

have had from odd persons, often very odd persons, asking me to give names, addresses and phone numbers of Class War's individual members.

I was unable to respond. Partly because I do not give out this kind of information over the phone and partly because I did not know whom they were anyway, and although I might well have found out, think it is not always necessary to know too much detail about your own allies - what you do not know you cannot blurt out under torture or truth drugs if the worst comes to the worst. I hope that remark does not sound histrionic but you get my drift. Class War seemed to do a good job, in their own area, so good luck to them.

I have said nothing about pacifist anarchists or the Green anarchist movement. I have the greatest respect for pacifist anarchists who appear to do an excellent job. I wish I had the courage and certainty to count myself alongside them but it is not to be. Much of what the Green movement do I support with a few modifications: I am a meat eater, when I can afford it,

and enjoy driving. But I am responsive to criticisms, object to senseless murder of animals and conscious that town and country planning might be better organised and more improvements made to motor vehicles. Clearly I see things differently to the State and capitalism. I would consider these pacifists and Greens as kinds of, if not non-aligned anarchists, people with whom I find favour at least in their less dogmatic incarnations. I can work with them on matters of common interest in a way I can never work with the class struggle dogmatists.

So I am beginning to think it is time for some people who call themselves non-aligned anarchists to get together to form themselves into a national federation. I say "some people" because I am well aware many will reject the idea initially if not totally. Fair enough. But it might just be time to, in a sense, follow the example of other federations be they the ACF, Solidarity Federation, Class War, what you will, for a number of reasons.

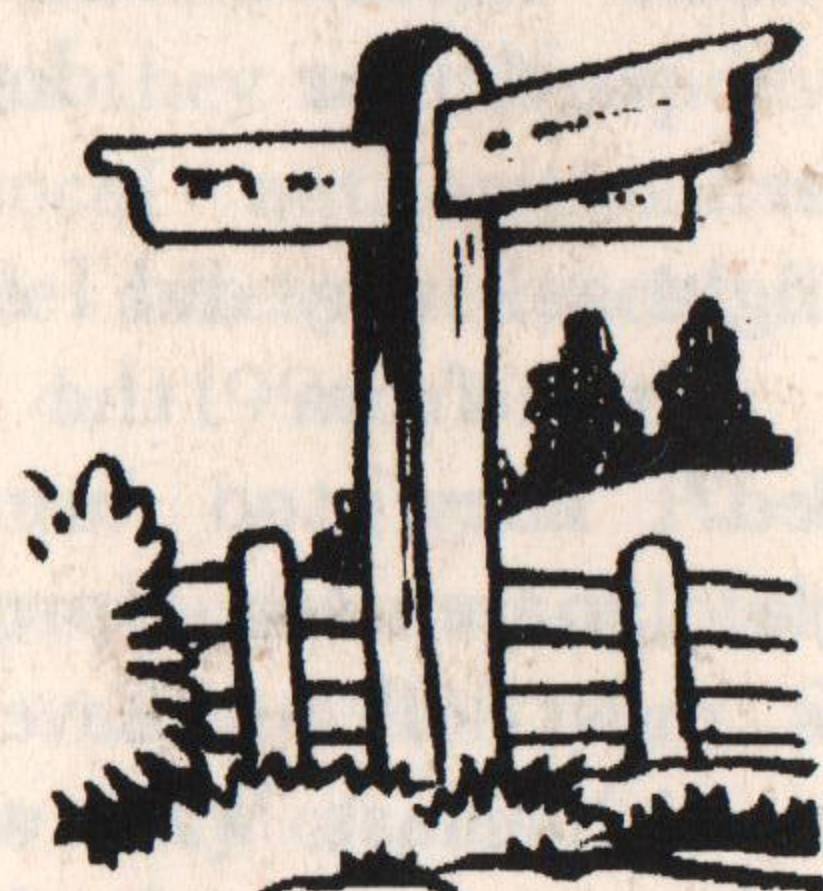
Firstly to establish an

ideological base within anarchism; thence to make contact with those similarly interested - calling yourself an anarchist can be a rather lonely experience; then to educate ourselves in anarchism and appropriate methods of action - both in the educative sense and in skills development; to produce papers and journals including a distribution network; organise local and regional meetings, schools, camps and other activities; and specify, and if necessary distance ourselves from other ideologies within anarchism. And so on - please add to the list. And of course have a yearly conference to get together to discuss and debate, but not to agree policy and never to vote except in terms of unanimity. Or, in other words, not to pass motions, merely follow similar modes of thought and activity because we deem it to be right. Know any catchy-sounding names? Let us see if we can get organised by 1998 and be really flourishing by the next millenium. What do you think?

Peter Neville.

Red Rambles

For Socialists and Anarchists



Red Rambles are monthly guided walks in The Peak District and Midlands, and also in the Yorkshire Dales. Walks are usually 5 - 8 miles. Walkers should wear suitable clothing and footwear and bring food & drink. For details of

walks phone 01773 827513 (Peak District) or 01756 799002 (Yorkshire Dales).

London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8.00pm 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.

Anyone interested in giving a talk or leading a discussion, please contact Carol Saunders or Peter Neville at the meetings, or Peter Neville at 4 Copper Beeches, Witham Road,

Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4AW, giving subject and prospective dates.

