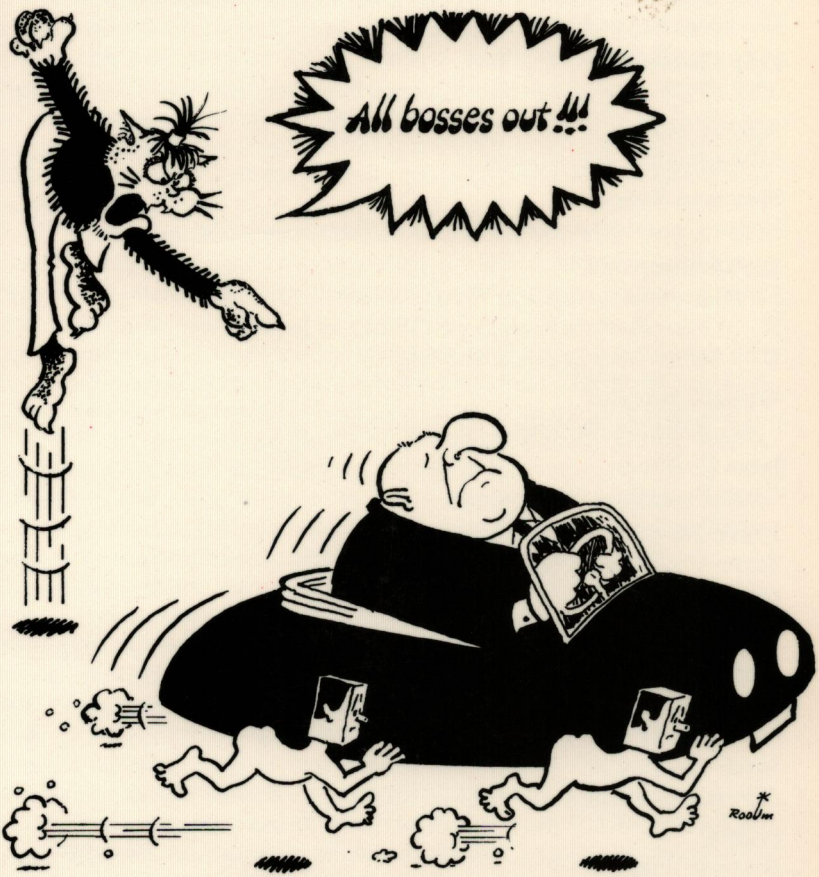
Class Struggle and Social Protest



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Introduction

Although class has now become almost a taboo subject in polite political society we make no apology for turning to it in this issue of *The Raven*. We open with **David Douglass** arguing that the class struggle should be a central tenet of anarchist ideology, the economic underpinning of all other forms of social conflict. **Derek Pattison**, President of Tameside Trade Union Council, analyses in depth the role of unemployment in the control of workers by State and Capital and, separately, in an interview with a textile worker he exposes the little known use of Labour Camps in 1970s Britain to control the unemployed.

After more than two years the Liverpool dockers still struggle for justice and the International Secretary of Hull Trades Council **Guy Cheverton**, writing in September 1997, gives us an update on this most important conflict.

The campaign by unemployed workers in Britain, against the Job Seeker's Act, continues unabated despite a change of government and **Albert Shore** outlines its history and comments on its significance.

Turning to the rest of Europe, **Norman Stock**, in an article originally published in German, demonstrates the power of the General Strike as a weapon in the hands of the working class, especially when combined with Non Violent Direct Action (NVDA). He uses examples from Spain, Poland and, particularly, France.

Brian Bamford describes his experience of the contribution anarcho-syndicalists have made to the class struggle in Andalucian Spain over recent decades, including personal interviews with Pepe Gomez, a highly respected anarcho-syndicalist, and contrasts this with the impotence of the movement in Britain.

Not all anarchists see the class struggle as being quite so central to anarchist ideology and we have three contributors who point out the dangers of a purely class based approach. **Donald Roum** considers anarchism is primarily about individuals, not classes, with the call to 'class struggle' an example of the allegiance syndrome so readily exploited by those who would have us act against our own interests.

