

occur in particular communities there may sometimes be a need for mutual intervention or support from outside. But with a multifaceted approach there is always room and space for new communities, alternative communities, different communities for people to go to. But, with one integralist "world human community" it is a monopoly, if something goes wrong then you are stuck, you can't get out.

We do not want to follow the approach of "democratic centralism", and we do not want to become trapped in the bureaucratic collectivist monolith it will generate. Not only would we prefer the approach suggested in the MOSAIC proposal, but in dealing with today's already sectoralised and fragmented realities, such an approach would also be more practical and applicable.

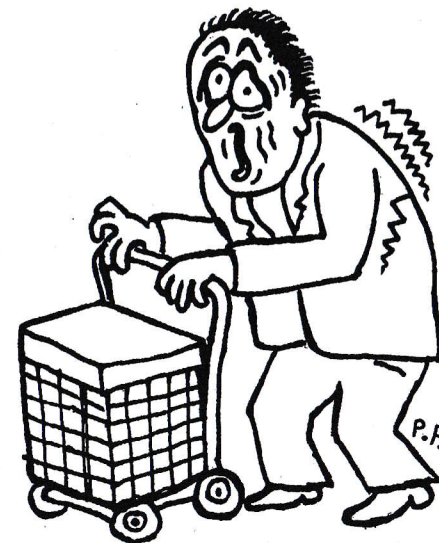


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# THE WHINGER

Irregular Libertarian Socialist Rantzine

No.7 Fall 2008



CRUNCHONOMICS

*brief whinges*

Petit Bourgeois Rant

*TWO CLASSES, THREE CLASSES, OR MORE?*

Ward In Action

*The Dragon and the Hydra*



# VERY BORING

**THE WHINGER** is the irregular rant mag of me, Paul Petard, produced maybe once a year while grumbling and commenting on life and the world while sitting in my kitchen in East London, UK. Some of what we are writing here tends to have a UK perspective, and part of what we are dealing with is the problem of our own incorporation into the social democratic welfare state.

We are cheating a bit here as two of the articles are essentially reprints in slightly altered or extended form of items that have already appeared elsewhere. I find writing a slow process, so the next Whinger might consist of not much more than an extended "Brief Whinges" column. Also there are vague ideas about putting out a "Worst of the Whinger" compilation book at some point in the future, and maybe getting some friends of ours to print it nicely, but that might not be for some time.

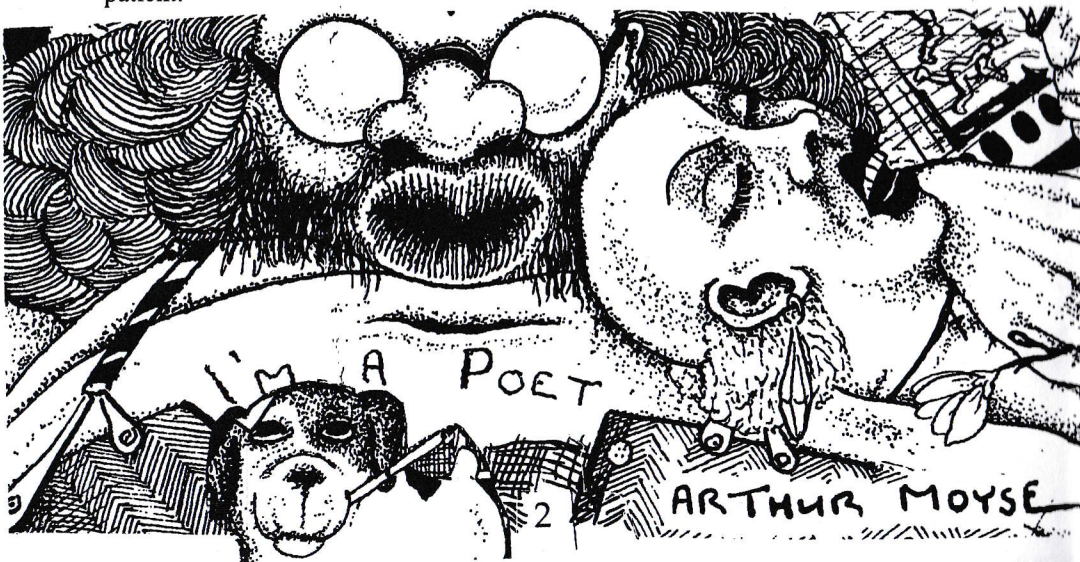
There is no instant total revolution next Wednesday that will happily resolve everything. But we still need to struggle to try and push back exploitation and domination under capital, landlord, and bureaucratic state. This process will involve worldwide solidarity of workers, unemployed, peasants, craftspeople,... in a transitional transformational **struggle of many struggles**, and movement of many movements.

*What do we want to move toward?*

- \*Open diverse libertarian socialism
- \*Post-scarcity abundance, with **free access to needs** and more
- \***Mutual aid and solidarity**: maximum complementary liberty for communities, groups, and individuals, in voluntary federative networks and associations
- \*We reject monopoly, monoliths, and monoculture, both in the existing systems and in the struggles against them

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Some of the articles here may end up at [doodlepaul@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:doodlepaul@yahoo.co.uk) but be patient.



## Crunchonomics crisis yawn

Apparently there has been some sort of "crisis" going on recently in the big wide world, or so people say. They tell you it is to do with the economy, before calling you "stupid". Fucked if I know what it is really all about. Although we might be able to intelligently guess some of it.

Some of it seems to involve a big inflated housing mortgage and financial credit bubble underpinning western imperial economic hegemony, particularly large in the U.S. and the U.K. for the last ten years suddenly going pop! thrrrp! plopl! Some of the small banks were pushing their luck a bit and were vulnerable, they were infected with toxic debts. Savers and investors got the "jitters" and weren't too happy to invest in them any more. So some of the small banks went under and got eaten by some of the big banks.

But some of the big banks were also infected too and started to catch a financial cold. So the state capitalists and governments muscled in and nationalized part of the banks.

Unfortunately this doesn't mean us little people have become real small shareholders in the assets. It is more like the government has nationalized the banks' debts at our expense and we're going to have to pay for it with extortionate higher regressive taxes against ordinary and lower income earners over the next few years. Most people have already guessed that the first budget after the next election will be horrible.

Meanwhile the stock market fell a massive chunk as there is a shortage of spare cash to invest and it can't lift itself up out of the doldrums. The massively inflated house prices that lots of people had banked on and borrowed on have now crashed 15% in one year in the UK. Apparently in parts of Detroit houses are like seriously cheap if you wanted to live there, but of course in somewhere like grey London they are still way beyond what you or I can afford.

"Recession" is the current buzzword and mass involuntary unemployment is back, although it never really went away. One side effect of this is I don't quite feel so socially excluded or left out as usual, but for many it is a real problem. The real unemployment level in the UK could now be higher than 3 million, about 12% of the workforce, if it were not for the government fiddling the figures (the "official" figure is over 1.8 million).

Despite threats whip the unemployed and make them jump up and down on the spot, they can't, and don't want to, "solve" the "problem", they just carry on paying the majority of us dole money to go indoors and shut up. This isn't situationist work-free heaven, it is just mindless powerless near subsistence daily life drudge, and bureaucratic dependency. And one does want a share of some of the productive labour sometimes, if there is any.

It is all very well philosophizing about "social relations" as general misty processes, but in practise social relations involve people-interactions, and some people have a lot more power and privilege to impose the dominant social



relations than others. This particular situation I'm in ends up cultivating in me not just a dislike for the individual rich, and naughty private capitalists that many currently love to hate, but actually a more specific anger with the state-welfarist bureaucratic system, and its bureaucratic fat cat subsidariat-salariat, immediately ruling over me. And also, alongside this, a specific loathing of crummy landlordism.

I am much pleased to hear that, despite the situation in London, apparently many cowboy buy-to-let landlords in the north east of England have been caught out by the onset of slump. They are now desperate for tenants, and the boot is now temporarily on the other foot.

Apparently the capitalist economy in China is experiencing a "fall" in its growth rate from over 10% per year to maybe 8% or less, which if you think about it, is still a big steaming capitalist growth rate! So despite what some romantic millenarians think, I don't think all capital accumulation and capitalist development is about to end just yet, in a couple of years it might widely surge again.

Maybe the big "globalised neoliberal market economy" project-things they've been trying to shove down our throats is now really crashing and pulling all the big capitalists down with it, maybe not. But even if it is, it doesn't inevitably mean the end of all local small capitalists and freelance merchant gangs. Somali pirates hijacking oil tankers are a demonstration of that.