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Total Liberty

A Journal of non-aligned Anarchism

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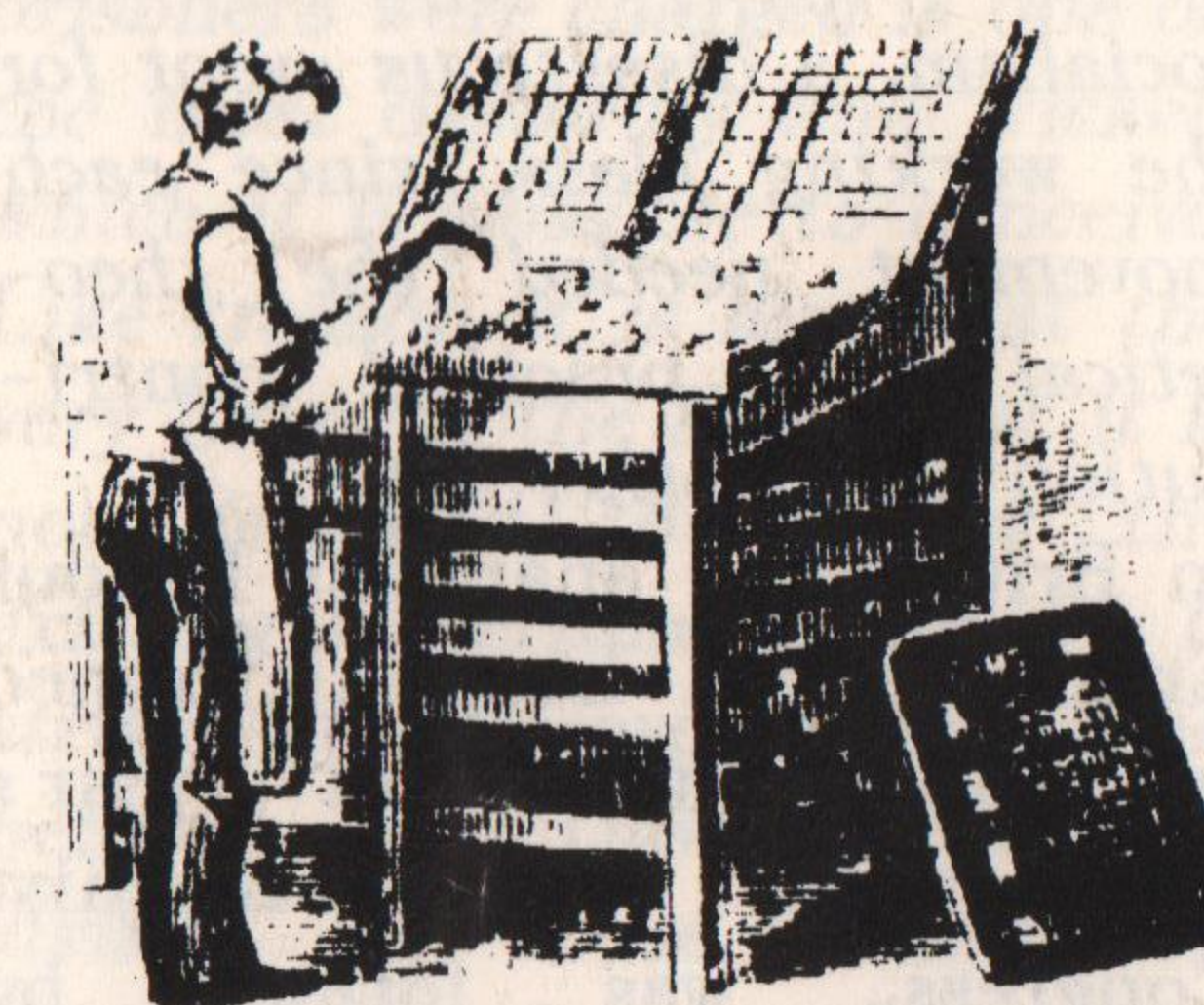
Editorial

This first edition of 'Total Liberty', a title inspired by Benjamin Tucker's paper 'Liberty', is a publication which the editor aims to establish as a journal dedicated to the discussion and examination, both serious and light-hearted, of Anarchism. This task will involve consideration of both the theoretical and the practical. The words 'a journal of non-aligned Anarchism' on our masthead are deliberately chosen in that there is no connection between 'Total Liberty' and any group, organisation or particular ideological position within the Anarchist pantheon. The journal will carry articles from differing strains of Anarchist opinion and also works from non-anarchist writers critical of Anarchism today. The publication will initially appear on an occasional basis. Articles for publication of between 1000 and 1500 words should be sent to our box number address. The editor reserves the right to shorten or omit from publication articles received. Subscriptions are available at £5.00 per 4 issues. 'Total Liberty' is intended to be a non-profit making undertaking. Monies raised will be used to cover costs of printing and distribution. Payment to be by cheque made payable to J. Simcock. This edition features

Bill Whitehead's article discussing the impact of Anarchism on the late 19th century Socialist and Labour Movement, Peter Neville's account of the effect the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists had upon the Anarchist Federation of Britain, a call for the creation of an Anarchist Media Group, Rory Bowskill's analysis of the Charity scene, a diatribe from Doreen Frampton SRN and much more.

Anarchists in British Labour History

What impact, if any have Anarchist ideas had upon the British Socialist / Labour Movement focusing on the 1890s.



Though we entirely differ from Nicoll [sic] we must give him the fullest credit for the work he did in securing a defence for his Walsall comrades. He spared no pains in this direction and sacrificed himself in every way. Such noble and courageous conduct renders us the more sorry that so much enthusiasm

and zeal should be thrown away on the hopeless cause of Anarchism (1).

This quote from the Marxist Social Democratic Federation's (SDF) paper *Justice* is indicative of the relationship at the time between the socialist and anarchist organisations. David Nicoll was the editor at the time of *Commonweal*, the paper of the anarchist Socialist League (SL). Following the fitting up and imprisoning on manufactured charges of the Walsall Anarchists he too was jailed for threatening to expose the police's agent provocateur, Coulon and the devious plot they used to entrap the Walsall Anarchists (2).

The main effect that the actions and ideas of anarchist groups and individuals had at the time was of encouraging social democratic groupings to spread the idea that they were not an integral part of the socialist movement.

This essay will look at some of the influences which anarchists had upon the socialist movement in Britain mainly in the the early 1890s.

To provide some background to the situation it is worth mentioning that the first English anarchist was William Godwin whose book *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (published in 1793) had a recognised effect on early English utopian socialists such as Robert Owen, who "acknowledged Godwin as his

political master". The Owenites and Chartists of the mid nineteenth century "reprinted many extracts from Godwin's works in their journals and bought out a new edition of *Political Justice* in 1842" (3).

So, the tradition of libertarian anti-statist socialism was already in existence in England before the imported socialist ideas of Marx, Bakunin and Kropotkin arrived. In fact these ideas which were around at the beginnings of the labour movement in other European countries, came long after the founding of many trade unions and the failure of the Chartist movement. For this reason

British Marxist and anarchist organisations struggled to gain any influence at all in industrial trade unionism and were often seen and portrayed by the capitalist press as "outside agitators".

With these handicaps it was difficult for either the anarchist Socialist League or the Marxist SDF to progress from the status of sect to that of a mass movement. The activities of the SDF are perhaps more important than the anarchists to the British Labour and Trade Union movement not because of their activities at the time but because of the larger numbers who left the SDF to become prominent in the movement in later years. Anarchist ideas and influences were not confined to the anarchist groups: "Charlotte Wilson, a Kropotkinite anarchist and member of the Fabian executive, mustered enough support amongst 'anti-parliamentary' Fabians to worry the 'possibilists'." In fact the only Fabian Tract of 1886 was *What is Socialism*, explaining the "two distinct

schools, Collectivist and Anarchist, with the latter written by Wilson" (4).

