smart, stiff shako and his scarlet piping and shiny brass on navy serge always filled me with awe and pride. My father worked for the king. After walking many miles around the scattered community pushing bills and debt-summonses into letterboxes, he would arrive home, snatch off his coal-scuttle hat and his beautiful jacket and gulp down a cup of strong tea and a hasty meal. Then he would change into his old corduroy trousers, cloth cap and hobnailed boots, kiss us all round and go off like a greyhound to work on a broken-down farm. Father had to have two jobs to get the five of us enough to eat. I did not like it one bit. I did not think it fair of the king to make my father work all through the daylight."⁴

When, in 1911, Dad went off the Canada, "a country of vast glistening wheatlands where people could afford three good meals a day," planning for the family to follow him, the family starved. Spike escaped by joining the army as a bandsman at 16, having learned to ride and to play the clarinet, and when the army had finished with him, he too entered the Post Office as a clerk. His account of the military-style bureaucracy which was the only regular job available as an alternative to permanent unemployment, reveals an arbitrary petty dictatorship even less lovable than the army itself.⁵

But if you kept your boots and buttons shining and were punctual, the Post Office was a job for life, with a pension and paid holidays. You joined at 14 as a telegraph boy with a pillbox hat and a red bicycle, and in London would be sent to Kingsway Day Continuation School one day a week, lined up for inspection before their classes in postal geography and commercial English.

The Post Office became a public corporation, rather than a government department, in 1969. In 1981 the telephone system, nationalised in 1912, was separated and subsequently privatised, and since then private parcel post has been introduced and a continued process closing or downgrading Post Offices has been in progress. Opponents of the selling-off of postal services fear that

the frequency and price of delivery in remote areas will suffer, and that the Postbus, an uneconomic lifeline in rural Scotland, will disappear. They are unconvinced by government denials and Post Office workers fear that hard-won improvements in their conditions of employment will be whittled away. Meanwhile, ordinary citizens pay dearly for stamps while receiving un-sought junk mail whose senders, unlike the rest of us, are able to negotiate bargain rates.

Stamps have been collected ever since Rowland Hill invented them, and a whole collecting culture has grown up around them. Kropotkin's friend Patrick Geddes maintained that we should encourage children to gather "pretty things" for "their ardent collection and gloating possession" as an inoculation to immunise them from the obsession to accumulate possessions in adult life.⁶ In Britain we seem to have a new commemorative issue every week.

Queuing at Post Office Counters plc for twenty first-class stamps for a five pound note, I was asked "Big or little?" I have since learned that the correct distinction is between 'definitives' and 'commemoratives'. In my puritanical mode I said "Little ones please" but seeing the big sheet of portraits in front of her, I asked "Who are we celebrating this week?" The busy counter clerk pored over the sheet and said "It's someone called Sir Rowland Hill, whoever he was." So I switched to my didactic mode and explained that he was the man, born 200 years ago, who invented the penny stamp in 1840 and revolutionised communications. I would have gone on to mention that his brother had invented a perforating rule to fit a printing press, and that someone else had invented gummed paper, but that Rowland also invented the principle of ignoring distance or 'taking the rough with the smooth' in pricing policy. Luckily there was a queue behind me.

But the anniversary had news for the very reason that made Francis Sedlak resolve to walk to London: the Queen's head. Our most celebrated stamp designer David Gentleman, discussing a new book *European Stamp Design* by David Scott, is musing on the design problem of always having a silhouette Queen's head on commemorative stamps and reveals that thirty years ago the Postmaster General, Tony Benn, commissioned him to prepare an album of designs without the head. But the Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, insisted that Tony Benn should have the heads added to the samples. Headed and headless designs were spread out on the royal carpet

and the Queen preferred to stay on the stamps even though, as David Scott puts it, the obligatory head is squashed into a corner "as if it were some tiresome insect".⁷

The issue is brought to a head, so to speak, by the recent commemorative issue. Rowland Hill has his right shoulder superimposed on a full-size replica of the 1840 Penny Black and the young Queen Victoria, while over his left ear floats a tiny current royal officer-holder.

A different way of looking at Hill comes from Charles Handy, famous for looking for the bright side of the collapse of British industry:

"In the 1830s it cost 1s 6d to send a letter from London to Edinburgh because you priced a letter according to the distance it travelled, and the recipient had to pay. As a result, fewer people wrote letters and the price went up, of course. So Rowland Hill said 'Wouldn't it be sensible to turn it upside down and charge a penny for every letter however far it went?'"

The Post Office said "That's silly, we'll lose so much money". But badgering complaining and petitions for ten years brought a change. Within five years the Post Office was rolling in money and every country in the world adopted stamps. Handy claims that people learned to read and write because there was a point to it. But he goes on:

"... the really interesting thing about Rowland Hill was that he had given up teaching in despair and had joined the South Australia Company as a clerk. Changing the post system was literally none of his business, but he thought it would be a good idea. So he did it and changed the world."

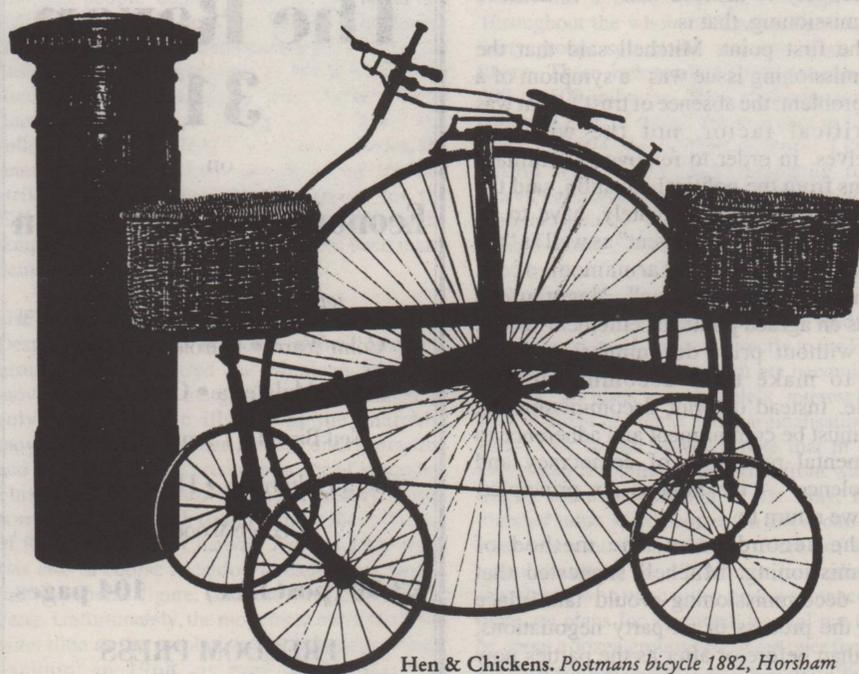
His message, of course, is that "if you think you're going to wait for somebody in Westminster or somebody in Birmingham City Council to do it all for you now, just remember Rowland Hill. We can all change the world, and now's the time."