For **Jean Pollard** the economic struggle is just one aspect of the human struggle of the controlled to escape from the controllers and she believes that to concentrate on it is to continue to remain within the mind-set of capitalism.

Peter Neville claims that historically the concept of the class struggle is a fairly recent Marxist intrusion into the evolution of anarchist ideas which dilutes and diverts anarchists from their main concern, the struggle for freedom.

We then turn to contributors from anarchists who are involved in, for want of a better name, single issue campaigns, working usually alongside non-anarchists. **John Rety** gives us his experiences of the occupation by 'The Land is Ours' movement of the Guinness vacant site in Wandsworth during the summer of 1996 and discusses the lessons to be learned from it by anarchists.

The peace movement is important for anarchists on two counts. It is directed against State military violence, using NVDA techniques, but it also, in the organisation and structure of its campaigns, uses non-hierarchical, co-operative, consensus methods. This is described by **Kate Witham** in her first contribution and, in her second, Kate gives us a glimpse of what it is like to be a dedicated peace activist. **Mick Cropper** describes his introduction to the politics of direct action which led to his involvement in an anti-roads protest. Finally **Julian** gives us some preliminary impressions of the campaign against Manchester Airport's second runway.

In a postscript we comment on some of the issues raised by our contributors.

Finally we have a book review by **John Pilgrim** and end with some comments received on *Raven 35*.

"The spirit of freedom will survive: of this I am convinced. Always, in every class of society, there will be found free spirits, men and women who are refractory to all conditioning."

Ignazio Silone in the preface to the 1963 edition of *The School for Dictators*

David Douglass

The Relevance of Class in Class War*

Some comrades, ostensibly on the anarchist left, although also on the newly reorienting Marxist-Leninist left, tired of the old language of class war and seeing in that 1930s images of horny handed sons of toil from pits and docks, have made remarkable new discoveries. A 'new' form of class struggle is emerging, it involves almost everyone who isn't actually rich themselves. It doesn't involve those dreary old unions and, perhaps most exciting of all, it doesn't much involve the proles who are anyway now confined to the heritage museum and Hovis adverts! New protests involving world concerns, third world concerns, environmental actions, people power, feminism, animal rights, mass disobedience and alternative lifestyles now replace the mass assembly at the workplace and the dreams of a general strike.

Let's be honest, many of the people getting wet lip't and excited over these new discoveries never really liked the working class much anyway and had always been brought up to despise unions in the first place, how comforting now to find a revolutionism which fits one's own class position and prejudices.

The truth is, the class struggle world wide has always been multi-dimensional, it has never been just about people at work or wage slavery. Those who thought it was, now go to the other extreme and see only the other features of exploitation and resistance to them, whereas before they saw only the wage labour struggle in the work place. Reality is an understanding of the complementary patterns of oppression and inter-linked modes of resistance; yes, the multi-dimensional nature of revolutionary struggle should be recognised, though it is necessary also to recognise the centrality of the work place and economic mode of production to the whole conflict. It is this feature which is central to the whole class relationship. For it is the transaction of the workers selling their labour power to the employer, in order to live, and the employer buying that labour power, in order to make a profit, which is the base on which the capitalist economic system rests and the 'wage slavery' which

* Originally published in *Yorkshire Anarchist* No. 5 (Summer 1996).

underpins it. This is not of course to suggest that class exploitation is one-dimensional, we are exploited on every level of life and existence, at home, in school, in social and sexual relationships, it impacts in every way, in perceptions of art, animals and each other, but the whole of those value relationships and modes of exploitation are underpinned and, indeed, developed from the economic mode of production dominant in society.