Members of the SL were also members and activists in Trade Unions such as Ted Leggart who became full time organiser of the Carmen's Union and Charles Mowbray (publisher of the *Commonweal*) who was active in the Tailor's strike (5).

Much of the split between the British Marxists and Anarchists can be seen as down to outside influence. Arguments between Marx and Bakunin led to the expulsion of the libertarians from the First International in 1872. An event which Guerin describes thus:



Henceforth the links were broken between anarchism and socialism, a disastrous event for the working class, since each movement needed the theoretical and practical contribution of the other (6).

In Britain the anarchist Labour Emancipation League, formed in 1881 after that year's International Anarchist Congress, was formed by anarchists Frank Kitz and Joseph Lane (an elderly carter who remembered listening to Chartist speakers, who was later to write the *Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto*). This later affiliated to the SDF in 1884 and then left in December to form the Socialist League.

The Socialist League too was an uneasy alliance as it composed those who disliked Hyndman (the Stock Broker leader of the SDF) and those who disliked him and his politics (7). From this time on there was little co-operation and much animosity and faction fighting between the authoritarians and the libertarians.

Lately the attendance at the gatherings has largely increased and between the socialists and ...the anarchists considerable friction has been caused, the various speakers accusing each other of treachery and backsliding. These scenes have nearly led to a breach of the peace. (8).

This article printed in 1894 was at the peak of anarchist organisation and support when they could match the SDF in numbers for demonstrations and crowds listening to speakers. This was also paradoxically at a time when the capitalist press had made anarchists the scapegoats for all bombings and atrocities carried out on British soil.

In fact the anarchist SL's *Commonweal* under the editorship of H.B. Samuels was gladly claiming responsibility and urging further individual acts of violence. He continued this "noisy editorship of *Commonweal*" for two years without personal harassment by the police. This led to his suspicion as a police spy but no conclusive proof is yet available.

As Quail says:

All this could amount to little more than the fact that Samuels was a reckless aficionado of propaganda by deed who combined a certain self-preservation caution with a useful portion of luck. (9)

What it did do was give the

authorities an excuse to arrest or harass anarchists at will with public support. This encouraged the SDF in their instinct to plough a separate and more "respectable" parliamentary democracy route. Perhaps the most damning evidence of their lack of practical positive influence upon the Trade Union movement (rather than the socialist movement which was equally pathetically small) of the day was their lack of numbers. Even John Quail who has self declared sympathy with the movement admits that the evidence "...would seem to indicate a maximum of 2,000 English Anarchists in London at that time (1894) - a generous estimate. Equally generous we could double that number for a national total(10)". It would seem that by sticking rigidly to the maxim of revolution or nothing they had distanced themselves ideologically from practical trade disputes and community actions such as co-operatives. In the London dock strike of 1889 the SL were involved only as spreaders of Anarchist propaganda by papers and speeches. They did not take an active part but were "tourists as far as the dock strike was concerned"(11). This, linked with their inability to distribute their propaganda efficiently, left the working class with the image of bomb throwing individuals who wanted nothing else but the destruction of civilisation. Hardly designed to attract a mass movement.

The beginning of this reputation was also the beginning of the period when Anarchists were taken at their most serious and when the *Commonweal* was at its Samuels inspired most militant.

As Quail points out:

The arrest, trial and sentencing of the Walsall Anarchists in 1892 deserve more attention than they have received from historians of the left in Britain. From the point of view of the more liberal, there was a disconcertingly straight forward use of agents provocateur by the police. From the point of view of historians of the growth of institutions connected with the working class movement, the existence of options for propaganda by deed and the reasons for the rejection of these options should have given more cause for thought (12).

In effect (as came out later in one of the police inspectors memoirs) the police fitted up a group of anarchists who were henceforth known as the Walsall Anarchists with a fictitious bomb plot. The hysteria caused was so great that even when the memoirs were published the Walsall Anarchists were still not released from jail. Although "Justice Hawkins declared that 'no part of the sentence he passed was because they were Anarchist'... The Times, however was a little more honest" (13).

The offence with which the prisoners were charged is one of the most dastardly and wicked which it is possible to conceive. Like treason it is aimed at the very heart of the State, but it is not designed to destroy the existing Government alone. It strikes at all Governments, and behind all Governments it strikes at those elementary social rights for the defence of which all forms and methods of civil rules exist. The crime of which the Walsall prisoners have been found guilty was no isolated act... Hate, envy, the lust of plunder, and the lust of bloodshed are stamped on every line of the Anarchist literature read at Walsall and on every word of the confessions made

by Ravachol (14). Ravachol was a French anarchist involved in causing explosions in the much wider programme of propaganda by deed on the continent. It could be supposed that this attitude of the press and the heavy sentences and obvious infiltration of police spies in the movement would have deterred further such actions. However, as previously mentioned the new editor of *Commonweal* actively publicised and encouraged it.

In conclusion the anarchist movement had a decidedly negative effect upon the British socialist movement. This can only be mitigated by the fact that that was all new territory to the activists of the day. The Social Democrats seemed to have their own personal careers more at heart than the revolution which they supposedly espoused. This is perhaps why more of them became leading figures in the reformist Labour movement and why the pathetic efforts of the SDF are seen as more important from our perspective than the pathetic efforts of the anarchists.

Bill Whitehead

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Footnotes

- (1) *Justice*, 9 April 1892, quoted in: John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse*, 1978, Granada Publishing Ltd. page 121
- (2) John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse*, 1978, Granada Publishing Ltd. page 126.
- (3) Ed. Peter Marshall, *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin*, 1986, Freedom Press, page 10.
- (4) Barrow and Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement 1880-1914*, 1996, Cambridge University Press, page 30.
- (5) John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse*, 1978, Granada Publishing Ltd. page 88
- (6) Daniel Guerin, *Marxism and Anarchism*, in Ed. David Goodway, *For Anarchism, History, Theory and Practice*, 1989, Routledge, page 115.
- (7) George Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 1986, Pelican, page 372.
- (8) *The Times*, 8 August 1894, in: John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse*, 1978, Granada Publishing Ltd. page 192
- (9) John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse*, 1978, Granada Publishing Ltd. page 188
- (10) *ibid.* page 194
- (11) *ibid.* page 87
- (12) *ibid.* page 103
- (13) *ibid.* page 121
- (14) *The Times*, 5 April 1892, quoted in: John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse*, 1978, Granada Publishing Ltd. page 121

Decline and Fall: ORA & the AFB.