How I wish that social inventions were as simple as stamps.

Colin Ward

Notes

1. Joy Thacker, *Whiteway Colony: The Social History of a Tolstoyan Community* (Whiteway, the author, 1993).
2. Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles*, 1887 (London, Freedom Press, edited by Nicolas Walter, 1987).
3. Gillian Lindsay, *Flora Thompson: The Story of the 'Lark Rise' Writer* (London, Robert Hale, 1990).
4. Spike Mays, *Reuben's Corner* (London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969).
5. Spike Mays, *No More Soldiering for Me* (London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961).
6. Patrick Geddes, *Talks from my Outlook Tower* (New York, Survey, 1925).
7. David Gentleman in *RSA Journal*, November 1995.



Hen & Chickens. Postmans bicycle 1882, Horsham

TALENT - EITHER WE'VE ALL GOT IT OR NOBODY HAS

Don't you get pissed off with all the public claptrap about talent, or am I just getting old and envious? The media force feeds us on the stuff. Harriet Harman's lad has it, so too does the latest pop group or rugby find. Boy wonders Tony Blair and Michael Jackson; fast-track executives, artistic and musical prodigies all have it. I too can still marvel at displays of skill and achievement, so where's the rub.

Doubts about the ballyhoo are mixed up inevitably with personal prejudice. Talent has become the preserve of opportunity and privilege. It's widely fused with capital. You can buy it. It's also for the poseur and too many indulged, arrogant and immature youngsters infected with the exclusive Jesus Christ virus by impotent parents with no self-respect. Most of the 'world beaters' are male and young so Mums contribute to the nonsense. Phoney talent rides on the back of the latest gear and equipment and an army of supporters and colluders content to serve *the ego*. If only these indulgent citizens could be as up-front as the breeders of stud horses there'd be a hell of a lot of people giving their primary occupation as 'the pointer'.

I prefer the late Jo Campbell's view of supreme talent and his risto to the Messiah complex. Jo's subject was comparative religion. A nun at one of his lectures asked: "Mr Campbell, do you think Jesus was God's son", to which he replied (after Blake) "Not unless we all are".

Hyped talent legitimises ripping off and being overpaid. Successful capitalists, high-flying executives, football heroes and movie stars have it in abundance. Lottery winners will soon be found a place in this galaxy. Don't you like the politicians defending their greed in terms of paying peanuts and getting monkeys? At Botch-Up Farm we spend a quid each week feeding peanuts (stolen from hungry Chinese peasants) to starving tits and finches. We'll be telling the birds to clear off so the peanuts can go to Westminster.

POLITICS AND TALENT

Glamour and scarcity are two key themes in the politics of talent. If you've got a pointer or two the 95% potential to achievement is easily overlooked. Talent as magic helps to sell everything from shoes for feet to bums on seats. Over-sold talent keeps enthusiasts in their place as mere spectators. No room for grafters and your ordinary punters.

More sinister is the fate of those who can't pretend they have talent with economic clout but want to be more than consumers - hand-line and local fishermen, buskers and the older and meeker employees who get blown apart by that bombshell 'Sorry Mary and Bill, we have to let you go'.

Last week that nice Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead - fine name for a hatchet man - gave the 'Sorry Bill and Mary' signal to 14,700 schoolteachers. Difficult to imagine Woodhead being an inspiring teacher but he's just doing his well-paid job.

At one level his announcement is innocuous. Out of 410,000 teachers there are, at any chosen time and place, bound to be a proportion whose performance is below par. By putting a precise number on a negative assessment, Woodhead is also doing a Joe McCarthy. 'Below par' with overtones of permanent gives the all-clear to the predators. Coercion and victimisation will follow. With Woodhead on his side, Tony Blair's proposal to rid schools of sub-standard teachers is not a thousand miles away from Hitler's promise to rid Europe of the Jews.

To make matters worse ghetto thinking is now commonplace among school-bound teachers - the official nurturers of talent. Time surely for teachers with self-respect to get out or fight their patch. How can anyone talk about standards - always a refuge for the mediocre - when a teacher is expected to be instructor, disciplinarian, parent, technocrat,

moralist and policeman? This weighty and complex role in social control serves also to ameliorate the exploitation of kids by business. Teachers uphold the interests of the state second-to-none. Government would struggle to survive their refusal to work.

INADEQUACY OR TALENT

I prefer a more fundamental bottom-up view of talent. Try anything which tests your capacities and limitations and you'll be familiar with your inadequacies. We're born helpless and, after struggling with pain and the fear of death, we die that way. All this stuff about excellence, success and achievement is making a mountain out of a molehill, exaggerating a thousand times those brief moments when our frailty can be overlooked. That's why I like the dictum: whatever a person is selling that's his or her tragic flaw. Incompetence rather than talent drives us and so explains why many accountants have a poor grasp of numbers; the RSPCC is full of guilt-ridden members who've been lousy parents; advocates of mutual aid are rotten co-operators; psychologists are mixed up people and permaculturalists have itchy feet. I bet your nightmares about powerlessness don't hold a candle to those spooking Murdoch, Hanson and Gates.