Get the question of this fundamental element in the class relationship wrong and you've blinded yourself to any other question you care to look at. For this reason, it is essential that we keep our feet on the ground and not be led off into self-imposed irrelevance by adopting ultra-leftist sounding 'New Class Struggle' relationships and 'anti-union' positions, which at best confuse working people or else totally alienate them from anarchist and revolutionary Marxist politics. Of late we see petit-bourgeois elements 'discovering' that 'traditional (that is the struggle in the workplace) class war is dead'. Never ever having fitted in comfortably with the working class, they breathe a sigh of relief, now they don't have to be workers to be exploited. The 'new class struggle' will embrace them equally with the prole. The anti-roads protests, animal exports protests and environmental struggles seem to make class origin and orientation irrelevant. Of course it doesn't, it is still the class orientation to the underpinning economic mode of production, and the method by which class society will internally combust through class war itself, which is decisive. The mass movement of the working class as a class is still a fundamental requirement of the destruction of capitalism, even if along the way a thousand other issues which affect the general quality of life as 'citizens' or 'consumers' intervene to mobilise masses of people, in truth they always have, they were just dwarfed by massive industrial struggles of the proletariat in the years when British capitalism was heavily centred on 'home' based manufacture.

Somewhere in the region of 12% of the population own 90% of all wealth. Control of share capital, land ownership, etc., is similarly concentrated in the hands of this tiny hyper-privileged group: the capitalist class. The worker does not own anything to make a living, unlike the tramping artisan of the early nineteenth century he does not own his own tools, unlike the cottage industries the workers' families do not make whole objects to sell. S/he doesn't own orchards from which to take carts of apples or pears to sell at market. They have only their labour power to sell, and this must be rationed out and sold like apples or the whole product at the highest possible price.

On the other side, the capitalist, or more likely his management representative, seeks as much labour as possible and at the smallest possible price in order to extract the greatest labour power from it. Around this conflict the class war takes place. Taken as an individual the boss can force the worker to fling his cap on the table and beg for work, almost at any price if s/he has been out of work long enough (this is, of course, the purpose for THE POLICY of unemployment). It is for this reason that combinations of workers, later to be called unions, have evolved, by forming a collective, a microcosm of the class as such, by advancing the collective class interest and setting a minimum of wages and conditions below which none should work.

In the pamphlet *Anarchism and the Trade Unions*, Workers Solidarity Movement, our Irish comrades, demonstrate qualitatively more maturity than their southern English counterparts:

> The workers who create the wealth under capitalism are different to all previous oppressed classes. They have to fight together if they are to win and they can only achieve their freedom together. The small peasants of Ireland in the last century did fight together at times, particularly in The Land League agitation. But the goal of the small peasant was to be become a bigger peasant and then an independent small farmer. Modern workers cannot share such a goal. They cannot break up large industries, power, supermarkets, hospitals, railways, schools and so on, and share them out piece by piece among themselves. They can only control production and essential services collectively.

This means that the working class can be a force capable not merely of rebelling against the existing system but of taking over and recreating society in their own interests. As the majority class, the modern working class cannot become a ruling class in the way that the merchants replaced the feudal lords. There wouldn't be enough people for them to exploit and live off, even if such an idea became popular. The victory of the working class will see it having to dissolve itself and usher in a truly classless society.

Trade unions were first organisations thrown up by the working class in struggle against the bosses. Trade unions are essentially the defence organisation of workers under capitalism. Their very existence is a challenge to the right of the boss to set wages and conditions of work. No matter how conservative, bureaucratic or downright backward a union may be, to join it implies a recognition that there is a class division in society and that workers have to get together to fight for their own separate interests. This is a sign of some level of 'class consciousness'.

Our critics, ostensibly on the left, would say that inherently this relationship recognises as normal the wage slavery of capitalism and all we are doing is making the best of a bad deal. In truth there is nothing in the temporary 'deal' we have to make on the best terms for now which says, or even implies, we aren't coming back for the lot! Nothing! Individual leaders, professional bureaucrat parasites and even many workers may well accept capitalism as being the normal state of affairs and to which there is no viable alternative, but a huge number of working people, and even on occasion trade union leaders, likewise do not.

There is nothing to stop workers, through their unions, or independent rank-and-file bodies aspiring to the abolition of the wages system itself, or as communities cutting across race, sex and age barriers, collectively resisting poll tax, police harassment, environmental encroachment or whatever. The struggle for the planet must first pose questions as to who controls where the power lies. Such questions can only draw sharply into focus the class nature of society and the central role of the working class as a revolutionary class.