In the Spring 1996 edition of the Anarchist Communist Federation publication *ORGANISE* there was an illuminating article on the origins of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists in the early nineteen-seventies and subsequent groupings leading to the creation of the Anarchist Communist Federation. Although I was active in the anarchist movement at the time of ORA's creation, much of the information was new to me as I was not a member of ORA or its subsequent derivatives.

I have to say, however, that the article was biased. I do not mean this in an unfriendly way. I have no idea how accurate or inaccurate it was. Rather, the article described how a segment

of the then Anarchist Federation of Britain broke away and this had much to do with the AFB's collapse although, as the writer said, this was not ORA's intention.

The Anarchist Movement In The Nineteen Sixties

I was myself active in the anarchist movement from the late nineteen fifties. I started a student group at a Birmingham college in the mid-sixties and a year later founded a Birmingham Anarchist Group. I and my group were founder members of the Anarchist Federation of Britain.

When the AFB was founded it was specifically a national federation of groups, a national co-ordinating body specifically non-aligned. And being an anarchist body it operated under unanimity and, as such, did not include voting. Its annual conference was merely a get-together, not a policy-making body. The groups were paramount, not the annual conference.

An early change in its structure led to many later problems. I remember a comrade from Stockton-on-Tees who said that try as he would he could never find any other anarchists in his locality; was he not to be involved because he was not a member of a group? So the structure was changed to a national federation of groups and individuals but this led to many problems because individuals not responsible to anyone, despite groups existing in their own areas, turned up and tried to dominate annual conferences. An example was the late Albert Meltzer.

Decision Taking And Decision Making

Group secretaries like myself would communicate with each other and pass proposed agenda

items to the next conference's host group and when the agenda was published the groups would discuss the points raised in local meetings and, in many circumstances, mandate conference delegates to take up certain positions. But individuals, not connected with groups at the time (such as Meltzer), would come along and, in a rather self-opinionated way, try to get mandated delegates to accept other positions as an apparent AFB policy which had not been discussed at group meetings. A favourite trick of Meltzer's was to ask for a straw vote to be held to give something of an understanding of how the people at the conference felt. We subsequently found he then told others, especially international comrades, how people had voted was now AFB national policy, never mentioning the word "straw"; a fact which infuriated many people.

The Origins Of The Anarchist Federation Of Britain

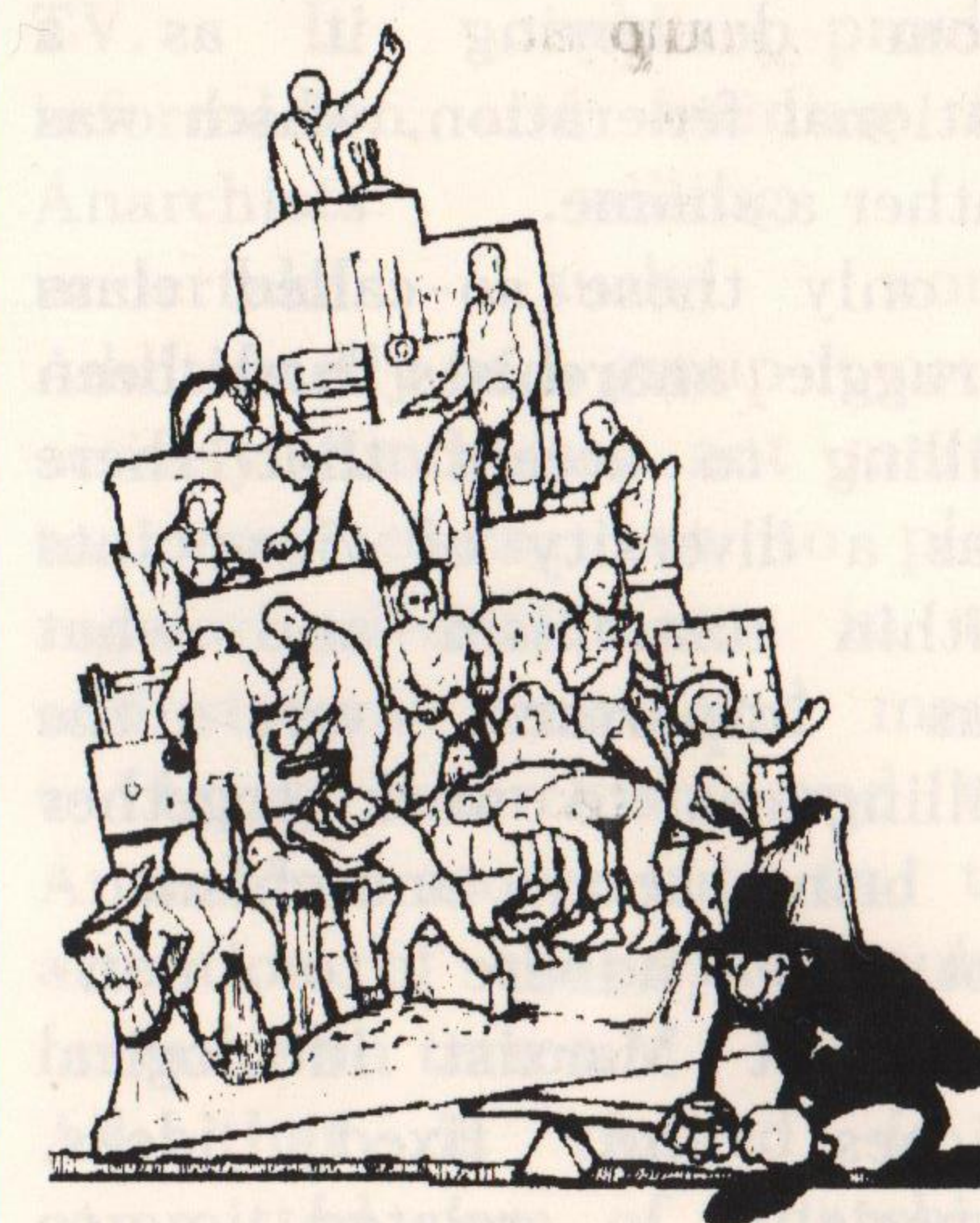
Although a small anarchist movement existed in the nineteen fifties the most dominant groups were Freedom Press Group, the London Anarchist Group, the Syndicalist Workers Federation and some other regional groups which appeared and often disappeared and a caucus in Glasgow. The big growth period was the sixties and this was largely derived from the nuclear disarmament movement (CND and the later regional Committees of 100). These were comrades who saw things in moral terms rather than having an industrial background; not necessarily pacifists although some were; not middle class, although again a few were; but more likely to be working class

