

Anarchist Co-operative?

We have about fifty people on our mailing list in Merseyside; 'Freedom' sells about two to three thousand copies nationally. So we have, then, a fair number of people, both here and nationally who are at least in sympathy with anarchism. Further there is no doubt that there are many people who consider themselves anarchists but have no contact with other anarchists because they have not heard of any anarchist group and have not seen 'Freedom'. There are also vastly more people who, although they have not yet thought of themselves as anarchists, need only a definition of anarchism put once in a coherent form for them to become anarchists - this applies especially to young people who are, as each generation does, casting about for new values and 'causes', but at a time when the values of the parent generation have been pretty thoroughly discredited - or, more accurately, been shown to be non-adaptive.

It is essential, therefore, for the strength of the anarchist movement that anarchists advertise their existence as much as possible, and all activities which keep anarchists in contact and thus strengthen their power to propagandise are worthwhile maintaining.

MAGNITUDE BUT NO DIRECTION

One of the reasons why anarchists and anarchist groups often suffer from a sense of purposelessness and powerlessness is that the society which they hope for - an anarchist society - is, at the present rate of progress, a very distant prospect. The involvement of many anarchists in issues which are not specifically anarchist, e.g. Biafra, disarmament, housing, Viet Nam, tends to conceal this overall lack of direction with the anarchist 'movement'. While most of the activities engaged in by anarchists, whether due to 'goal displacement' or to independent considerations, are laudable, they are no substitute for an explicitly anarchist programme of action, and they do not bring an anarchist society any closer.

"To pen panaceas for the future of the half-existent is not to have read Ivan Karamazov's 'Rebellion'." So says Donald Harrison in Insert 5. Be that as it may, I believe that it is useful and necessary that we both examine the problems likely to be faced by any society run along anarchist lines and to investigate ways in which such a society may be brought about.

One way I think an anarchist society might begin to emerge is through mutual aid. One type of mutual aid is to be found in the anarchist commune. A few small ones exist in Britain today - however I don't have much information about them at present.

Different in degree rather than in nature, because it does not need so high a level of commitment, is the anarchist co-operative. Every time wealth changes hands it is taxed by the Government, and there is usually a middle-man somewhere around to take his profit. Just to live and work in this economy is to subsidise the generals and the politicians and the capitalists. The purpose of an anarchist co-operative is to channel wealth away from the State and Big Business and back to the people (i.e. us). The first step is to look for some point of economic co-operation which is acceptable to a sufficiently large and economically powerful number of people (i.e. you). A variety of ideas have suggested themselves - anything from buying houses to the co-operative manufacture of sherbet.

The establishment of some sort of anarchist co-operative is my hobby-horse and I give warning that I may well ride it into the ground through these columns.

MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST MEETINGS

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