"Every year there are thousands of strikes and lockouts in Europe and America – the most severe and protracted being, as a rule, the so-called 'sympathy strikes', which are entered upon to support locked-out comrades or to maintain the rights of the unions. And while a portion of the press is prone to explain strikes by 'intimidation', those who have lived among the strikers speak with admiration of the mutual aid and support which are constantly practised by them."

Peter Kropotkin in *Mutual Aid*

Derek Pattison

I
Unemployment: ideological construct or economic reality?

Definitions have social consequences. The way in which any society defines a social problem will determine the kind of response which the state resorts to in order to deal with that problem and the type of explanations and discourses which are used to explain causation. For instance, if one perceives prostitution as both sinful and immoral rather than an economic transaction between two consenting adults, then prostitution may well be seen by society as a social problem rather than a social service. Moreover, it would be erroneous to think that all society's problems acquire the recognition and status of a 'social problem'. Many problems are considered private troubles: the recognition of 'battered wives' as a social problem is a fairly recent phenomenon in British society along with racism and the sexual abuse of children. Clearly, there is a sense in which social problems are both culturally and historically specific.

Whilst social problems can arise through social causation such as in the relationship between crime and unemployment, there is also a sense in which social problems are 'constructed' by those who manufacture opinion such as politicians, academics, the media, pressure groups and the professions. This is apparent in the way in which such things as the 'scrounger' have been socially constructed along with 'road rage', 'stalking' and the 'juvenile delinquent'.

As with many inequalities in society, the power to define and the ability to set the agenda are also unequally distributed and, whilst definitions may be contested, it is clear that power is central in determining which definitions become effective. However, it would be misleading in my view to think that the reason why an idea or belief becomes powerful is simply because it furthers the immediate interests of a dominant social class. With 'Back to Basics' John Major found that his government was held up to ridicule and soon realised that membership of the ruling class doesn't necessarily guarantee ideological dominance. Some ideas are obviously more powerful and

enduring than others and in a sense those ideas which do become internalised are powerful because they become the medium through which we make sense of our own lives and, in doing so, they often make other alternatives appear to be unworkable or even unimaginable.

Although various theories are put forward to explain the causes of social problems, it is significant that explanations do tend to fit into two broad categories: on the one hand there are explanations that focus on the individual or family and on the other there are explanations that focus on society itself. For instance, at an individual level of analysis, unemployment might be seen as being due to some form of moral failing such as being workshy or due to a lack of training and qualifications. Explanations which focus on the family might argue that children brought up in a single parent family by a mother are more likely to be unemployed because they have not had the influence of a working male role model. Similarly it might also be argued that this equally applies to children brought up in households where there is no working adult.

At a societal level of analysis, unemployment might be explained in terms of 'market failure' and 'demand deficiency' or being due to the payment of state benefits which encourage dependency and discourage work effort.

As regards the types of intervention which may be used by the state to deal with what is considered a 'social problem', this will depend on how the problem is defined. If unemployment is defined as an individual problem then it might be seen as a private trouble requiring no state intervention. Even if unemployment is considered a social problem the level of analysis may focus on the individual, and the type of state intervention which is used may involve withdrawing or reducing the real value of state benefits in order to encourage people to take any kind of work which is available. Other forms of intervention may involve government training courses or reforming the tax system or offering employers financial inducements to employ the long term unemployed.

Obviously the kinds of explanations for unemployment which involve an element of 'blame the individual' offer certain advantages to the state. For instance, it costs the state a lot less to provide the kind of help which is available for the unemployed in Britain today such as 'Jobclubs', and other forms of spurious training which are targeted on the individual, than it would to embark on policies which are geared to stimulating employment such as government

investment in Britain's infrastructure. Moreover, whilst many of us can recognise that unemployment is built into the capitalist system and that successive Tory governments from 1979 did use unemployment to regulate the British economy, there is some advantage to be gained for any government that can inculcate the belief that people are unemployed because they are workshy and bone idle. Indeed, it is intriguing how government discourses on unemployment appear to have reinvented earlier nineteenth century middle class beliefs and opinions about unemployment in Britain.