school achievers. Many later, both as youngsters, or as in my case, mature students, went to universities or qualified as teachers, became social workers, joined the professions and so on, eventually becoming a part of the white collar sector. This is what sociologists called being credentialists i.e. obtaining occupations through educational qualifications (their credentials) although a later sociological term used to describe them in post, the Service Class, is perhaps more relevant. It was also a generational thing. Many active anarchists at the time were young. Some were students or in the early phase of their careers. Very few were industrial workers although this did not stop some, especially syndicalists, claiming to be representative of the workers. A good few were women and remember this was before women's lib, but few of the latter came from an industrial background. By the early seventies many 1960's anarchists were developing marital-type relationships and becoming absorbed in their occupations and, in a sense, also suffering burnout. Few had had any previous political background but virtually none came from a Marxist background. The advent of the Vietnam War changed that.

The Marxising Of The Anarchist Movement

It seemed to be a logical contribution of nuclear disarmament to oppose the United States interference in the Vietnamese liberation struggle led by the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, a group which was originally composed of many tendencies both political and

religious although this was later taken over by the Vietnamese communist party and dominated by Russian-backed North Vietnam. Our campaign was anti-imperialist and anti-militarist but not anti-American. The initial idea of the campaign was to put moral pressure on the United States government to disengage, as eventually they did.



A new type of activist came into the anarchist movement; Anarchists with a Marxist background, what groups like the ACF call 'class struggle anarchists'. I am not saying they were still Marxists. They spoke as if they were anarchists but they had brought much of their Marxist background and baggage with them and much of their Marxian approach to meetings and activities. Unlike the older anarchists to whom Marxism was anathema - for very good reasons, and the nuclear disarmers who thought it irrelevant, these newcomers appeared to see the world in terms of a Marxian-like perspective, a world composed of the Communist Party, Trotskyists and the Labour Left which so far as people like myself was concerned was quite irrelevant to our conception of reality which was purely anarchistic.

AFB conferences became more and more heated and there were demands for a support of the NLF and even communist North Vietnam. Much of AFB annual conference discussions began to have little to do with the ideas of local anarchist groups demanding the passing of threatening sounding motions which, in any case, were all hot air. Many, especially the newcomers, did not appear to want to acknowledge that there was a plurality of opinion within the anarchist movement and let the matter lie but began to insist on dogmatic position-taking. This was not Spain in the nineteen thirties. Nobody suggested forming an international brigade to fight in Vietnam nor even send food parcels, clothing and money to the NLF. But it was no longer an expression of moral outrage. And it played right into the hands of the United States government and enabled them to claim protesters were a bunch of communists. Many of the ex-Marxist anarchists were demanding a party line to which we all had to adhere but amounting to nothing in real terms. This was completely unanarchistic in conception and structure.

The Organisation Of Revolutionary Anarchists

It was within this period that the ex-Marxist, class struggle, pro-NLF comrades, call them what you will, formed the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists and it was done so secretly. Those people who were known to oppose the ideas, like myself, were never circularised. It was this secrecy that I and others found so objectional. A comrade active at the time (and later)

and an early member of ORA, has written to me denying there was any secrecy. To him it was fully open but it was only fully open to those that supported ORA's aims. In my case it was eighteen months after ORA had commenced before I became aware of its inception although I was helping out with the production of the AFB Internal Bulletin. After the Birmingham comrades who were producing the bulletin gave up, comrades in other towns offered to produce it; first Oxford, then Cambridge, then we in London where I had now moved.

The Demise Of The Anarchist Federation Of Britain

Oxford's bulletin was rather skimpy. You felt you wondered why they bothered. Cambridge's bulletin failed to come out. I wrote to Cambridge's comrades asking what had happened, asking for the address lists, correspondence and agenda items for us in London to produce the bulletin, and received a curious letter from someone in Cambridge saying the writer thought the AFB had ceased to exist and had been replaced by this new body ORA. I started making enquiries and found in substance this was true.

Writing to comrades around the country I found that a major disillusionment had set in and those groups and individuals not part of ORA had dropped out, become part of other movements or got themselves involved in furthering their education or, as in my own case, had entered a career. I myself had become involved in both my union and professional societies concerned with Sociology teaching although,

from time to time, I did join other local anarchist groups, and eventually the London Anarchist Forum.

We know from the writer of ORGANISE's article that ORA itself quickly collapsed, splitting into other grouplets - if it was intended as a point of growth the opposite actually happened - and its ideas had little effect on the rest of the anarchist movement, apart from destroying it as a national federation, which was rather a shame. If only these so-called class struggle anarchists had been willing to accept that there was a diversity of viewpoints within anarchism and what was important was the willingness to work together to bring about anarchism - not to adhere to non-anarchist Marxist ideological cliches and fixed ideas, especially related to ideological conceptions of social class that have little to do with the contemporary reality of stratification, and to adopt attitudes in relation to other Marxist groupings, but these new anarchists would have none of it. What they seemed to want was an anarchist party with a fixed party line, even if it was not called that, and this was anathema to other anarchists.

The Resurgence Of Anarchism In The Nineties

The last few years have seen a resurgence of interest in anarchism. New groups have developed as have new orthodoxies. Comrades active in the sixties and later have come forward again although in fact many have been active for years in other areas such as nuclear disarmament or environmentalism. New anarchist groups and federations have been created.