Gordon the moron Brown has been attempting to launch bureaucratic takeovers of more and more of the economy and the society under the panic cloak of the "crisis". As private industrial capital and finance capital weaken and retreat, then moribund state bureaucracy steps forward. More and more of economy just becomes a suspended artificial toy for the state rentier, revenue collector, and bureaucrat to play games with. So who is "predominant" now?... socialism or barbarism, or bureaucratic state corporatist misery and a life wasted on welfare?

The so-called "crisis": The final failure of "capitalism", or just another failure of "apocalypse"?

"Lower interest rates and lower taxes," they cry, "We must spend money into the economy to keep it afloat." And for the short term the government obliges with a temporary de facto pay rise for the upper working classes and lower middle classes. If necessary interest rates could be lowered all the way down to 0% - Proudhonism is here!? They are desperate to avoid *deflation*, a much nastier lurgy for the economy than the usual inflation. But it would make my dole money worth more, before they cut me off.

Build more railways! build more social housing! upgrade school buildings, build more trident nuclear missiles!!! Funny how social housing and nuclear megadeth go hand in hand under Keynesian measures to try and beat recession. What a mess they are dragging us into.

But what if anything might have been going on, on our side of the equation, behind the scenes to give the economy such a bad hangover? Maybe it was something to do with millions of workers starting to assert themselves in the far east and putting a partial halt to the neoliberal "race to the bottom" with wages. Labour costs in the most industrialized parts of south eastern China have climbed 50% in the last four years. The minimum industrial wage in Shanghai went up by 12% in Sep 2007, and then climbed another 14% in April 2008.

Inside China wage demands have been fuelled by both inflation and by industrial militancy. Many exported Chinese manufactured goods on which we increasingly depend are becoming more expensive. Periodic waves of riotous industrial insurrection in the garment factories of Bangladesh have forced some of the clothing and fashion corporations to stop and think a bit.

But is it just about worker revolts in the far east? What about the ongoing long-term problem of industrial profitability in the west? The workers are too expensive, and the industries and their employees need continual government subsidies in one form or another. For some years the credit card and mortgage bubble allowed some of the upper working class in the west a sort of increase in their social wage, they were encouraged to go on an atomized credit card fuelled spending spree, and this helped divert from workplace wage pressure and militancy.

This came at the expense of community and solidarity, and paradoxically the shattering of social fabric ends up encouraging social disfunctionality, pushing up health and social welfare costs further down the line. The state has to spend more money again.

The state is even forced to take responsibility itself for part of the workers' struggles and demands: putting up the minimum wage, paying working tax credit, allowing more maternity leave, implementing some workplace health regulations, etc. These are token and never enough of course. But it is interesting to note how the state must step in and take a lead in advancing workers' demands, as many workers are too atomized/ fragmented/ knackered to organize even reformist demands for themselves.

In a minority of sectors some formal industrial action still goes on; transport workers, civil service and local government staff, post office workers, education and health workers,... When formal organized strikes and industrial action takes place it isn't always clear who has actually "won", or what the outcome really was. *Both sides* must continue to tread carefully.

Whether it is an official union walk-out for a day or two, a slowdown, work to rule, overtime boycott, sick-in, refusal of dangerous conditions and equipment, demanding to do something more socially useful, expropriating part of the production ("strikes" aren't the only form of struggle), there is always some little industrial grumble going on somewhere. Does this explain the "crisis"?





Maybe it is the true cost of failed imperial aggressions, killing spree, and plunders in Iraq and Afghanistan finally coming home, this is probably a significant part of the immediate economic problem.

Maybe also there is something else... We continually hear the media talk in terms of "lack of confidence" in the economy and the urgent need to "restore confidence". What is this "lack of confidence"? Is it just some piece of pop psychology, or some piece of systemic false consciousness that obscures more than it reveals? Is it just businesses and entrepreneurs just feeling a little wary of each other?

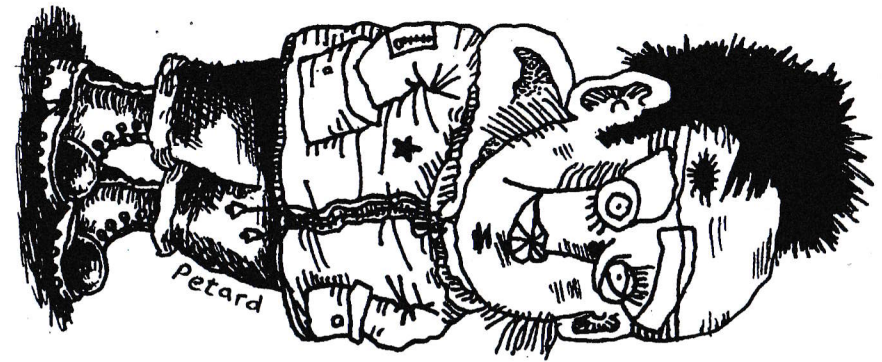
Maybe some of it has to do with several million formerly "ordinary" and "small-c conservative" people in the west, and also elsewhere, in the back of their minds undergoing a fundamental *loss of belief*.

Even up to ten years ago many of these people might not have been uncritical of some aspects of the political and economic systems under which they lived, and would not have regarded the capitalist economy as perfect. Nonetheless they would have seen the various problems as temporary aberrations, exceptions to the rule, and all essentially solvable, or at least absorbable, within the framework of the existing capitalist economy. They would still have believed that, despite minor problems, endless capitalist growth and development, and the endless expansion of the consumer economy, were essentially benign, and for the overall benefit of the majority, and was undoubtedly the progressive way forward.

Now millions of formerly ordinary small-c conservative people, not just your usual political activists and radical suspects, have become consciously aware in the back of their minds that GLOBAL WARMING and CLIMATE CHAOS and GLOBAL RESOURCE DEPLETION and LIMITATIONS are all for real, and are going to start seriously kicking in within their lifetime. What they now understand consciously in the back of their minds is that the much wider economic system has serious finite limitations. Large-scale capitalist growth and development and expansion can't just go on indefinitely, sooner or later they have to *seriously trip up*.

In itself, knowing this is not yet something one could call a social revolutionary consciousness, but it is already a significant shift in part of mass consciousness. The majority of these people are not yet rushing to join the activist scene, or join street protests or political groups, or form strike committees. For the time being they are carrying on going through the motions, if they can, of going to their jobs and doing their shopping and continuing with their "normal" daily life routines. But instead of working and consuming with fundamental belief and eager enthusiasm, they are now in so many little ways beginning to withdraw participation and effort in their corner of the political and economic systems, and starting to drag their feet.

What might be a next step is when thousands of bus stop conversations turn from the weather to what can people do in a libertarian way to mutually help each other break out of the misery. Paul Nov 2008.



## Brief Whinges

**Staying indoors** and obstinately refusing to participate in the social democratic society and the wonders of the consumer economy is the new form of rioting. Last week I only left the flat three times. Our government backed lifestyle advisers are piling on the pressure to motivate us but we are not feeling too motivated.

**Is lots of people in the community** scaring each other into taking their money out of the banks and hiding it under the mattress the new form of militant strike committee?

**Enjoying "capitalism" while it still lasts:** If you can't get rich quickly, get rich slowly – sell useless junk lying around the flat at jumble sales and flea markets. Enjoy yourself, socialize, and chat people up, while peddling faded decaying failed commodities fallen out of dynamic circulation for a few pennies. Be aware that in times of "crisis", although such behaviour is likely to become popular, it is also likely to be part of diminishing economic circuits, and will only help sustain a minor sector for a temporary period. But what the hell, nothing lasts forever. Even the new millennium of "communism", if it happens, would only last for a thousand years.

**Big groups** don't necessarily draw more people in. often they just push more people to the back.

**Conspiracy Theory:** For the last fifty years western communist parties have been slowly and secretly infiltrating the western governments. Now they have finally began to achieve their aim and they are nationalizing some of the banks (credit crunch etc.). We are now actually living under bureaucratic state socialism, but everybody is so distracted by "anti-capitalism", that nobody has noticed yet. Meanwhile, in the old days the communist party newspaper the Morning Star used to say "Nationalise the banks" on their front page, but recently on their front page they've been saying: "No bail out".



**The upper working class and lower middle class mortgage mess** – is it a different gentrified hidden form of squatting? Are they just playing a game of bluff, gambling to see if they get repossessed or get bailed out with their debts re-scheduled yet again?

**Messiness is fundamental to the way the world works**, or... Fundamentalism is messy to the way the world works, or... Workerism is the way of the world's messy fundamentalists, or... the world works in a way that the fundamentalist finds messy, or... The way of the world messes the workers' fundamentals, or... The fundamental work of the world is way messy, or... something like that...