Even when we enjoy some dubious talent it can be counterbalanced by a bigger dose of some inadequacy. Pity members of MENSAs, a society of geniuses according to the psychologists' views. It's their visual literary and numerical acuity which signs members of this august body. They're good at dealing with abstractions, problems requiring rational thinking, visual spatial relations and the like. The down-side to their skill is a difficulty connecting with and relating to the world around them. As a club where super-intelligent people can meet, converse and ... MENSAs provides a useful crutch for people who are socially and sexually disadvantaged.

TALENT AT BOTCH-UP FARM

Talent around our place comes from hanging about and being there for a while; sussing out who's who and what's what; using your loaf and settling your stall in one of the many vacuums as well as having a bit of aptitude and being able to muck-in and improvise. If something is worth doing it's worth doing badly. Our motto round the farm applies equally to this article. Beat you to it, dear reader. No prize for second. We reckon only machines are perfect. Most of our gear is old and suspect to avoid too much competition from inanimates. This creed gives every living creature from Dylan to the dog a regular dose of triumph and disaster.

Crap talent still invades our pitch. Exponents of crap talent concede nothing to history, current practice and the people already there. This sort of kids' stuff isn't confined to the young or exponents of agribusiness. You get it from practically every passing expert, including those who should know better - ecologists, naturalists, permaculturalists and organic freaks. People full of eukation and great skills in name-dropping, button-pressing and paper-pushing are always keen to sell you a blueprint to make your operation go, at no little cost. Adventure and design are in vogue everywhere. Husbandry and wifery ain't worth a fart. Get the design right and leave the rest to nature is their slogan. It's another slant on the production ethic when what is wanted is a decent whack of maintenance culture. This policy is fine for panderers, dilettantes and the Marie Antoinettes of this world, but it's laughable in our messed up environment.

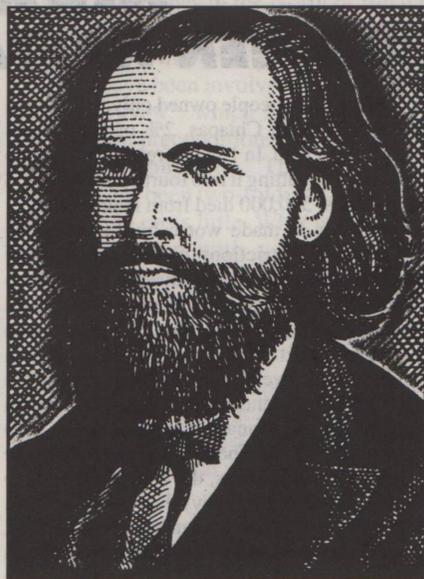
Any alternatives to capital, chemicals and machinery depends on old fashioned graft. There's a glut of crap talent and knowledge. In every walk of life people are drowning in it. Our decrepit industrial culture is desperately short of familiarity, involvement, perspiration and co-operation. Neither capital nor expert can provide these essentials, only people can.

Denis Pym

FERDINAND DOMELA NIEUWENHUIS Born 31st December 1846 in Amsterdam, died 18th November in Hilversum, Netherlands. The son of a professor at a Lutheran seminary, Domela himself studied theology and became a preacher. He left the church in 1879 and became a freethinker and socialist. In 1879 he founded the paper *Recht van Allen* (Right for All) published from 1879-1900, to be followed by *De Vrije Socialist* (The Free Socialist) from 1898-1919. The first socialist member of the Dutch parliament (1888-1891), he broke in the 1890s with Social Democracy and became an anarchist. In 1904 he founded the International Antimilitarist Association. An incredibly productive writer, he is one of the very few anarchists, freethinkers and antimilitarists to have been 'honoured' by a monument.

The portrait, right, is a black and white copy of one of 36 portraits of anarchists drawn in three-colour line by Clifford Harper, included in a set of picture cards each with a potted biography on the reverse and published by Freedom Press. Other portraits include such varied anarchist figures as Errico Malatesta, Marie Louise Berneri, Emiliano Zapata, Noam Chomsky, Michael Bakunin, Colin Ward, Peter Kropotkin and many more.

The 36 picture cards (known to collectors as trading cards) come in a neat box and are available in our bookshop or by mail order, price £5.00 (post free in UK, £5.45 including p&p abroad) from: Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX



FERDINAND DOMELA

ON ANARCHIST ORGANISATION ...

... it seems to me a mistake - and in any case impossible to realise - to believe that all anarchists can be grouped to together in one 'General Union' - that is, in the words of the Project, in a *single* active revolutionary body. We anarchists can all say that we are of the same party, if by the word 'party' we mean all who are *on the same side*, that is, who share the same general aspirations and who, in one way or another, struggle for the same ends against common adversaries and enemies. But this does not mean it is possible - or even desirable - for all of us to be gathered into one

specific association. There are too many differences of environment and conditions of struggle; too many possible ways of action to choose among, and also too many differences of temperament and personal incompatibilities for a *General Union*, if taken seriously, not to become, instead of a means for coordinating and reviewing the efforts of all, an obstacle to individual activity and perhaps also a cause of more bitter internal strife.

taken from Errico Malatesta's *The Anarchist Revolution* (Freedom Press, £3.50)

PAST AND FUTURE

The following editorial in an English language newspaper appeared recently. The country had six years of civil war, with the usual loss of lives, curfews, starvation and with five armed political factions slaughtering each other indiscriminately. I have been given a batch of newspapers from all the factions and every one of them tells a different story. The papers only agree in their dates of issue. The papers were given to me at the recent 'Negotiate Now' vigil for Ireland by a person who has since returned to that country. In view of the situation here, even without mentioning the country of origin (obviously not Northern Ireland) by looking at the recent past you may 'quantum leap' into the future and act accordingly. So let us hope that our own 'editorial writer' will not have to write the following lamentable plea for toleration in six years from now, in the first year of the next millennium by some people's calculation:

Editorial:

WE DESERVE PEACE

Reports reach us that factional operatives loyal to --- leader and --- leader have been engaged in mass fist fighting at the Parliament building. This is outrageous and repugnant. We deprecate such indecency.

This executive Mansion is the seat of --- government, a symbol of our dignity as a people and as a nation. We cannot sit supinely. The Mansion must not be defiled: it is not a place for blood-letting.

During the marathon negotiations surrounding the --- agreement the persistent argument of the warlords had been that they were the only ones capable of persuading their men to disarm.