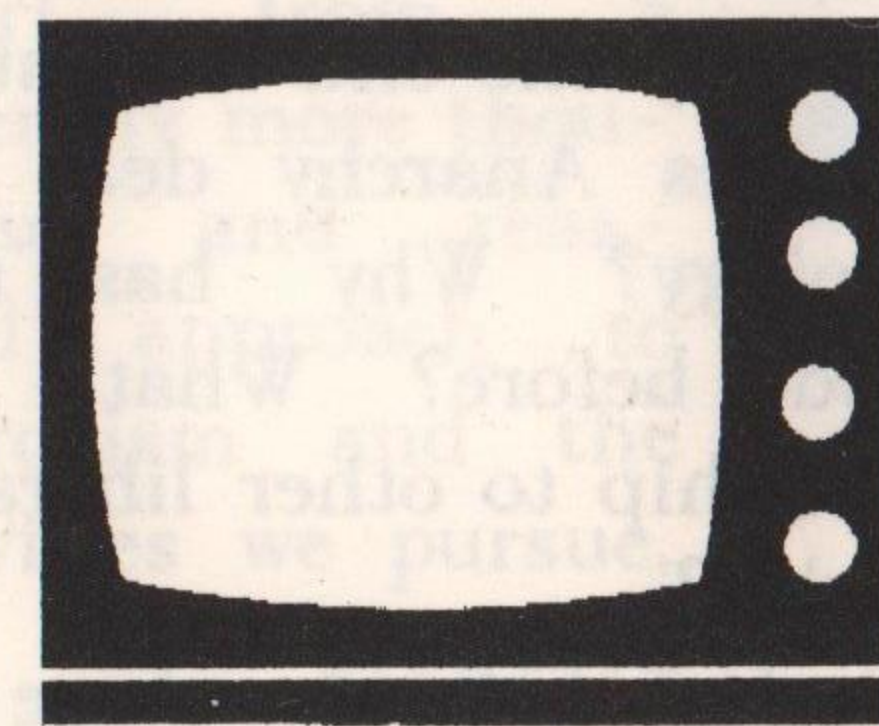
There has been talk of re-starting an Anarchist Federation of Britain. In the north for instance, the Northern Anarchist Network has been founded although it too has, I gather, had problems with ideological dogmatists from a Marxist background.

Once upon a time there were debates as to whether you were an anarchist of individualist anarchism, anarchist communism or anarcho-syndicalism, or, on another dimension, whether one was or was not a pacifist - not that the non-pacifists were so active. Later whether you were a feminist or environmentalist. Now it is whether you are or are not a so-called class struggle anarchist. Surely it is important to avoid the mistakes of the past. The movement is too small. And there is a sexual dimension too. Does it not occur to comrades to wonder why so many anarchist groups or conferences are almost entirely attended just by men talking about their muddled views of social class and an industrial workplace which hardly exists except in the realms of history or more likely an ideological fiction - a workplace they were never part of? Marx is dead. Let him stay dead. Vahinger in his book "The Philosophy of 'As If'" points out we cannot be sure we are free or are responsible for our own destiny, to suppose so is absurd. Just like anarchism. But as Migel de Unamunu points out "Only he who attempts the absurd is capable of achieving the impossible". Let's get rid of all this Marxist nonsense and concentrate on anarchism. And if the ideologues want to join in let them do so, re-educate them in anarchism or if that is impossible point them in other

directions and let them go. Do not let them diminish the anarchist movement this time around. There is enough to do working out the practicalities of opposing the state and capitalism without these interminable wrangles which in the end amount to nothing but hot air and bore most anarchists to tears.

Peter Neville

An Anarchist Media Group?



Anarchism, both as a movement and a philosophy suffers from a distinct lack of public awareness, and also a lack of positive, informed coverage in the mainstream media - whether Newspapers, TV, Radio etc. Many among us may put this down to media bias, or to the interests of Government and Capitalism. While this is undoubtedly true to a considerable extent, it is also true that the absence of Anarchism from the media is due to our own failure to promote our ideas. Presently if we are covered at all we are regarded as a violent lunatic extreme, useful to blame for outbreaks of public disorder such as the Poll Tax riot or various animal rights demos. Alternatively we are described as a harmless bunch of freaks and eccentrics, dreaming impractically of an unrealistic utopia. We can change this. How? I hear you ask. This is where the formation of an 'Anarchist Media Group' comes into play.

Such a group would serve a number of functions. It could provide a well publicised point of contact, using a mobile phone number, for journalists and the media generally, where they could obtain an Anarchist perspective on given events. It could issue regular press releases and hold press conferences. It would provide individual Anarchists willing to serve on panels for radio and TV. It could provide information and training for Anarchists willing to undertake such work. Additionally as a group it could actively fundraise, not merely to cover costs, but to place regular advertisements in the mainstream press and media to bring Anarchism and the Anarchist movement to the attention of the wider public on our own terms.

All that is needed is a committed core of Anarchists who are willing to give their time and energy. If you are interested in helping form an Anarchist Media Group write to Box EMAB, 88 Abbey Street, Derby. JPS

Charity, at home and elsewhere!

There is an old saying that "Charity begins at home" but I suspect that this may not be the case where British charities are involved in the promotion of land rights for the poor. Several of the larger British charities are currently supporting the landless peasants' action of squatting unused land belonging to large estates in countries like Brazil, among them OXFAM and Save the Children. However, a look at their patrons soon reveals that they are headed by people with large landholdings in Britain. This is of particular

interest as Britain is itself high on any list of countries where a small proportion of people own and control large areas while the vast majority are excluded from any right to any form of access or use of land. It is doubtful that any support, either financial or otherwise, would be forthcoming from Save the Children if a group of Britain's landless poor were to take possession of some property in the estate of Princess Anne their patron. Indeed it is much more likely that this supporter of land rights, as long as they don't threaten her wealth, would seek their forceable eviction at the hands of the forces of the state such as the Police. In Canada Police were issued with heavy machine guns and land mines to remove a peaceable occupation of unceded land by the indigenous population. Although to be fair to them, they have tried to help travellers with children, but not to the extent of saying that the legal concept of the rights of the owner should be on the basis of tenure and usage rather than armed robbery.

Perhaps this fact will help decide the evolving practice of occupation by the landless in this country. It may even be the case, although I do not have information on it, that some organisations supporting far away land rights struggles are directly holding land which, although potentially productive, is laying empty and the people do not have even the right to walk over it. Both of these situations, ownership by an organisation or patron thereof which supports foreign land rights struggles, can be used to show how people are willing to do something as long as there is no real cost to themselves. This is also apparent where prisoners' rights are concerned.

Amnesty International has thousands of members in Britain who are willing to support prisoners in other countries, where there is no real risk from their actions but despite repeated proof of abuse of the prison population and "miscarriages of Justice" they have it as a policy not to ask their members in the UK to get involved in what happens in our prisons.

The message that is given out is clear and simple. Direct involvement in local issues is dangerous because it challenges things here and you might begin to find out that you are not as free as others would like you to think you are.