**If Marx were alive today** he'd be a neocon. If Marx were alive today he'd be a Labour M.P. If Marx were alive today he'd be running a government economics think-tank. If Marx were alive today he would be a politics pundit on newsnight. If Marx were alive today he wouldn't need Engels, he'd have a community grant from the arts council....

**"Framily"** (spelt F-R-A-M-I-L-Y); meaning a tight knit extended family of urban friends. This has already become a trendy lifestyle term. But it also refers to real social tendencies. Maybe at grassroots level it sometimes comes with radical content and potential, maybe the new form of networkable affinity group?

**The overbearing tendency** towards Gordonian state-capital is destroying fun. Any free enjoyment is to be regulated out of existence. The slightest murmur of non-compliance out of you and an overpaid oversubsidised council bureaucrat will label you "anti-social". But can on the spot fines and council –tax rises provide enough revenue to keep the bureaucratic state mercantilists in liquidity? It's hardly a dynamic capital accumulation is it?

**We should not be so frightened** of right-wingers, conservatives, and business types using the word "libertarian". We should be quite happy that they are advertising the word and the concept. Meanwhile the more that business types go on about their *liberty* to own most of the resources, and their *liberty* to exploit the labour of the workers, then the more it directly provokes the question of the *liberty* of the workers to withdraw their labour from the capitalist employers, and the *liberty* of the workers and everyone else to liberate the resources from the capitalist owners. And what is wrong with that?

**Many people** are already aware of how much of government environmental policy, and many supposedly "Green" measures imposed by central and local government, are so much green-con. So called "green" taxes, like local bin taxes for instance, are not really green at all, they are in part just an excuse for creeping regressive poll taxes against working class and lower middle class people.

Directly or indirectly they are even helping the government to offset the cost of the war!

Recycling our household waste materials with the authorities amounts to a form of unpaid labour. We are expected, even coerced, to supply them with free pre-sorted metal, glass, paper, plastic so it can be sold by the local state for a small profit cheaply to the manufacturers so they can produce more subsidized junk on top of the junk they're already producing.

Large-scale recycling of paper and card for instance, uses much energy and transport, and so isn't that green. Recycling aluminium cans with the system doesn't necessarily mean bauxite mining for aluminium is reduced overall, it might just mean an increase in the total production of aluminium items. If you want to be more "green" then you need to substantially reduce the amount of junk you use in the first place, and re-use leftover jam jars and containers and packaging material etc. at home. Avoid recycling with the authorities.

**Our local council** in east London (Tower Hamlets) is proud to announce publicly in its propaganda leaflets what happens to some of the recycled items you supply to them: Cardboard and mixed paper is recycled into *cardboard packaging* and other paper products. Office paper is recycled into new *office paper*. Glass is crushed down for use as *road aggregate* or block paving sand. Plastic bottles are recycled into various products such as land drainage pipes, and *car upholstery*. Steel cans and aerosols are recycled into a wide range of steel products such as

*fridges*. Aluminium cans and aerosols are recycled back into *new drink cans*. Do we really need more cardboard packaging, office paper, road aggregate, car upholstery, fridges, and new drink cans?... No!

**Should** white English unemployed grumpy heterosexual middle-aged men with back-pain problems be included in multi-culturalism?

**Stuckarity**: Lots of ultra-lefty and autonomous Marxist types keep talking about precariousness, or "precarity" as they term it, being some sort of new central universal subject. The trouble with trying to centre everything and universalize everything around one particular tendency, or one particular economic and social process, is that in practise the universalism doesn't universalize. I wish to protest: I am not precarious, I am stuckarious. My life is currently stuck as a bureaucratic dependent on basic welfare benefits. My situation is tied down by the state and frozen, it is blocked from changing or developing. Nor is neoliberal economics moving me across borders from one economically protected zone to another the better to exploit my labour, to the contrary the system is holding me permanently in one zone, it doesn't want me to work it just wants me to shut up. When will my category be mentioned at academic intellectual workerist dayschools?





**Economic angst** in the U.S. has a growing number of folks flirting with apocalyptic doomsday survivalism: Some urban survivalists are not waiting for the stock market to recover, some are moving their money into safer investments: long-life rice and beans for starters, gold if they can afford it, and plenty of guns and bullets of course. Some predict the country is entering a "Greater Depression", and "Maybe they jolly well better get used to the change in lifestyle". They are all getting ready for "TEOTWAWKI"; The End Of The World As We Know It. The survivalists advise people to prepare for a "major paradigm shift" that will, in a decade, leave large areas of the U.S. with a third world economy.

One frightening possibility for paranoiacs is the banking system freezing up... "Our remittance system is almost entirely through the banking system... without ATMs, you can't get groceries, you can't get paid..." One survivalist grandma with a half acre plot in eastern Washington state commented: "We're in deep doo-doo,... I honestly believe the government thinks we're idiots.... I get that they can't come out and say 'the sky is falling' but it is."

But then the paradox is that half the world seems to permanently consist of people endlessly preparing for "TEOTWAWKI", and survivalism itself becomes a growth industry with booming alternative businesses, and with many specialist products and growing sales.

In practise I don't believe in apocalypse, or in millenarianism, or messianism. There is plenty of disaster and conflict and upheaval in the world, but it is never total apocalypse. Meanwhile I gave up expecting instant total world revolution years ago. The world does change, and the systems never stay the same, but the world changes slowly bit by bit. It is a long drawn out "struggle of many struggles" as they say, an ongoing bumpy transition and transformation that goes on for a long period. Every day millions of people take two steps forward, one step back, three and a half steps sideways,...



## Plugs

Some of the stuff we like to stumble across in radical bookshops, infostores, and on tables at political events etc. includes...

**The Match!**: Still going after all these years. Post Office Box 3012, Tucson, Arizona 85702, USA.

**Total Liberty**: Journal of non-dogmatic anarchist voices. 47 High Street, Belper, Derby, DE56 1GF, UK.

**Northern Voices**: Diverse and interesting libertarian magazine featuring a range of articles on life in Northern England and Wales. 1.20 (cash). Edited by Brian Bamford, 44 Harold Street, Leeds, LS6 1PL, UK.

**The Cunningham Ammendment**: beautifully hand-printed journal of thought, fun & frolics, against sterile bureaucracies. Send donation to; 1005 Huddersfield Road, Bradford, BD12 8LP, UK.

**Reader's Digress**: An irregular free sheet for the irregular mind. Reader's Digress, 15 Dartington Walk, Leigham, Plymouth, PL6 8OA, UK.

**Any Time Now**: Anarchist decentralist magazine. Subscription by donation to ATN, Affinity Place, Argenta, BC., Canada (VOG 1BO).

**Freedom**: From Freedom Bookshop, in Angel Alley; 84b Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX, UK.

**Black Flag**: BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX, UK.

**Black Cat Press**: Born out of the Anarchist Open Forum (London). They specialize in freethought and secular texts. c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London, E1 7QX, UK.

**Communicating Vessels**: Literature, essays, poetry, art, knowledge, criticism, letters, politics. 3527 NE 15th Avenue no. 127, Portland, OR 97212, USA.

**Vagabond Publications**: small mutual circulation booklets, pamphlets and chapbooks. Bohemian vagabond anarcho-insurrectionary heresy and more. 3527 NE 15th Avenue no. 127, Portland, OR 97212, USA.

**Hobnail Press**: Publishing extracts from the work of historic freethinkers and radicals. This year Hobnail published three titles by Emma Goldman: *The Philosophy of Atheism*, *The Failure of Christianity*, and *Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure*. Hobnail Press, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London, E1 7QX, UK.

**Past Tense Publications**: Radical, Subversive, and working class history pamphlets. This year's titles include: *A Glorious Liberty: The Ideas of the Ranters*, and *Symond Newell and the Kett's Rebellion*. A pamphlet most recently published is: *Muzak to my ears; canned music & class struggle*. "Originally piped into workplaces to improve productivity, muzak has now invaded public space like a cancer everywhere,... From drumming more productivity from workers... through bamboozling shoppers into spending more, to developments in music and sound as social control..." Past Tense Publications, 56a Info Shop, 56 Crampton St, London, SE17 3AE, UK. (We are hoping that Past Tense can print some copies of THE WHINGER for us on their nice quality duplicating machine.)



# Men's Wellbeing Outreach Worker (Community Services)

£24,452 - £28,767 pa dependent on skills and experience • London SE1

The Peabody Trust's award winning Sundial Centre in Tower Hamlets has a fantastic position for a proactive Men's Outreach Worker to assist isolated men over 50 whose needs are not being met by existing services. This forward-looking role needs someone who has the confidence and experience to work with sometimes vulnerable and hard to reach older male adults. A clear understanding of older men's needs and aspirations is an absolute necessity. Partnership working and the ability to set up a forum while developing a knowledge base of local services are essential.