Interestingly it is 64 days since the inauguration of all-faction government. Disappointingly there is no peace. Inter- and intra-factional skirmishes continue as our people continue to suffer.

These gangsters must know that they did not ascend to highest office in the land because of their popularity, but because they pledged to bring peace *once they were given power*. They have regrettably brought no peace but unleashed anarchy in this safe haven.

At the pledging conference in New York, several speakers have shown their commitment to peace by pledging *millions of dollars*, the warlords therefore must cogently demonstrate their desire for peace otherwise we will not be able to lay our hands on the lucre.

We also implore the High Command to be much more vigilant and assertive in this safe haven. It must not allow factional fanatics bent on causing confusion to disturb the peace of ---. Henceforth all troublemakers must promptly be arrested and brought to justice.

Meanwhile there is no doubt in our mind that our opponents are wicked operators who play on the gullibility and fears of the less alert sections of the population.

We have for the past eighteen years (some say a bit longer) had to deal with characters we all know very well. We appeal to other members of the newspaper industry and television to sharpen their investigative skills and adopt a more critical outlook on issues that have the propensity to cause friction among the people. The press therefore have an enormous responsibility to ensure that this sweet land of liberty by God's command thrives and continues to prosper now and forever.

Anybody found prying into the affairs of the chief executive in order to find his Swiss bank account number will be welcome to a grave in --- province. I thank you! (Your editor)

The above appeared on 3rd November 1995 in the main newspaper of --- where the people, according to some reports, are reduced to eating leaves. It is fair to say that the photograph which accompanies the editorial shows a fat, smug man in a business suit smiling contentedly and with due assurance of office. His name, we can reveal exclusively in this paper, is --- Minister of Health and Social Welfare and chief executive.

Let us hope such a snivelling piece will not have to be printed in the London daily news six years from now.

John Retey

ISRAEL-PALESTINE A STRANGE AUTONOMY

The Oslo agreement clearly divides up the spoils: the Palestinians get control of education, health, social services, tourism and direct taxation; the Israelis get control of industry, agriculture, overseas trade, customs, indirect taxation and ... water. In short it is the Israelis who will have control of the commanding heights of the Palestinian economy.

'RECONSTRUCTION'

Arafat and Rabin have acquired the support of the West and that of the Arab leaders, only too happy to sign separate peace agreements whilst at the same time securing trade agreements with the Israelis. Shimon Peres is calling for international aid to help in the rebuilding of Palestine, which amounts to saying that the contributions from the thirty aid-contributing states are going to pay for the damage done by successive Israeli governments to Palestinian society and to compensate (a little) the total lack of infrastructural investment of the last 27 years. (For example, in 1967 there were 800 hospital beds in the Gaza Strip for 360,000 Palestinians. There are still 800 today for 800,000 Palestinians.)

The Israelis are involved in the 'reconstruction' in the role of 'hidden partners' for the banks, foreign investors etc., which amounts to saying that international funds will be targeted at projects which do not compete with the Israeli economy.

The PLO leadership has in effect given its agreement to a certain number of inescapable points:

- the control of the Palestinian economy by the world bank;
- the surrendering of the budget of the autonomous zone, its banking system and its planning to Israeli needs;
- the abandonment of the idea of a separate currency.

In other words, Arafat has bowed to the notion that the Palestinian economy will be controlled by Israel, which has angered certain sectors of

the Jordanian bourgeoisie who have filled this role up until now.

In order to be sure of his coup, Arafat has ensured that funds destined for Palestinian reconstruction only go through the administrative structure that he controls and has gone to great lengths to ensure the cutting off of funds going to NGOs who were supporting numerous projects and institutions in the occupied territories. Although this has not been a total success, the great bulk of financing now goes through the centralising canals of the PLO. At the same time Arafat has cut off internal funding by the PLO which traditionally went to institutions which were not, or were not completely, controlled by his supporters, an act which has weakened the position of the big home-based families and independent political forces.

A DUPE'S AGREEMENT

The signature on the Gaza Jerico agreement has proved to be nothing more than a publicity stunt with no real significance. The Gaza Strip is no more than a small strip of land which is no more than an enormous shanty town with the highest population density in the world. Even the Israeli military has for years been calling on the government to abandon this ungovernable territory to the Palestinians. As for Jericho, Israel has given the Palestinians some thirty square kilometres which is to come under local administration.

The *International Herald Tribune* (14th December 1992) quoted five government ministries who were calling for a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Maurice Jacobi in *Témoignage Chrétien* (19th December 1992) writes: "The explosive situation in the Gaza Strip is such that the Israeli leaders have lost any hope in succeeding in imposing and maintaining 'law and order'. Successive Israeli governments have also envisaged a retreat." Maurice Jacobi also quotes the editorial taken from the Israeli daily *Haaretz* (9th December 1992): "There is reason for asking how much longer we are to continue to sacrifice the best

of our young men on the altar of an erroneous political strategy. The government must understand that the days of our domination of the Gaza Strip are numbered. Our seeming lack of a willingness to accept this reality is far greater than the benefits that we can get from our continuing presence in the Gaza Strip." Let us also note in passing that the lead writer of *Haaretz* is not in the least motivated by considerations of what is right and just but rather by questions of cost, human lives (Israeli ones) and money (or lack of profit).

As for the economic co-operation agreements which the press has discussed at such length and which are supposed to help eliminate the huge gap between the two communities, we have this to say. These are agreements between Israeli entrepreneurs who hold the reins and with a handful of Palestinians to produce, using a very cheap workforce, goods *Made in Palestine* which will allow Israeli products to penetrate the enormous market represented by the Arab world. The advantages for Israel are considerable and the Palestinians will get some crumbs. Only a handful of Palestinian capitalists will profit from the situation.

Much has been written about the moving ceremony in Washington. Less has been said about the visit that Rabin made to Indonesia the following day to sign some very lucrative arms contracts. Such a visit to a Muslim country would have been impossible had it not been for the little ceremony the night before. Since then Morocco has increased trade with Israel. The Gulf States were only waiting for an excuse to start up commercial relations with the Israelis.

But in the aftermath of the signing of the agreements the Israeli government launched a series of raids in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank. Houses continue to be destroyed and lands confiscated. Colonisation continues – it even accentuates.