Rory Bowskill

Doreen's Rant

"I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired about arguing over the cosmetic freedoms used to justify current political systems. I'm fed up to the back teeth with being fed up to the back teeth over capitalism's genius in distracting us away from fundamental human issues. I have lost interest in it all. The single word FREEDOM is all that now excites me. In whatever context freedom is to become, one thing is certain, it will not be won by mind numbing logical debate. I now give notice that I surrender my skills in rhetorical debate. I am handing back my powers of argumentation. It is my intention to acquire proficiency in disorder. And I do this to expose rational organisation for what it is: an absurdity. I am becoming free to create games of disorder. And I play these games without fear and therefore with good will in my bones and great love in my veins. I don't mind losing my life. How about you? I don't mind losing my job. How about

you? I don't mind being put under surveillance. How about you?

Doreen Frampton SRN
east pennine anarchists

Is Anarchy the end of History?

Voices across the waters

Anarchists, both individuals and groups, who produce magazines, papers, books and pamphlets do have an effect. This may not always be the effect they hoped for, or even intended. Often as not it can be like throwing a pebble into a lake. The pebble itself is lost and sinks out of sight to the bottom. However, the ripples it creates spread out in ever widening circles from the first, small point of impact.

The printed word has a habit of taking on a life of its own. The impression it makes may be among your peers, your neighbours - or among people far removed in time or location. That people go on dreaming, thinking, putting thoughts to paper is in itself encouraging, and can produce works of real interest. This is borne out by the wealth of Anarchist ideas which have come out of the American Anarchist movement in the last two decades in journals such as Our Generation, Social Anarchism, Kick It Over, The Match, The Dandelion, Instead of a Magazine to name but a few. 'Anarchy and the End of History' Pb Factsheet Five / Lysander Spooner 1991 and available from AK Distribution, Edinburgh, is a by-product of this renaissance. The work is an anthology of essays edited by Michael Ziesing and Mike Gunderloy, editors respectively of 'Instead of a Magazine' and 'Factsheet Five'. The essays start with an article by Gunderloy first published in Instead of a Magazine titled

'Challenges for the Anarchist Movement' His questions were: What is an Anarchist, What is government? What about criminals? How does an Anarchist Society work? How do we get from here to there? What about the here and now? Is Anarchy the end of History? How does Anarchy deal with technology? Why hasn't it worked before? What's our relationship to other liberatory struggles?

Gunderloy believes these are areas to which Anarchists have given insufficient thought or glib answers.

The question and answer format for writing a pamphlet or book is not new. The catholic catechism follows it, so have numerous Anarchist books. For example: George Barrett's 'Objections to Anarchism' published by Freedom Press in 1921, Nicolas Walter's 'About Anarchism' originally published in Anarchy series 1, 'Hard Questions for Citizen Radicals' by David Bouchier published in Social Anarchism 1990, even the late Albert Meltzer produced a small A6 sized hand book entitled 'Anarchism: arguments for and against'.

However, the writers who responded to Gunderloy's initial article produced an interesting and readable book. They cover the spectrum of American Anarchism from left to right and include authors both well known and obscure. Robert Shea, George Woodcock, Larry Gambone, Hakem Bey,

David Koven, Carl Watner, Ed Stamm among twenty eight in all.

One article in particular caught my eye. Only a page and a half in length it made a brief case for a 'moderate anarchism'. Stamm identifies four weaknesses in the Anarchist movement: 1. utopianism and orthodoxy, 2. lack of small 'd' democracy, 3. lack of organisation and co-operation, 4. lack of patience. Apart from a generally more thoughtful and reasoned approach to anarchism and the activities we pursue, his proposed specific remedies for these problems included the

following ideas: firstly to form a federation involving democratic decision making with a 'no first use of violence policy', non-hierarchical organization and free speech. Secondly to patronise those Anarchists trying to make a non-hierarchical living. Third to spend more 'quality time' with each other instead of mainly meeting up at 'mega-gatherings'. Fourth to mellow out and adopt a long term outlook. His fifth idea is for Anarchists

to relocate to near each other. This perhaps makes more sense in his own American context of widely scattered small town American anarchists than in this overcrowded island.

Ed Stamm is now the contact



point for an address exchange network calling itself 'The Affinity Group of Evolutionary Anarchists'. They have contacts in America and Europe and they can be contacted via Ed Stamm, PO Box 1402, Lawrence, KS 66044, USA.

The group distribute pamphlets, badges, stickers and their own reprints of anarchist literature. The pamphlets include several by Larry Gambone who is a regular contributor to

Freedom: 'Syndicalism', 'Sane Anarchy' and 'Laughter is Bourgeois' which is an anarchist critique of 'Political Correctness' all published under the imprint of The Red Lion Press. The reprints include a new edition of

Augustin Souchy's 'With the peasants of Aragon'. A more lengthy exposition of their own ideas can be found in their pamphlet 'Consent or Coercion: an Anarchist case for social transformation and answers to questions about Anarchism.' which includes the following Gustave Landaur quote on its front cover "The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of behaviour; we destroy it by contracting

other relationships, by behaving differently." Stamm's initiative in helping to form the Affinity Group of Evolutionary Anarchists is a heartening example of anarchists behaving differently, of rethinking our ideas and attempting to communicate with each other and the wider world in an open and honest manner. Long may such voices across the waters be heard.

Jonathan Simcock

ANARCHISM

ANARCHISM seeks the abolition of the state and present day capitalism.

ANARCHISM is the philosophy that favours a free society organised along lines of voluntary co-operation, individual liberty and mutual aid. ANARCHIST society would be a decentralised network of communities and individuals working together to satisfy their mutual needs for goods and services, while exploiting no one, and living in harmony with the natural world.

EVERY person has the right to make all decisions about their own life. All moralistic

meddling in the private affairs of freely acting persons is unjustified.

GOVERNMENT is an unnecessary evil. All governments survive on theft and extortion, called taxation. All governments force their decrees on the people, and command obedience under threat of punishment.

THE major outrages of history have been, and continue to be, committed by governments. While every advancement of thought, every betterment in the human condition, has come about through the practices of voluntary co-operation and individual initiative.

Let's Do It Our Way

From car boot sales to making music, creating clothes fashions or working the land, people get involved. Not all of us are content to be passive consumers spending our leisure and money in the huge shopping malls. We can observe them doing things that fit in with their own idealism. In World War Two the UK propagandists coined the phrase "Digging for Victory" which apparently worked very well according to David Crouch and Colin Ward in their excellent book "The Allotment, Its Landscape and Culture", Mushroom Books 1994 (or the Faber & Faber Edition of 1988). A broadcast by the Ministry of Agriculture on 4 October 1939 proclaimed that: "Half a million more allotments properly worked will provide

potatoes and vegetables that will feed another million adults and one and a half million children for eight months of the year, so let's get going and let "Dig for Victory" be the task for everyone with a garden or allotment and every man and woman capable of digging an allotment in their spare time." At

this time as rationing of food and goods were introduced, the black market came into being. The present writer well remembers the local poachers offering game to my disapproving mother. Alternatively joints of pork, when a pig was secretly butchered, but mother with her strict moral code always refused.