Section 7(2)(e) of the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 apply.

For more information, please visit [www.peabody.org.uk](http://www.peabody.org.uk) and download an application pack from the 'about us' section.

Closing date: Midday, 11 September 2008.

No agencies please.

This ad appeared recently in our local east London council bureaucratic propaganda newspaper (a masterpiece of sophisticated modern municipal stalinism). It made me laugh. Apparently in a few years time somebody from the concerned subsidariat-salariat professions in Tower Hamlets is going to knock on my door with a clipboard in their hand to ask me all

about my needs in life and try to include me in things.

I'm glad to see that us grumpy solitary middle aged men are finally being recognised as a specific disadvantaged group with special needs. How about a grumpy middle aged mens drop-in centre or a grumpy middle aged mens drama-therapy group. We need more positive images and positive discrimination for whingers! Let's reclaim our history. But let's hope it doesn't push up the bloody council tax!



They're calling us "petty bourgeois" again

If you keep calling people by an offensive name or keep using a particular word as a label in an abusive manner against them, there might well come a point when, rather than having to continually deny the term, they might actually turn around and adopt the term as a badge of pride, re-appropriate the word, and change its meaning into something positive.

One traditional term of abuse, still thrown around to this day on the marxist dominated left, is to denounce somebody or something as "petty-bourgeois". It is sort of a clever term of abuse as it implies a double insult. It's bad enough being accused by a marxist as being "bourgeois", who are regarded as the general class enemy. But the marxist can have a sneaky begrudging cowardly admiration for the big modern "bourgeois" as a supposedly dynamic and progressive force up to a point. But the "petty bourgeois" are merely small, and to be derided and looked down upon as simply "backward", "undeveloped", "reactionary",...

And it is a witch-hunt kind of accusation: If a marxist accuses you of being either "bourgeois" or "petty bourgeois" then, seeing as it is marxist ideology that claims a monopoly of defining these notions in the first place, you must be guilty. In the time of Stalin, in some cases the accusation of "petty bourgeois" could be equivalent to a death sentence. There is also a subtle element of cultural and ethnic prejudice latent in the accusation. Less industrialized, small trading, craft-based, and peasant peoples and cultures are being sneered at as *inferior*.

Anarchists and libertarians don't have a monopoly of suffering this abuse, but they have often come in for strong doses of it at the hands of hard marxists and hard marxisms. Anarchism is often denounced as a "petty bourgeois ideology". I recently had one quip thrown at me by a "dialectical" hegelian mystic saying that "If you scratch an anarchist on the surface you'll find a petty bourgeois underneath". To this it could well be replied that if you scratch a marxist on the surface you'll often find a romantic despotist underneath.

So how politically should we respond to the stalinist name calling that still carries on today, even in the 21st century? If we get labeled "petty bourgeois", or maybe "lumpen", or "peasant" in a derogatory way, because we insist on a socialism that comes with *liberty* and with developed self-conscious *individuals*, then should we just feel embarrassed and wriggle a bit? or worse, should we fall into the trap of posturing as harder and prolier than thou? Maybe instead of pleading not guilty, we should plead guilty and proud of it!

The late Albert Meltzer, who used to edit Black Flag, commented on the issue and pointed out that originally: "...the term was "petit" (small) not "petty" that qualified the adjective ["Bourgeois"] -and meant precisely that these were not the same as bourgeoisie. The small burgher was one who had less privileges, economically, than the wealthy, but had some privileges by virtue of their craft." and "Anarchism, said Marx, was the movement of the artisan worker... not subject to factory hours and discipline, independently minded and difficult to threaten..." and "The Paris Commune was above all a rising of the artisans who



had been reduced to penury by Napoleon..." (Quotes from ANARCHISM: Arguments for and Against, by Albert Meltzer, AK Press ISBN 187317657-0)

When you actually read some bits from Marx himself on the subject of the petit bourgeois they come across as confused and self-contradictory. His most vulgar work, with Engels, was probably the Communist Manifesto, 1848, and in it we find: "The small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat..." Well many of them have been diminished and many have been pushed into various forms of wage labour over the last century and a half. But then again, globally many of them, despite encroachment, are still carrying on.

Sectors of peasants and small farmers are still a continuing necessary part of today's wider production in many parts of the world. They are still a vital necessary component in sustaining other parts of the human population as well as themselves. The vulgar Marx wants everything to conveniently reduce to a generalized bipolar two-class opposition of bourgeois versus proletarians in order to sleight-of-hand posit a unipolar universal monolithic outcome: the dictatorship of the proletariat! So he wants to get these other classes hurriedly cleaned up and conveniently swept under the carpet, but unfortunately they won't disappear.

He generalizes and romanticizes the industrial workers as the *proletariat*: "...the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product." But the industrial workers are in fact several different classes and sectors and continuing complex production develops them to be so.

Further on: "The medieval burgesses and the small peasant proprietors were the precursors of the modern bourgeoisie. In those countries which are but little developed, industrially and commercially, these two classes still vegetate side by side with the rising bourgeoisie."

The word bourgeoisie comes from the word burgess, but Marx's argument isn't good enough. Marx here is trying to place the whole blame for the development of modern aggressive predominant capital on the shoulders of the peasants and artisans and their occasional small trading!!! But medieval burgesses and small peasant proprietors are never strong enough on their own to accumulate and grow into modern bourgeoisie.

It is more the case that feudal state capitalists, who already had big central accumulations, in interaction with the big monetary accumulations of aggressive independent mercantilists on the edge of European Feudal society (such as the early Venetian merchants, who already led Venetian society BEFORE north and west Europe had even fully developed as medieval feudalists!) who were the real main precursors of the modern *capitalists*.

Also, although they don't develop as fast as the modern bourgeois, peasants and craftspeople DO actually slowly develop over time. They will slowly develop and change their tools and techniques and patterns of working, living and reproducing. They slowly change their social relations and community structures over periods of time. If they sometimes show "revolutionary" tendencies, it is not

just to do with impending "proletarianisation", but also sometimes is to do with their periodic need to overcome social obstacles to their own radical redevelopment.

Further on, Marx has to admit new petit bourgeois are continually being reproduced, but he still tries to kill them off: "In countries where modern civilization has become fully developed, a new class of petty bourgeois has been formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of bourgeois society. The individual members of this class, however, are being constantly hurled down into the proletariat by the action of competition, and, as modern industry develops, they even see the moment approaching when they will completely disappear..."

So one moment they are coming, the next moment they are going, but then they are being redeveloped again, but although Marx *wants* them to disappear they never fully go away. Meanwhile, as the organic composition of industrial capital changes, and industries become more capital and technology intensive, much industrial labour is actually shed. It is shifted down into the lumpenproletariat, or it is shifted to other new classes! Even in a place like China, although industrial capitalist development will continue to grow, there will come a point where the portion of the population directly employed in the industrial development will proportionately begin to decline.

The term "proletarian" existed long before Marx used it, and previously referred simply to the lowest class of a community, or to the common people, sometimes lowly strata of agrarian workers. Marx's narrative of the modern industrial "proletariat", despite its claims to be "scientific", is essentially a *romantic* and *idealistic* spiritual narrative. No modern industrial work is completely unskilled, and the modern skilled industrial worker in practise is developed to be precisely NOT just a "proletarian". They are developed as *people*, and they struggle as *people*.

Modern skilled industrial workers must always have a small share of *control* of production, if they didn't the employers wouldn't have much use in employing them. So although they might not individually own the means of production they still function as small temporary conditional controllers of capital, and as a result the majority of them can in practise bargain for a small token share of the profits of capital. In practise the majority of industrial workers always tend to earn wages that are significantly above subsistence

The long term general tendency, visible for a large part of the 20th century, has been for the majority of industrial workers to push their wages upwards. That small money surplus is a small share of capital and with it some sectors of workers have bought various forms of small property or investment. The majority of industrial workers are never strictly "without reserves" or all reduced to absolute universal dispossession, they never fully form as the one "fundamental and universal class". Workers are not only de-skilled, but many need to be re-skilled, particularized, individualized, developed as modern people, by today's capitalist production.



The *individualized freely-contractual industrial money-waged labourer*, who is already human variable capital in the first place, is developed as a new form of relatively impoverished and exploited modern petit bourgeois worker. Freed up from the tied and bonded communal relations of feudalism, individualization and new petit-bourgeoisification become a necessary part of the modern worker's historic development. "Proletarianisation" might be philosophically and hypothetically a very long term "fundamental" tendency for those who like that sort of thing, but the practical and prevailing tendencies (the ones that matter in life) include a new semi-bourgeoisification.