Arafat, until so recently labelled a terrorist with whom no discussion was possible, became the only partner in discussions with both the Western powers and the Israeli state.

Arafat put off his return to the 'autonomous' territories because he had not received the promised money which is what gives real substance to the Oslo agreements. This payment remains however very limited and

highly symbolic: \$42,000,000 instead of the hundreds of millions that had been expected which would serve to set up a bureaucracy with no development plans.

The Palestinian leadership conceded on every front during the economic discussions which took place in Paris before the Cairo agreement of May 5th. Earlier in Oslo they had already renounced any possibility of developing an independent economy when they abandoned sovereignty over the territories as well as the acceptance that the new Palestinian autonomy be subjected to the demands of the World Bank which arranged things so that it controlled the economic planning of the autonomous zones. The financial minister appointed by Arafat is a conservative who enjoys the confidence of the World Bank and the IMF and is also a member of one of the most important Palestinian clans – Hamulot.

What meaningful independence can there be in a territory still under the control of the former occupier? Rather we are speaking of a new organisation of dependence. For in point of fact the Palestinians have to adapt fiscal policy to Israeli needs:

- import-export, even that with the Arab world, is limited by Israel;
- the workforce remains wholly dependent on employment in Israel;
- the Palestinian police force promotes an order which answers to the needs of the former occupier.

Arafat's money will not go into infrastructural projects but into paying for the police force and administration imported from Tunisia. Arafat seems so confident of receiving funds that he has called on the services of a US investment company, Morgan Stanley, to manage the finances of the autonomous territories. He displays an alarming naiveté when one thinks of the history of international aid which has been one of broken promises. Israel will not give the Palestinians a dollar if it is not in her interests. The money will serve to build a structure which will reinforce the upper echelons of Palestinian society with – at the top of the pyramid – the pro-Arafat members of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, the big families and the middle classes in Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank.

Raoult Boullard
(*Le Monde Libertaire* 21st February 1996)

The third round of negotiations between the EZLN and the government began on the 8th January. On the 1st January the EZLN announced the formation of a Front (FZLN), a Front far broader both geographically and politically. From the 5th to the 10th January, in San Cristobal de Las Casas, a forum of indigenous people was convened, bringing together several indigenous organisations from Chiapas, Oaxaca, Morelos, Guerrero ... in order to lay down the principles of the FZLN. The first aim of this new Front is to demonstrate to the government that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) is not alone and the problems involved have implications well beyond Chiapas. The main themes that were tackled at the Forum relate to strategy: create either a class Front or a political Front, whose struggle would be based on political freedoms ... Secondly, the very nature of the revolution and the eternal debate between 'reform and revolution'. Anarchists, particularly from Oaxaca, were present and we hope that their libertarian and self management ideas will make some ground.

At the beginning of January, four 'Agua calientes' (indigenous cultural forums, centre for training and information) were set up, despite a strong military presence in the region. The EZLN also called for an inter-continental anti-liberal meeting at Easter in the Lacandon forest. Clearly this meeting will take place if army pressure and migration controllers allow it.

THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION

When in December 1995, in France, thousands came out onto the streets and also, on the streets of Mexico, thousands of people protested against privatisation plans for their own social security system (IMSS). In the '60s and '70s Mexico was the Latin American country which saw the biggest economic boom, thanks to its oil. The IMF financed this policy to a large extent and the growing governmental debt in Mexico simply accelerated the progressive integration of Mexico into the American economy. This growth of capitalism produced aggravated social inequalities. In 1992,

MEXICO: BETWEEN NAFTA AND THE FZLN

40% of the poorest people owned only 9.3% of the country's wealth; in Chiapas, 2% of landowners held 70% of the land. In 1993 there were in Mexico 24 millionaires (putting it into fourth place in world ranking) whilst 500,000 died from malnutrition.

This situation is made worse by the economic crisis. Despite restrictions on income and the budget, the public deficit continued to grow due to attempts to pay off the debts of the private banks (subsidising in the short term foreign investors who would then profit in the long term. On 20th December 1994, twelve months after joining the NAFTA (North Atlantic Free Trade Association comprising the US, Canada and Mexico) the peso was devalued by 35%. The political response of the PRI (linked to landowners, the bourgeoisie and to a large degree the clergy) has always been dictatorial in so far as it manipulated elections, having claimed for itself the revolutionary themes of 1910 in order to safeguard its privileges. The Democratic Revolutionary Party (social democrat) is the most representative opposition party but it has less and less credibility as it plays the institutional card thus pawning itself to a de-legitimised system.

THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Now over the last few months we can see the development of a dual indigenous movement and of civil society with the emergence of the National Democratic Convention and the development of a social protest movement. Independent unions are appearing in several towns and are beginning to draw hundreds (or thousands?) of members, who have carried out sporadic actions at Ford, in telecommunications, in the oil industry... Some unions give libertarian ideas a warm welcome. Thus we saw a meeting in December 1995 between militants of the Anarchist Federation and a dozen other Mexican anarchist groups which took place

on the premises of the Independent Textile Workers Union and which also welcomed a travelling group of artists which had been set up by the EZLN and which had begun its wanderings on the 1st January.

On 1st May when, for tactical and technical reasons the official unions did nothing, Mexico saw its biggest protest march since 1968, with 1.5 million people (already at the end of March 1994, 350,000 people demonstrated in favour of the EZLN). We should note, the better to understand these statistics, that to demonstrate in France is far easier given that repression in Mexico takes on incomparable dimensions. The claims of the demonstrators were, on the 1st of May, the following: no to the NAFTA, a rise in salaries, the reintegration of workers sacked during the last strikes, political freedom and support for the EZLN. The 1st May 1996 promises to maintain the temperature. Since last year there have been many demonstrations against the IMSS.

THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT

Despite the fact that in recent months anarchist groups have appeared the Mexican anarchist movement remains marginal – having failed to solve the 'endemic illness' of the anarchist movement worldwide, that is to say disorganisation and a totally relative presence in social struggles. This movement has however a rich history. It was born in the nineteenth century under the influence of Rodakonoty and Chauvin. Around 1900 there was also of course Ricardo Flores-Magon, who is still a popular figure, and the Mexican Liberal Party. Unfortunately, the movement burnt out at the same time as the revolution of 1910. After a long vacuum, in 1968, as part of the Mexican autonomous University movement anarchist groups re-emerged. One can also note the presence of libertarian thought in the syndicalist movement

of the 1970s (workers' autonomy, workers' information). In 1980 the anarcho-punk movement came into being.

At the heart of the movement today, the Anti-Authoritarian Revolutionary Youth – 80% punk – constitutes the most important group bringing together about 100 members and a few hundreds on demonstrations. This group too often lacks cohesion. Other groups exist. The Motin group, more recently, has some 20 members in Mexico and is separate from the JAR, accusing it of only having cultural aims – counter-culture and anarcho-punk. The Motin group seeks to create the conditions for a social anarchism. There is also the Social Library, which has a bookshop open 6 days a week. Throughout the whole of Mexico there are about thirty groups spread out amongst about a dozen towns. These independent groups number some 400 to 500 militants. They evidently lack links, cohesion even if things are evolving in this area. Thus in 1994 the Self-management Libertarian Union was born (ULA) bringing together individuals from JAR, Motin and the social Library numbering some 300 members. This organisation stems from the 1994 movement in Chiapas. It seeks to co-ordinate the involvement of libertarians in the 'aid caravans' and other peace convoys and also within the CND. Unfortunately, ULA tends only to intervene on issues relating directly to the EZLN or the CND, interventions which are becoming rarer as the CND loses some people's interest because of its internal problems and marginalisation by the PRD. One should however note that in spite of everything a common libertarian front was set up during the demonstration of 1st May, bringing together some 3,000 people. On this occasion there were confrontations with the forces of law and order resulting in 19 arrests (including four anarchists) who were given prison sentences. Also there are plans for a national journal put together by about a dozen groups spread out over five towns. The first edition should be out in March 1996. Plans are to publish 1,000 copies.

Regis Malry (Milly Witkop Group FAF - Nantes)
translated from *Le Monde Libertaire*

THE IRA AND PEACE

Dear Comrades,
Your editorial and several individual correspondents on the end of the IRA ceasefire all had good sense in them (as one might expect) but I think lack something. Perhaps you were all over-anxious to avoid giving an excuse for our opponents to scream 'anarchists are paranoid, always looking for conspiracies'.

We have an election due some time in the next sixteen months, possibly in the next six. The Tories always know that they do best when they can whip up a war scare. People were getting sick of 25 years of continuing war in Northern Ireland, so the government did need to appear to do something about it, but it also knew that it stood to lose more by ending the Six County war than they would by letting it re-start.

Indeed this way they do (from the point of view of Tory Party electoral interests) excellently. The average Briton is not well informed about Ireland, does not know the history, does not know that partition was so drawn as to ensure a built-in Protestant majority, nor knows that elections in Northern Ireland have always been gerrymandered farces.

Consequently most Britons believe that the suggestion of elections was motivated by democratic faith and that the IRA refused them because

they are contemptuous of democracy. So many, if not most, will forget that it was the IRA that declared the ceasefire in order to have negotiations and that it was the British government that constantly found excuses not to go to the negotiating table.

A large section of the electorate will therefore believe that Britain tried its best to get peace, that the IRA spurned the idea and deliberately went back to war. It will be worth at least a million votes to the Tories in the elections.

Nor is that all. It had been understood for some time - *Freedom* said it a long time ago, *Private Eye* soon after and pundits in the *Observer* and the *Guardian* had caught on before the ceasefire - that Gerry Adams appearing peaceful and anxious to negotiate was more of a menace to Toryism than Gerry Adams wielding an Armalite. By their obstruction over the last year and a half the Tories have driven a wedge between the IRA Army Council and Adams. Even if the latter is lucky enough not to get hit by a hard-liner's bullet, he no longer represents the 'terrorists' and the glee with which Tory spokesmen now dismiss him as speaking for no one demonstrates just how much they feared him.

Laurens Otter

SHOULD ANARCHISTS VOTE IN THE ELECTION?

Dear *Freedom*,
Stephen Hyland's letter in *Freedom* (27th January 1996) reminded me of the rhetorical questions the Socialist Workers Party are so keen to set for their public meetings. So is this letter a hoax, bearing in mind the arena it has been set in, or just a piece of mischief-making?

However, taking the question at face value will prove useful to anarchists. It allows us to explain our position, not as a group of people who are too idle to vote, but have a clear understanding that a non-capitalist society cannot be created using the existing state-sanctioned political mechanisms, like petitioning, voting, etc. Capitalism is a highly flexible system which can reform itself, as in South Africa, but is grounded on the profit motive and so the exploitation of one class/group by another.

Yes, it must be a dilemma for people after sixteen-plus years, they will only have their fifth opportunity to get rid of a party that has never achieved more than 43% electoral support. In the meantime it has led a hostile war against the working-class both in the workplace and community, which is now sucking in sections of the middle-class. It is the liberal-left capitalist media - *Guardian*, *Independent* and the tabloid *Mirror* - who will be using the very same argument that we must get the 'Tories out', as if we had some social obligation to vote, and for something we do not support. This is psychological warfare, trying to make us feel guilty for 'opting out', but at the same time subconsciously trying to suggest we have some form of choice over the political system we live under. We do not!

The Sunderland-based Labour MP Chris Mullin spelt this out in his book *A Very British Coup*, that a serious left-wing capitalist Labour government would experience the same fate as Chile's 'socialist' government in 1973, when the USA and its multinationals based in Chile decided they did not like the result of the elections and backed a military coup. Mullin's fiction is probably nearer the truth than even Mullin believes - how else can you explain Mullin's still drawing his MP's

salary in the hope than a Labour government could do anything of significance? Mullin is obviously deluding himself.

MIS have a long tradition of trying to destabilise the Labour Party, as well as other parties/groups. Could the Social Democratic Party split of 1981 and the Kinnock-Smith-Blair agenda of creating a New Labour Party, free of any socialist values, indicate their hidden hand at work?