But I let my mind wander back to the task at hand as they say. Nowadays land is at a premium and local authorities realise that they have valuable assets at their disposal. An article in Issue 4, 1996 of the "Allotment & Leisure Gardener" by Derek F. Humphreys states that "The protection of allotment provision is under threat. The 1908 Act, Section 23 made it the express duty of every allotment authority who are of the opinion that there is a demand for allotments in their area, to provide a sufficient number of them. The authority must also take into consideration any representation in writing to them by six parliamentary electors in the area. Sadly (intentionally?) the Secretary of State has no default powers, and this apparent legal right to an allotment is of little practical use". He goes on to write that: "Allotment wardens or overseers,



and their successors in allotment authorities may, with the approval of the Secretary of State, sell all or any part of a site and purchase other suitable land for the same purpose. This gives no security to the plotters, and no participatory place in negotiations for them. It makes a mockery of Town Planning that the allotment facility, providing not only gardens but open spaces, visual amenity and wildlife habitats, can be moved on the basis of corporate greed induced by the artificial price of potential development land in the urban situation".

I would comment that what is needed here is a little direct action. When we have sorted out the road lobby and airfield extensions we should turn our attention to protection of allotment sites and open spaces. Diggers and Levellers, Rainbow Coalition, Unite!

Meanwhile, back on the disease and pest ridden, windswept allotment somewhere in the East Midlands, the struggle to grow crops goes on. Nine individuals - where hundreds once worked the thin, gravelly, hungry soil. We know that gardeners employed in the local pits sowed this land. They sunk numerous wells down to the deep clay. In the wet cement Bulwell Tommy scratched his monicker. In the year 1911, he tells us that he was on strike. His epitaph is in a well. What would he have made of the 1984 strike, one wonders. All water under the bridge now of course.

Working on hands and knees grubbing out weeds, you tend to get a different view of the world. It's all eyes down. No, we are not playing bingo. This weeding is a serious matter. The sow thistle has rather a long tap root and its extraction in a bed of onions is difficult, to say the least. Very often an onion plant will be pulled out with the thistle. Some weeds like chickweed and groundsel are edible, the former rich in copper. As I move along on my knees I'm constantly grazing on various plants. Being an organic gardener there is no risk of contamination by chemicals. The weeds that are pulled out must be put back into the soil by way of composting. Pigeon manure from local fanciers on the nearby council estate is also added to our compost. This will accelerate the temperature and thus generate enough heat to

break down all the contents into useable humus. A nice brown friable sweet smelling medium, we hope.

On our site hardly anything, apart from a few seeds, is brought in new. From nails to fertilisers, all are recycled. A few years ago the aforementioned housing estate was refurbished. A skip was placed at strategic positions as to enable the workmen easy loading access. Soon these metal containers were full of doors and window frames complete with glass. As we heard the hammering and screeching of withdrawn nails we were as one like Pavlov's dog reacting to the sound of his master's bell. Pushing wheelbarrows, bikes, trolleys - home made and the supermarket variety - we dashed off to the skip. We scanned the contents and decided that we should get permission from the contractors who were in the process of ripping out the old windows and doors from the nearby dwellings. The workmen readily agreed that recycling was the best option. No doubt they took the view that the stuff we carried off on our makeshift barrows would not have to be transported at their expense to the landfill site. As we loaded up our booty, one of our brethren asked a man taking out a window if he might be more careful so as not to damage anything. "Bollocks to that mate, y'take it as it comes" was his snappy answer. We made no comment at this, only to castigate our comrade for pushing his luck. Barrows precariously piled high with the old doors and windows were bumped and rocked down the rough track back to our allotment site.

Not all our actions regarding this joint exercise in self-

sufficiency and recycling were due to altruism. I think that the word is reciprocal. The nine of us who work the Old Cemetery Gardens don't always see things the same way. Heated arguments, usually of a political nature, were commonplace in my first year there. Now that eighteen years of Tory rule is over and the beloved Labour Party, so called, is in, people (other than me) have mellowed. How long this is to last remains to be seen. Most of the time we get on well enough. If someone is on holiday or is staying in hospital then his tasks will be shared among us all.

Winter time, when the land rests, obviously work is at a minimum. Then is the time to take stock, clutching a glass of Merrydown cider, sharing the glow of the gas fire with Barney the dog. Gramophone makes music, curtains closed, while the neighbours shriek at the kids above the sound of their television. It's nice to know that there is life out there.

Mick Cropper

A Type of Anarchist Federation

Two years ago, at the Anarchist Bookfair, John Rety organised a session around the suggestion that we might think of organising a new national anarchist federation like the The Anarchist Federation of Britain of the 1960s and 1970s. I assisted him by drafting and circularising the minutes which I sent around various known anarchist groupings with, I might add, a few suggestions of my own.

The response was rather uneven. Although a number of individuals, some of whom were

members of anarchist groupings around the country, indicated a hearty response, the response from those already organised into national federations was disappointingly minimal.

Since that time a number of us have come together either in person or by mail and appear to have clearly similar views. The others have actively distanced themselves. The latter include the Anarchist Communist Federation, The Solidarity Federation (the Syndicalists not the journal), Black associates (I cannot give precise name to these except they appear to be a web with the late Albert Meltzer sitting in the middle), Northern Anarchist Network (as it is today, not as was originally intended) and so on. In essence most of those who have self-excluded themselves would fall under the self-designated categorisation of *class struggle anarchists*.

Those of us who have come together would fall under the categorisation of non-aligned anarchists. I know this sounds like a contradiction in terms. Non-aligned should mean inclusive of everybody. And in one sense it does. But it also means exclusive of those who hold to one specific ideology and who will not work with those who do not adhere to their particular dogmatic approach.

One might ask why did I exclude Class War from the self-excluded? They too are class struggle anarchists (probably) but as most of us have little contact with Class War, which I gather has now dissolved itself for the umpteenth time, I propose to ignore them with, I should add, no disrespect as clearly whilst active they played their part.

In fact Class War must have some importance judging by the number of curious phone calls I