This is both a necessary and useful development, workers can get inside their petit bourgeois individual with its particular skill and thirst for *freedom*, and detourne it, and push it to its radical limits in opposition to predominant capital and state. If you want to go "beyond" the petit bourgeois condition and social form you have to develop it further to its limits in order to enable it to go beyond itself.

So we ARE petit bourgeois; modern newly developed petit bourgeois workers, and we should be proud of it. Now as big-beard Bakunin put it: Freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice. So we need to fight exploitation by the capitalist and the landlord, and take back the land and productive resources. But as big-beard also put it: Socialism without Freedom is slavery and brutality. So rather than choosing the path of a grumpy repressive socialism that fears the developed individual and seeks to suppress it, we should choose the path of a sophisticated libertarian socialism, capable of accommodating and allowing space for skilled and self-conscious developed individuals as part of free communities.  
Paul 2008



A couple of issues ago we reprinted an extract from one of our favourite books, "Marx; A Radical Critique" written by an academic by the name of Alan B Carter in 1988 (published by Wheatsheaf Books, Brighton. ISBN 0710804490). Almost three years later and I still haven't finished reading the thing! I've been occasionally attempting to wrestle with small chunks of it at a time. It has to be said the thing is quite dense and heavy going, and contains much academic trainspotterish theory about theory. But it does have a political argument, and radical political intent.

The book describes itself as an introduction to, and systematic critique of, Marx's own writings and theories, criticizing them from a radical, and environmentally minded, anarcho-communist viewpoint. It makes a good libertarian attempt at challenging the basic principles of marxist thought and hegellian-marxist philosophy, it criticizes marx in his own terms, and argues that vital alternative theories are urgently needed. The author attempts a radical new

theory of revolution which rejects the traditional marxist view of the state, arguing that it is the state, rather than just economics, which plays the decisive role in the transition between oppressive historical epochs. (yawn)

The Whinger is printing here two short extracts from the book taken from the section "Class, Class Struggle and Class Consciousness". Part of the purpose of this section is to highlight a particular failure on Marx's part to properly theorize the modern middle classes and distinguish them accurately from the "proletariat".

The point here is not to argue that anyone who comes from a "middle class" background is inherently "bad" (I come from an impoverished "lower middle class" background myself). The real point is that an analysis of the big growth and development of modern professional, managerial, and bureaucratic strata, is part of the key to understanding why the mythologised revolution of a universal "proletariat" never fully happened, and why we are stuck in the sort of situation we are in today.

#### 4.1 MARX ON 'CLASS'

**P.132** We shall begin with what appear to be certain ambiguities in Marx's conception of 'class'. One problem which confronts anyone attempting to understand what Marx says concerning class is that Marx appears to use the term 'class' both loosely and more technically, the latter when the term is employed specifically in the context of his theory of history. We shall be concerned with the latter usage. With regard to this, the delimitation of the class of the bourgeoisie does seem clear. The bourgeoisie consists of those who own sufficient capital to live off it, and therefore directly or otherwise, off the surplus-labour of another class. But what are the defining characteristics of the proletariat? There are several possible answers. The proletariat might be that class which does not own sufficient means of production to hire workers (and this would render us with a binary conception of 'class' which would accommodate all of the population in the capitalist mode under both its terms); or, on the other hand, the proletariat might be that class which sells its labour (thus producing a non-binary conception of 'class' in that other classes could arise which either do not sell their labour or do not own their means of production, e.g. the petit bourgeoisie or the unemployed in a welfare state).<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty is further compounded by the possibility of an even larger third class arising if the proletariat were to be restricted to those who sell their labour and produce surplus-value. This conception of the proletariat would entail placing all those who sell their labour but do not produce surplus-value (e.g. state school-teachers, cashiers, etc.) in a class distinct from both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.<sup>2</sup>

When we try to 'cash out' these different conceptions of 'class' into a workable notion of 'class struggle', then major problems arise with the non-binary conception because a difficulty occurs in



locating the other classes within class struggle. Problems arise concerning how they will align with either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, and ideological or political criteria might be required to supplement the economic, leading to a more sociological notion of 'class'. Clearly, the Marxist position would be greatly simplified were the binary conception to be defensible.

Now, *The Communist Manifesto* can be seen to bypass these difficulties when it states: 'Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses... this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat' (MCP, p. 80). It is clear that, at this time, Marx considered capitalist society to be dividing into the owners of the means of production, and the producers of surplus-product. This does not overcome the theoretical problem of the actual specificity of each class, but it overcomes any practical problem concerning class struggle. Moreover, the various criteria which might be employed to determine one's class would, in this case, make no real difference. The same people would be regarded as proletarian on purely economic and on more sociological grounds.

Unfortunately, there is, if anything, empirical evidence to the contrary of what Marx asserts in this famous passage if a non-binary conception of 'class' is employed. Not only can there be seen to be a decline in the size of the proletariat (as yet unspecified) and a rise in the number of those occupying a third class, but this middle class provides, to a large extent, an area of gradations between those who dominate economically, politically and ideologically, and those who are correspondingly dominated. What is important is that Marx himself, later in his life in *Theories of Surplus Value*, acknowledged the existence of an expanding middle class:

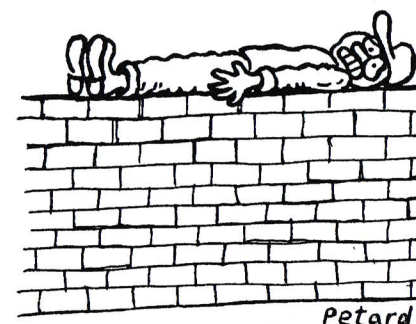
What he [Ricardo] forgets to mention is the continual increase in numbers of the middle classes... situated midway between the workers on one side and the capitalists on the other, who rest with all their weight upon the working classes and at the same time increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand (quoted in Bottomore, 1973, p. 23).

We are not merely confronting Marx with a development which he could not foresee (because that would be no more than an empirical critique); we are concerned with a development of which he was aware (though it would appear that he was not aware of it as a problem) and which needed to be accommodated within his theory.

One thing is clear: Marx cannot be employing a binary conception of 'class' in this particular passage. In *Capital*, where Marx refers to three great classes ('wage-labourers, capitalists and landowners'; C3, p. 1025), two of these 'classes', the capitalists and the landowners, might be considered fractions of one class, the bourgeoisie. But it is difficult to regard the middle class as a

fraction of another class when Marx, in *Theories of Surplus Value*, locates it between capitalists and workers. This problem of a growing middle class does not seem to have confronted Marx at the time of writing *The Communist Manifesto*. Consequently, the failure to delimit the proletariat was not important at that time. But with the growth of a middle class acknowledged in later writings, a failure on Marx's part to theorize the middle class and distinguish it accurately from the proletariat constitutes a serious silence.

P.174 Marx's analyses tend at times to suggest a binary conception of 'class' in which the bourgeoisie owns the means of production and hires workers which it exploits. But not all those who sell their labour produce a surplus-product, nor are they likely to side with those who do in the class struggle, which Marx considered to be political and not merely economic. Clearly, criteria other than an economic one concerning the production of surplus-value are required if political alliances are to be developed for the sake of united struggle: 'class struggle' cannot be understood in a binary economic manner.<sup>24</sup> Those engaged in revolutionary struggle in the capitalist mode of production against the bourgeoisie are neither all those who sell their labour (for example, some managers of large firms may be expected to side with the bourgeoisie), nor just those who produce a surplus-product. This would not be a problem were present-day capitalist society tending towards a division into those who produce a surplus-product and those who own sufficient means of production to exploit others. However, if anything, the tendency is for more and more people to move into the middle ground between these two positions, and for the traditional industrial proletariat to decline numerically. Marx's lack of discussion of the middle class is, consequently, a considerable hiatus in his theory, especially when such a middle class may well be on the road to becoming the next dominant economic class, if it has not become so already in some societies.





(We wrote the following review of the latest reprint of Colin Ward's "Anarchy in Action" for the Anarchist magazine Black Flag, it appears in their issue number 228, Autumn 2008. We are reprinting it here for any of our readers who may have missed it. Black Flag can be contacted at: BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX, UK. [black\\_flag@lycos.co.uk](mailto:black_flag@lycos.co.uk) )

## Review

Anarchy In Action

by Colin Ward

Freedom Press (84b Whitechapel High St, London, E1 7QX, U.K.)