Next is the question, who do you vote for? Labour appear at present to have a realistic chance of winning a workable majority, based on opinion polls, but where do Labour stand? Labour will not be revoking the anti-trade union legislation or the Criminal Justice Act. It remains silent on how much a minimum wage should be and continues to perpetuate the lie that they can create full employment without radically reducing the working week.

The Liberal Democrats advocate wealth creation and private property hand-in-hand with ending inequality under capitalism! As Stephen is concerned with the road building programme, it is worth noting that the Liberal Democrat MP for Newbury is in favour of the by-pass.

The dilemma has been added to by Arthur Scargill's new vehicle, the Socialist Labour Party, which could have been killed at birth after the Hemsworth by-election disaster, finishing fourth and receiving less than 1,200 votes. Certainly the SLP has received hostile press coverage in the *Guardian* and *Independent* and also from the moaning liberal elements unable to comprehend the right-wing Labour agenda, in the openly sympathetic pro-Labour publications *New Statesman* and *Red Pepper*. The SLP may have to re-think their exclusionist policy to Militant Labour who have made very sympathetic overtures to Scargill & Co., but this only goes to show that this avenue is a dead end. Look what ninety years of collaborating with the system has done to the Labour Party. It was the biggest mistake the trade unions made when syndicalism offered a better route to

workers' control.

Charter 88, the constitutional reform group, youth section Activ 88, has commenced a campaign, 'M-Power', to target young people to register to vote. The music industry has also got in on the act with 'Rock the Vote', a cynical operation in trying to help out the parliamentary system by psychology warfare. The aim is to divert young people from direct action politics to register and vote in the general election - 'serious politics'. In return they hope the grateful politicians will clamp down on music piracy and 'illegal' raves which are threatening their profits.

The Labour / Liberal Democrat dominated Scottish Constitutional Convention is pushing ahead with creating a Scottish Parliament, hoping it will solve two problems at once: the growth of the Scottish Nationalists (SNP) demand for independence, and convincing people to vote for them for a fifth time to remove the Conservatives whose seats in Scotland do not accurately reflect their actual support.

Labour has gone further on this issue, supporting both a Welsh assembly and devolution in the English regions, although this policy appears to have been dropped. The aim is to win political activists, not the ballot box fodder whose political participation is putting a single X on a ballot paper once every five years or so, to waste their time in parliamentary action.

The Liberal Democrats have plans for proportional representation, if they can convince Labour that the wasted vote is a factor turning people off voting. The Liberal Democrats are the biggest losers under the present system, but ultimately the system will be if it does not reform itself.

For us anarchists this is good news. People are disillusioned with voting and the surrendering of power to politicians. Stephen, don't vote. Instead prepare an abstentionist campaign in your area, turning not voting into a clear political position to undermine the system and a platform for our ideas to reach a larger audience.

Little Cog

INDIVIDUALIST ANARCHISM

Dear *Freedom*,
I read a letter requesting information on individualist anarchism. Almost coincidentally I received another publication which might be of interest to both NADS and other comrades that is the Norwegian English-language magazine *Non Serviam*.

Non Serviam is published by Svein Olav Nyberg, Bestumvn 50, 0282 Oslo, Norway. It is an 'electronic' zine which has been published free on the Internet for some three years. 'Its focus is on *ownness* - that is *self-ownership* and is, due to the interest of the editor, mainly centred around a dialectical egoism inspired by Max Stirner'. I received my copy because I have, for many years, subscribed to *Minus One*, the individualist magazine produced by S.E. Parker. Sid recently decided to cease publication and forwarded his subscription list to Svein Nyberg.

Those who wish to have access can subscribe for free via the Internet (solan@math.uio.no) or obtain printed back numbers direct from Svein at the cost per issue of NoK 10,00 (Scandinavia), NoK 11,50 (Europe), NoK 13,00 (outside Europe). Payment must be in the Norwegian currency 'kroner' (NoK).

I must admit that I have always found individualist anarchism attractive. It has always seemed to be, to me, the purest form of anarchism although I do not wish you to think I am uninterested in other types of anarchism or other ideas outside anarchism. On a scale of 1 to 10, I put my interest as 1 because so many individualist anarchists seem to be only interested in debating theory, however some individualists of my acquaintance are also activists and much of what they do and have done is propaganda by deed - in the neo-pacifist sense as expressed recently by Nicolas Walter, not the violent type as suggested by Peter Cadogan.

On the other hand, whether I will bother to subscribe to *Non Serviam* is another matter as in the copy I received - other issues might have been different - it appears to imply theory is simply about defining words not, as I would see it, as drawing up blueprints for action. To me theory is essentially about strategy and tactics. Strategy, the long-term planning; tactics, the immediate way we might further our ends.

Nevertheless examining words and their meanings can be instructive and could in the long run lead to a more accurate summation of where we were going and why. I recently attended an anarchist meeting (not the LAF) where many of the participants clearly owed their origin to the marxist rather than the anarchist fold. One participant started talking about 'class struggle' as if it had something to do with his personal animosity to what he called 'the middle class'. He was quickly corrected by a colleague who pointed out class struggle as being to do with opposition to 'the ruling class'. But nevertheless one finds people talking about, say, opposition from the 'industrial proletariat' and linking this with terms like 'the working class' which ignores the fact that one can be a millionaire and still be a member of 'the proletariat'. Being a member of 'the proletariat' has nothing to do with wealth or income, or class for that matter, it simply means being landless.

So, in fact, perhaps Svein Nyberg's 'zine has an appropriateness in that theory is important, especially for those interested in anarchist individualism, and those with access to the Internet might find it useful to make contact. Whether it is worth sending NoK 11,50 a copy for 17 printed back numbers is another matter. The edition I received had interesting articles by Nyberg on 'What is Selfishness?' and 'The Union of Egoists' which were stimulating and thoughtful. One thing about individualist anarchism is it tells you as it is, not merely how you would like it to be. It points the searchlight. The London ACF, for instance, is the nearest thing to a Union of Egoists I know of, but I am sure they would be horrified at the suggestion. It may be no less true.

Peter Neville

HE WHO WOULD BE ...

Dear Comrades,
If I had a guaranteed income of £150,000 a week I would relax. The head of the Church of England does not relax! She glamorises war in the 'Trooping of the Colour' ceremony every year and goes out of her way to give medals to people who hurt other people.