New Edition 2008

ISBN 978-0-900384-20-2

Although it is an old anarchist favourite read by thousands, and has been an important influence to many anarcho-activists from the 70s onwards, I have never actually read Colin Ward's "Anarchy In Action" before. So I am reading and reviewing this new 2008 edition, conscious of the world as it is today, without being influenced by previous memories of having read it before in the 70s or 80s. As a result I can discover for the first time how immediately relevant Colin Ward's message might still be to our world right now.

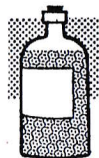
Colin Ward argues that there are two basic historical approaches that lead to Anarchism as a conscious set of political ideas: "Anarchism as a political and social ideology has two separate origins. It can be seen as an ultimate derivative of liberalism or as a final end for socialism".

I think it would be fair to say Colin Ward himself comes a bit more from the "liberal" approach to anarchism. He was for many years involved with *Freedom Press* and the anarchist paper *Freedom*, which was often dismissed in the past by the more militant and class-struggle orientated *Black Flag* as "liberal".

I remember, particularly in the 1980s, the cold war rivalry that sometimes went on between *Freedom* and *Black Flag*. But the two claimed approaches to Anarchism, "liberalism" and "socialism", are in fact closely related. Modern ideas of socialism were very much a product of the evolving contradictions and developments of classical liberal ideas and the conditions that went with them. So we shouldn't just dismiss what Colin Ward has to say in his book.

Ward makes clear that "Anarchy In Action" is not about strategies for revolution and it is not about speculation on the way a future anarchist society would function. It concerns itself more with continual social struggles for self-organisation by ordinary people that sort of go on all the time. The book, as he puts it, "is simply an extended, updating footnote to Kropotkin's book *Mutual Aid*".

The core argument of "Anarchy In Action" is that an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority is always in fact already in existence, although half hidden and buried under the weight of state and



bureaucracy and capital. The book attempts in a readable way to bridge the gap between present realities and anarchist aspirations.

Ward uses a wide-ranging analysis drawing on many sources and examples. With chapters on a range of subject areas including education, urban planning, welfare, housing, the workplace, the family, and the environment, he demonstrates that the roots of anarchist practise lie very much in the way that people have always tended to organize themselves when left alone to do so.

Ward talks from a 70s perspective, there is a significant emphasis as one might expect, on sociology, and he talks primarily but not exclusively from a british perspective. He wrote the book very much in the context of the wave of radical ferment and revolutionary optimism that followed on from the late 60s. The events of 1968, the general strike and student uprising in France, the Prague Spring, protests, riots and revolts in Mexico City, Rome, London, U.S. cities, and many other places all being an inspiration.

Looking back from today's perspective, it seems like Ward was almost still writing in an age of "innocence". His subsequent introduction to the book's second edition, 1982, only brings us up to the early days of the Thatcher regime.

Colin Ward talks a significant amount about workers' self-organisation, workers' control, and sometimes about class struggle. He touches briefly on some of the great workers' struggles in history. But he is not particularly concerned with class stereotypes and reductionist class positions, and he doesn't walk around wearing the ideological label of "class-struggle anarchist".

The first chapter, "Anarchy and State", gives a straightforward restatement of the classical anarchist criticism of government and the state, and then it outlines the historic division between anarchism and marxism. Marx, as Bakunin pointed out, wanted to achieve socialism through centralization and a despotic provisional government, with the state as sole owner of land and capital. Bakunin argued instead for the reconstruction of society from below upwards, by the free federation of all kinds of workers' associations liberated from the state.

Ward describes how by 1918 in Britain the Labour Party had already committed itself to a "socialism" based on the unlimited increase of the state's power in the form of the giant managerially-controlled public corporation. Elsewhere, when state socialism achieved power it created monopoly state capitalism with a veneer of social welfare.

Ward argues that the criticism of the state made by the 19th century anarchists increased in validity in the 20th century, the century of total war and the total state. Today, in the 21st century, we see state corporations openly operating hand in hand with private multinational corporations, imposed "privatization" and state power go together.

In opposition to the state Ward favours the approach of Gustave Landauer who said, "The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a... certain relationship between human beings... we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently."

I would argue that Landauer's approach does have some basis in social reality,



but at the same time it is a bit weak. Even when masses of workers and people do make conscious attempts to contract other relationships and behave differently, it doesn't necessarily mean they have the strength to successfully break out, or that the state will fully wither away and just disappear as a result. The entrenched state also involves bureaucratic and despotic elites with stored up surplus power. There is no easy answer to this. I practise, squadism and instant-insurrectionism don't succeed in immediately end the state either. The struggle is currently stuck in an ongoing "struggle of many struggles". As Landauer admits, there is no final struggle, only a series of partisan struggles on a variety of fronts.

War is the health of the state, and eventually the state will find its perfect expression in total war. The weakening of the state and the strengthening of different modes of human behaviour is now essential argues Ward, but where do we begin? Obviously we don't begin by joining the state, or joining political parties. Instead, he argues, we have to build networks instead of pyramids.

The classical anarchist thinkers envisaged the whole social organisation woven from an extended network of individuals and groups, such as the commune or council as the territorial nucleus, and the syndicate or workers' council as the industrial unit. These units would federate as a fluid network of autonomous groups.

The second chapter puts forward the theory of "Spontaneous Order", and to illustrate he draws on real historic experiences of social revolutionary situations and the examples of working-class self organization they temporarily threw up, before a new hierarchical order had managed to impose itself in place of the previous one.

Ward describes the libertarian aspects involved in the uprising in Hungary in 1956, during the Prague spring 1968, and in part of the workers movement in Poland in 1980. Most importantly he returns to the Spanish revolution of 1936, and in particular he quotes the example of the village of Membrilla where the land was expropriated and the village collectivized by its own people; "Food, clothing, and tools were distributed equitably to the whole population... The necessities of life were distributed freely..." Here self-organisation breaks out, combined with a basic libertarian socialist agenda addressing the material needs of the community.

I think it is often the case that the strength of the spontaneous order in such examples will significantly depend on how self-ordered the community was beforehand while still struggling under the shadow of the authorities, the landlords, and capitalists. In the 1930s in many agrarian communities in Spain the domination of capital and state, although repressive, was still "formal" and "stand-off" and somewhat external. Internally the community itself was still likely to have a strong autonomous social fabric, together with a strong sense of solidarity, both of which it depended on for survival. When the state and bosses suddenly buzzed off, the vacuum could be filled with a flowering of the spontaneous order, self-organisation, and solidarity that was already there contained under repression.

A problem with a theory of spontaneous order today is that many communities, particularly in the developed world, are so penetrated by the state, and so

subsumed and commodified under the predominant capitalist economy, that the social fabric of the community is shattered, fragmented, and broken up. In these circumstances, in a freak situation, if the authorities suddenly buzz off for a while, there is a danger of outbreaks of anti-social violence, spontaneous bullying and abuse, gang war, sectarianism, and so on. But nonetheless mutual aid will also emerge, and it will start to fight back.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 use a variety on non-anarchist sources, including material on some African tribal societies, to set out three key principles of anarchist organization: leaderless groups; diversity rather than unity; and federalist organizations without central authority. In reply to those who might say anarchism can only work for small isolated simple communities, Colin Ward is quite right to point out in chapter 4, "Harmony Through Complexity", that "Anarchy is a function, not of society's simplicity and lack of social organization, but of its complexity and multiplicity of social organizations."

From a hard "socialist" anarchist point of view, the "dodgy" bits in *Anarchy In Action* are perhaps to be found lurking somewhere in the pages of chapter 7 on housing, and also maybe later in chapter 12 about welfare. On housing, Ward starts by celebrating the big history of autonomous urban squatter settlements surrounding many big cities across the world. In the U.K. he looks at the big squatting movement in disused army camps in the 1940s, the radical revival of squatting in the 60s and 70s, and also mentions the cooperative housing movement.

But he falls into an over-enthusiasm for private housing and the owner-occupier. This, together with his slagging-off of public housing, and his stereotyping of council tenants, is bound to provoke a few grumbles, particularly with today's crisis in both public and ordinary private housing.

In the chapter on welfare Ward points out that "there is an essential paradox in the fact that the state whose symbols are the policeman, the jailer, and the soldier, should have become the... organiser of social welfare." And he describes the failure of the big traditional Victorian welfare institutions, like the workhouse, the mental asylum, the orphanage, the care home, the old style hospitals, etc.

Meanwhile it is symptomatic of the 1970s flavour of the book that he optimistically sees claimants unions as an anarchic way forward in the community's struggle to transform the welfare state into a genuine welfare society. Today there are not many claimants unions, despite unemployment and benefit-dependency being far higher than in 1973. Many unemployed and claimants today are too weakened, fragmented, and demoralized to be able to commit time, energy, and enthusiasm to help running unemployed groups and claimants unions.

Sometimes the situation is not so much that we are weak because we are disorganized, but that we are disorganized because we are weak. Part of their role, like benefits advice and legal support has been hijacked by the growth in state welfare agencies anyway. In the introduction to the second edition Ward admits some of the issues he was raising were "unfashionable" and the original arguments had become "complicated" by the emergence of mass unemployment.





When we read the chapter on work and the demand for workers' control, we are struck by how the period in which Colin Ward was writing was such a different world from today. Then life for many in an industrial country like the U.K. was still dominated by mass centralized fordist production and manufacturing, which directly employed many millions. Writing later at the beginning of the eighties, with industries shutting down, unemployment rocketing, and power shifting to finance and the city, he was moved to comment, "This is the chapter which is most in need of bringing up to date."

It is not just that most of the factories have gone to the other side of the world, it is also that many of them have changed shape and been restructured. Much production has been dispersed, heavily automated, and is globally coordinated "just in time" by information technology.

Ward looks at the idea of being self-employed, being your own person, and setting up your own trade. This was quite a popular ambition of many workers in the seventies, and is still an inspiration for many today. But now we see technical "self-employment" being imposed on many by the economy and the state as a way of cutting employers' admin costs, or of massaging the unemployment figures. Many are now pushed to survive by "setting up trade" in the illegal economy, selling dodgy goods, or dealing in drugs! Is this what is meant by a "self-employed society"?

Ward shows how over the years in industry the idea of workers' control, whether in the form of guild socialism, cooperativism, syndicalism, workers councils or assemblies, has always tended to resurface. He also shows how there has always been a battle to co-opt parts of these ideas by the employers in the forms of "workers' participation", "joint management", "works councils", and so on. Today many "professional" workers are expected to take responsible control of their own work and self-manage their own exploitation, and be good self-motivated "team workers". There have always been debates around the notion of "workers' control"; control by which workers? of what production? and for the workers in the workplace alone or the wider community?

But then what do such questions mean in the harsh face of real history? What do demands and debates about workers' control of the mines mean, for example, if Thatcher and Co. have no hang-ups about shutting down the whole mining industry including profitable mines, and then smash up the miners' communities in the process? How do we keep the idea of "workers' control" meaningfully alive when only a smaller proportion of the population is involved in any meaningful productive work in the first place?

In my opinion, in the future, until there is super-abundance of all needs and resources, there will still be a transitional need part of the time for some social rationing involving some kind of social exchange with some self-managed "necessary" labour, such as half a day a week or whatever. Puritan ultra-leftists might not like this, it isn't perfect total communism, but then nothing ever is.

The closing chapter, "Anarchy and a Plausible Future", raises questions, already being asked at the end of the 60s, about environmental and resource limitations on the growth of the existing economic system eventually forcing dramatic change. But he points out: "Necessity may reduce the rate of resource-consumption but the powerful and privileged will hang on to their share... Power and privilege have never been known to abdicate. This is why anarchism is bound to be a call to revolution. But what kind of revolution?"

Ward returns to the Kropotkinite vision of "industry decentralized, and the competition for markets replaced by local production and consumption while people themselves alternate brain work and manual work." Then, in an odd but accidentally relevant political clanger (page 169), he suggests this was already being realized, at the time he was writing his book, in a political climate different to anarchism, in China! –Well not today it isn't!!

If you wanted to sum up many of the traumatic social developments, industrial and economic restructuring, and neoliberal globalising that has affected us all in the last 30 years in one symbolic word, then it might well be; "China".

Colin Ward doesn't see anarchism developing in the context of immediate total social unanimity, but in the context of pluralist development; "So we don't have to worry about the boredom of utopia: we shan't get there." Meanwhile in the present he reminds us: "There are vast areas of capitalist societies which are not governed by capitalist principles,... you might even say that the only thing that makes life live-able in the capitalist world is the unacknowledged non-capitalist element within it..."

As a book, "Anarchy In Action" makes a good "propaganda" tool because in a clear coherent lucid way it begins by telling people what they already know. The book illustrates the arguments for anarchism, not just from theories, but from actual examples of tendencies which already exist in peoples' lives and communities. "Anarchy In Action" is clearly a product of its time and place, the U.K. in the 1970s (my favourite decade), but the basic message of many of the chapters stands the test of time. It remains a good radical social-libertarian propaganda book, and it still beats some contemporary "anarcho-introduction" books. It will continue to have an influence, -even for people under 40!

Colin Ward is still very much alive and kicking today, and having only just read what he was thinking in the 1970s it leaves me itching to know what he thinks NOW, about de-industrialisation, the illegal economy, the internet, carboot sales, ASBOs, post-modernism, mobile phones, freecycle, credit boom, credit crunch, the minimum wage, food riots, peak oil, global warming,... and all manner of subjects.... Paul Petard, Summer 2008.





(a) Population size by region (in millions of people)

Date	World	More developed regions	Less developed regions
1950	2519	819	1707
1975	4074	1047	3027
2000	6086	1193	4892
2005	6465	1211	5254
2025 projection	7905	1249	6656
2050 projection	9076	1236	7840

### CURRENT WORLD SITUATION:

1. *Middle classes anxiety ridden and drifting into crisis*
2. **Working classes mostly too Knackered and worn out to care that much.**
3. Ecosystem on the brink of collapse, so we're all sinking in the shit anyway.



**BIG-BEARD**

**BAKUNIN**

Freedom without Socialism is privilege and  
injustice. Socialism without Freedom is  
slavery and brutality.

The following article is a slightly longer version of a review we wrote that was originally published in *Hobnail Review* number 16. Unfortunately *Hobnail Review* is no longer being published. But the Hobnail Press are still producing and distributing a good range of pamphlets (Hobnail Press, c/o 84b Whitechapel High St, London, E1 7QX, UK.). Part of the reason for reprinting it here is to help state our opposition to the political methods of "democratic centralism", to criticize unified centrist-integralist interpretations of "communism", and to propose decentralized multifaceted federative libertarian socialist alternatives.

### **REVIEW:**

**The Dragon and the Hydra: A Historical Study of Organisational Methods.** Russell "Maroon" Shoatz. Pub. MOSAIC. 2007. A5 pamphlet. 20pp. Available by donation. Distributed by South Chicago ABC Zine Distro, Box 721, Homewood, IL60430, USA.

Sometimes in his writings one gets the impression that Marx genuinely but mistakenly believed that his imagined inevitable proletarian revolution was imminent, or likely to happen in just a few years. But while addressing the IWMA, the body that became the First International, Marx had to take a more realistic view, and he saw there was a need for a long period of social evolutionary struggles. He stated:

"You have fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and peoples' struggles to go through not only to change the conditions, but in order to change yourselves and make yourselves fit for political rule."

In a critical and historical study of the different organizational methods used for struggle, published here in pamphlet form, Russell "Maroon" Shoatz opens with the above quote. Speaking about himself he goes on to reveal:

"Marx's words hit close to home. I've been involved in such movements for 40 years, a product originally of the Black Liberation Movement of the 1960's, and subsequently being held as a political prisoner in the U.S. since 1972. And over that period I've participated in a number of mass and party formations. And it never fails to amaze me how much energy and time is dedicated towards establishing various groups' claims to being the so-called *vanguard* of some struggle for justice, when in the end most of these exercises turn out to be sterile, when they don't degenerate into fratricidal conflicts."

Starting with his own political history and experiences, Shoatz expresses his disillusionment with Marxist-Leninism and its conception of the vanguard party. The entire history of Marxist-Leninism, he points out, is a struggle for supremacy – against everybody! Their mantra of doing everything to seize power for the working class and oppressed is a farce.



Shoatz looks at the need for a critique of so called "Democratic Centralism", the original political organizing method of the Russian Bolsheviks under Lenin, the principles of which were always wide open to interpretation and manipulation. In practise, the historical *modus operandi* of the DC method, supervised and enforced by the vanguard party, is the drive towards unification of the executive and political organization of all aspects of the state. Historically, those who gained power using the DC method have always used it to defeat the aspirations of workers and oppressed and install the users of the method as a new ruling class. It ends up developing as all centralization and little, if any, "democracy".

From our own libertarian socialist point of view, part of the problem with "Democratic Centralism" is that even when it is initially "democratic" and based on "majority elected revocable delegates" and so on, it makes everything in struggle dependent on one big overriding *central and binding* decision, one unified organization, with one central programme and policy. This sets up a collective monopoly, and it ends up leaving no room for divergent and different approaches, or minority dissent. Any autonomy and spontaneity and independent initiative get collectively squashed.