T. Grantham

SCIENTISTS AND OUR WELL-BEING

Dear *Freedom*,
Unusually I am prompted to write for the second time in the same number of issues. This time it concerns the subject of global warming prompted by the article 'Antarctic Islands: Greenhouse Killing Field!' I do not doubt any of the facts stated in the article, I am concerned however with the validity of some of the beliefs on which this article and others like it are based.

This research which I undertook a few years ago uncovered a great simplification of the facts. For the past fifteen years we, that is the lay public, have been presented with the findings of one paper, that of James Hansen *et al* (*Science* vol. 213, pages 957-966). This is the paper that finds that CO₂ introduced into the atmosphere through human activity has raised global temperature by 0.4°C. The scientific world does not doubt that the atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ have risen and that this can be directly linked to the burning of fossil fuels. However, at that time a significant number of findings suggested that at best there was no detectable change or at worst a cooling of the northern hemisphere was apparent (S.B. Idso, *Science*, vol. 220, page 874). Professor Linden of MIT in Channel 4's *Equinox* programme in 1990 claimed that there is "ample evidence" to show that there is a cooling. Moreover, according to Dr Robert Balling of Arizona State University the apparent warming seen by Hansen could well be "urban warming" - an accusation made due to the urban locations of most climate data collection points. Even the theory that CO₂ causes warming is questioned. The Cambridge-based British Antarctic Survey as well as Professor Pat Michaels,

Head of the Department of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia, claim that "temperature causes the decline in CO₂" to the contrary of the popular belief. Who is right?

There is no question that the chemical composition of the atmosphere has changed since the industrial revolution but it is far from certain that a warming or a cooling will be, or has been, detected. So has there been a deliberate emphasis of one side of the findings? Whether deliberate or not, the popular belief is that the planet is warming and a huge environmental movement has built up around this belief. Spurred on by the world's media the science of climatology, as for that matter all science, is seen as a precise practice. It is far from that. We need only to look at the reliability of climatology's oldest and less complex relation, weather prediction, to note how imprecise a 'science' this area is. As to deception, I do not think there has been anything deliberate, more that there has been a following of those that shout the loudest and in this case it was the warming camp. Seizing on this, global corporations and their lap-dogs, that is national governments, have helped to promote the simplified explanation of the problem facing the world. By doing this it becomes easier for them to predict what demands commercially and politically the public will make, thus turning a potential disaster scenario into a commercial activity - an activity we all partake in.

As a common cause the danger exists that the environmental movement become predictable, and as such pacifiable through the implementation of placatory legislation. A cynical use of the

fear of impending disaster is being cleverly used by those in a position to exploit.

This is not a plea to abandon environmental campaigns, it is more a warning that our demands could (I stress could) help those we are campaigning against. If you need convincing then I point you in the direction of the nearest ex-employee of the National Coal Board.

Remember, it is not just you that uses propaganda.

Darren Ward

Dear *Freedom*,
Libertarian (10th February) asks "What can scientists contribute to our well-being today?" What about genetic engineering, which offers the only realistic chance of effective treatment for thousands of inherited disorders? Such techniques may offend some people's mystical sensibilities, but the millions of victims of good old mother nature's imperfections, now and for the rest of time, might take a different view.

As for the endlessly parroted chestnut about 'the scientists' being responsible for nuclear weapons, consider this: the scientists who initiated the atom bomb project in the USA in 1940 did so because otherwise Nazi Germany was likely to get the bomb first. Many of them were refugees from the Hitler regime and knew full well that in Germany scientists who refused to work on any project were liable to face far stiffer penalties than ostracism for being 'unpatriotic'. I wonder what some of our technophobic moralists would have done without the benefit of 20:20 hindsight?

John Wood

Northern Anarchist Network Conference in Manchester

Saturday 9th March
10.30am - 6.00pm followed by social
Sunday 10th March
11.00am - 5.30pm

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ACF

OPEN DISCUSSION MEETINGS

Held on first Thursday of every month at
8pm, Marchmont Community Centre, 62
Marchmont Street, London WC1
(nearest tube Russell Square). Entry free.

Thursday 4th April at 8pm ANARCHISM AND RELIGION

On the Feast of the Passover (!) we discuss the
role of organised religion. Since the time of
Bakunin, revolutionary anarchists have argued
that organised religion has an intimate
relationship with the state and class rule. It
achieves this through mystification, through
putting off a better life until the 'next world',
through acceptance of suffering and through
its peddling of a spiritual hierarchy with an
Almighty God duplicated and condoned in the
material world.

London Anarchist Forum

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

- 1996 PROGRAMME -

8th March What Anarchists Do? (symposium)

15th March General Discussion

22nd March The Destructive Legacy of Hegel
and his Successors on Libertarian Thought
(speaker Dave Dane)

29th March General Discussion

5th April no meeting (Bank Holiday)

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a
discussion, please contact either Dave Dane or
Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville
at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road, Isleworth,
Middlesex TW7 4AW (tel: 0181-847 0203,
not too early in the day please) giving subject
and prospective dates and we will do our best
to accommodate. A collection is made to pay
for the £15 cost of the room. Donations are
accepted from those who cannot attend
regularly but wish to see the continuation of
these meetings.

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

Red Rambles

A programme of free guided walks in the
Midlands for Greens, Socialists,
Libertarians and Anarchists. All walks are
on a Sunday unless otherwise stated. Bring
walking boots, waterproofs, food and drink.

April 7th: Walk leader Ray. Meet 11am at
centre of Peatling Magna village,
Leicestershire (leave M1 at junction 21).
Circular walk, length 7 miles, including visit
to lost medieval village site.

May 5th: Walk leader Mike. Meet 11am at
Whatstandwell railway station car park,
Whatstandwell, Derbyshire. Circular walk,
length 5-6 miles.

June 9th: Walk leader Jon. Meet 11am at
picnic site car park below Derwent Reservoir
Dam (map reference SK173893), Derwent
Valley, Derbyshire. Circular walk, length
8-9 miles over mountainous terrain.

**Telephone for further details
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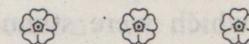
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Length approx 7 miles.

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