The question of organizational methods in struggle also depends on what actual direction you want the struggles to go in, and what precise ends you actually seek. Do you want to go in the direction of a monolithic and monocultural world centrist-integralist communism, with one all-encapsulating global unified production? (imperialist, potentially dangerous, and unecological). Or do you want to go in the direction of a decentralized federative libertarian socialism, with many peacefully co-existing diverse social productions? Not all socialisms are the same.

Shoatz is very sympathetic to the C.L.R. James anti-stalinist tradition of 20th century Marxism, but he had already reached anti-vanguardist and pro-libertarian positions through his own analysis before encountering James. Shoatz argues that Marx underestimated the degree of opposition the workers would face, and the *length of time* needed to overcome obstacles in their path. Marx often overlooked or dismissed important workers' struggles that fell outside of Europe. But, he claims, by studying some of those struggles outside Europe, "There we'll find proven, workable alternatives to the flawed DC forms of organizing...."

In order to search for such decentralized alternatives and test his hypothesis, he then goes on to give an outline of historical workers' struggles against early European imperialism, as practiced in four specific example places: in Suriname, in Jamaica, in some southern areas of what is today the U.S., and in Haiti. He argues that, despite problems, they were able to democratically derive methods and policies that were collectively pursued by their own decentralized formations, a "hydra", as he terms it, as opposed to centralist "dragon" forms of organization. In some of these examples traditions of worker-based autonomy still have continuity today.

Shoatz makes clear, "First off, let me state that I'm not an Anarchist. Yet a lot of what you'll read here is gonna look a whole lot like Anarchism!" But the historical practitioners of what Shoatz discusses never knew the word "Anarchism", they were mostly Africans and Amerindians, struggling before the spread of classical "Anarchism" as a mainly European originated ideology. "Afterwards, I hope you do your own in-depth research and study because to most people, the bulk of this history will be unfamiliar."

In the first example, Shoatz describes how the Dutch were the main imperial power to occupy Suriname from the mid 1600's, occupying it up until the 1970's. During that time most indigenous Amerindian populations were suppressed, forced to flee, or exterminated. The Dutch West Indies Company, and other European entrepreneurs, developed plantation-based production of cash crops on a large scale, importing enslaved African workers from many different ethnic groups and cultures from the African continent.

Right from the start there developed a tradition of flight from slavery, Africans escaping and going on to form new communities in the forests, swamps, and highlands. Shoatz uses the accepted generic term "Maroons" throughout his text to refer to the escaped and rebel communities. They developed an effective form

of decentralized organizing, but around the initial central collective focus of fighting the enslavers, which helped them slowly defeat their enemies and also retain their community autonomy until today. On occasions large conspiracies were organized that saw still-enslaved workers preparing the way for free Maroon guerrillas to raid plantations and liberate scores of slave workers at a time.

Sometimes, as Shoatz points out, the decentralized methods also had drawbacks. On occasions they may have helped the enemy to make compromise treaties with some Maroon communities in order to step up war against other Maroon communities, such as the Boni Maroons, who were still resisting during the Boni Maroon wars. While the famous Boni Maroons became the main fighting force against the Dutch in the mid 1700's they still respected the democratic wishes of other fugitives and Maroon groups they dealt with, not centralizing all control.

Decentralized groups of fighters frequently came together for specific campaigns, but separated and remained decentralized and autonomous otherwise. "Since there was never any centralized leadership that the Dutch could hope to eradicate, they were stuck with trying to cut off every one of the Hydra's heads." These fighters came from decentralized and autonomous communities who lived in different fortified Maroon villages, which were self-sufficient and capable of being mobile.

Over a 150 year period various Maroon communities of Suriname waged a guerrilla war with the Dutch and English slavers to remain free. Their descendants still occupy areas their ancestors fought on, and even today, following more recent struggles, they *remain autonomous* from the current government of Suriname.



The decentralized pattern of anti-imperialist and anti-expansionist struggles and revolts of *enslaved workers* was similarly repeated in places like Jamaica, and parts of what is now the U.S. An important distinction being, however, that while in the Caribbean and south America, most of the struggles of the slave period were primarily between enslaved Africans and European Imperialists, in north America it had distinctly multi-racial aspects.

Africans, Amerindians, and Europeans in certain areas allied to fight against imperialist powers. Some of the unexploitable and non-conformist Europeans, together with some of the "hillbilly" runaways from indentured status in the Southern Appalachian Mountains often allied with African and Amerindian rebels, sometimes forming tri-racial Maroon communities, at other times being allied but living separately.

From the 17th century until the abolition of slavery in the U.S. there were rebel Maroon communities in areas "stretching from the pine barrens of New Jersey down the east coast to Florida and in the Appalachian Mountains. Later migrations reached to Mexico's northern border regions." Some evidence of this can still be found today. For example descendents of the Seminole people in Florida, a specific ethnic group made up of Africans and Amerindians who came together to form the ethnicity like the Boni Maroons were formed in Suriname, are recognized as a semi-autonomous tribe.

Returning to the issue of "hillbillies", Shoatz argues that "...we've adopted the bourgeois myth about them being hopelessly backward and ultra-racist, although in reality true hillbilly culture and practice is *really isolationist* and independent, reflecting the autonomous spirit of their ancestors.

After America Shoatz turns his attention to the history of Haiti which he regards as an excellent laboratory for testing the strengths and weaknesses of centralized and decentralized forces of change. For generations up to the end of the 18th century Maroon guerrillas and communities had been operating throughout the Island of Hispaniola. Between 1791 and 1804 after 12 years of massive revolt, the formerly enslaved workers of Haiti successfully overthrew their colonial enslavers and then a succession of armies from Spain, England, and again France.

Before Toussaint L'Overture became the dominant central figure, the revolt was led by scores of decentralized bands of African workers, Maroon guerrilla groups, and was joined by separate Mulatto led groups, and a small segment of whites in league with the anti-slavery wing of the French Jacobins.

The Marxist C.L.R. James, who penned the classic *Black Jacobins*, compared the Haitian revolutionary army which emerged led by Toussaint, and later by Jean Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe, with the Russian Bolshevik Party - "The Dragon". But rather than being the revolution's best weapon, the centralized leadership of Toussaint and his generals became co-opted by Napoleon and tried to sell the Island. This sparks a new revolt amongst the decentralized "Hydra" elements who have to fight against both Toussaint's army and the French in order

to restore the revolution. When Dessalines, who switches back against the French, declares independence but with himself as the new *Emperor*, he too had to be resisted. And after him Henry Christophe had to be resisted too.

Shoatz quotes from Stan Goff's book, *Sex and War*: "There are Maroons in Haiti again, with the wave of repression sweeping the country in the wake of the last U.S. crafted coup d'etat (Feb, 2004)...twice in 2004 I visited one of these Maroon communities in the Central Plateau."

It isn't fully clear how one jumps from the examples of enslaved workers revolts and struggles in a mainly rural context, to today's majority-urbanised and industrially developed humanity which involves many new problems. But Shoatz insists the historical records of the *Dragon and Hydra* are clear, and he emphasizes the need to break with the central vanguard party mode of organization by quoting James: "Now if the party is the knowing of the proletariat, then the coming of age of the proletariat means the abolition of the party.... The Party as we know it must disappear... it will disappear as the state will disappear. The whole labouring population becomes the state. That is the disappearance of the state..."

Today, Shoatz argues, because of the global hardships brought about by today's imperialists, both the shared needs and necessity for change are already present among the multitudes of the earth's workers and oppressed peoples, and they now have the effective tools to communicate. "Our final consideration is whether or not these masses must centralize their organizing (not to be confused with the obvious need to co-ordinate their efforts). To that I answer with an emphatic NO!... such a centralization will only make it easier for our oppressors to identify and level repression upon us - prolonging the crisis our generation must deal with".

In our opinion, what can be seen from many historical examples, is that every centralized or bureaucratic "revolution" was not only preceded by many struggles, but went on eventually to need more struggles following it, in order to resist the imbalances and distortions such a "revolution" is bound to create.

Shoatz goes further than just historical analysis and a critique, he proposes an alternative organizational format involving a federative multifaceted patchwork which he terms the MOSAIC. The MOSAIC will be an "ideological jumping off point that will serve all our separate and collective interests; it can be termed Inter-Communal Self Determination."

Rather than seeking to impose one monocultural kind of conformist utopian universalism, the MOSAIC would allow individuals, organizations, and communities autonomous self-determination while at the same time mutually coming together and co-operating. It might be that such a form of organizational approach, as proposed in the MOSAIC, would still throw up some of the problems that isolationism and separatism sometimes involve. If internal abuses or problems