Like Peter Lilley, the recent Tory minister responsible for social security, the Victorian middle classes were obsessed with the notion of sturdy beggars who chose to live off charity rather than work. Similarly, many of the Victorian middle class believed, like Peter Lilley, that it was possible to distinguish between the undeserving poor and the deserving poor who had fallen on hard times. For instance, we were told by Tory ministers that the Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), which was implemented in full in October 1996, would help the "jobseeker and motivate the workshy". Anne Widdicombe, the Tory MP for Maidstone, stated that the JSA would be aimed at the "recalcitrant few who prefer to live on benefits rather than work". Even in the early 1970s Conservatives like Rhodes Boyson attacked the 'nanny state' which undermined the moral fibre of the British people and took money from the "energetic, successful and thrifty to give to the idle, the failures and the feckless".[1]

We can see that not only did the previous Tory government reinvent this dichotomy of deserving and undeserving, which was a dominant ideological view in nineteenth century Britain, but in the kind of remarks made by such as Rhodes Boyson it is apparent that, as in Victorian times, there is a belief in social Darwinism. Essentially, many Victorians believed that, in society, the strong triumphed over the weak and that poverty was due to character rather than circumstances. As Thomas Malthus said in his *Essay on the Principle of Population*:

> The impoverished man has no business to be where he is. At nature's mighty feast, there is no vacant cover for him.[2]

That "delicate priestly sycophant", as Marx described the High Church priest J. Townsend, observed:

> It seems to be a law of nature that the poor should be to a certain degree improvident, so that there may always be some to fulfil the most servile, the most sordid, the most ignoble offices in the community. The stock of human

happiness is thereby much increased, whilst the more delicate are left at liberty without interruption to pursue those callings which are suited to their various dispositions.[3]

Even in the 1850s books by the author Samuel Smiles, on such themes as 'Self Help', 'Thrift' and 'Duty' were extremely popular with the middle classes and a popular saying in the nineteenth century was to talk of 'The Battle of Life'. Against this ideological background it is hardly surprising that the underlying ethos behind the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was to discourage people from claiming poor relief by making the system of poor relief so disagreeable that people would have to stand on their own two feet.

Whilst there are obvious similarities with present day government thinking about unemployment and earlier nineteenth century beliefs and opinions, we can to some extent excuse our Victorian forbears for their errors of judgement. A lack of understanding about the workings of the economy meant that many Victorians believed that the market created full employment and it was not until around the 1880s that the concept of 'unemployment' as we understand it today entered the English language. Moreover, the 'wage fund theory' led many to believe that there was only a set amount of money in the economy and that poor relief diverted resources from wages that could be paid. When unemployment became defined as a 'social problem' later in the nineteenth century, various remedies were put forward including enforced emigration.

Clearly, those types of discourse which construct many unemployed people as 'scroungers' and 'workshy' and largely responsible for their own misfortunes, because they have become dependent on state benefits, do offer the state certain advantages. For instance, it distracts attention away from the underlying defects within capitalism itself by its emphasis on 'blaming the individual', and it distracts attention away from the consequences of government policies which have contributed to unemployment. Moreover, these types of discourse also make it easier for the state to cut state benefits and to introduce stricter benefit regimes.

Since the early 1980s, successive Tory governments sought to reduce what economists term 'replacement ratios', i.e. the ratio between benefits out of work with wages in work. This has been achieved by abolishing some benefits and cutting the value of others. Changes in the uprating rules in 1980, which also applied to pensions, meant that benefits were no longer increased in line with average earnings but only in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI).

Unemployment Benefit ceased for 16 and 17 year olds in 1988 and only in circumstances of severe hardship are discretionary payments now made to those not enrolled in a training scheme. Britain's unemployment benefits are now amongst the lowest in Europe with a replacement rate of 23% as compared with an EU average of 61%. What is also discernible is the way in which the regulations governing claims for unemployment benefit have become more stringent for those seeking work.

There is little doubt that the underlying intention behind many of these changes was to make it more difficult for the unemployed to claim benefits, to reduce public spending on social security as well as the unemployment figures and to coerce the unemployed into taking low-paid work. A popular Tory government slogan was that the unemployed had to price themselves back into work and despite such high levels of unemployment amongst young people aged between 16 and 17 (who are ineligible for unemployment benefit) the Tory government held the belief that denying people unemployment benefits was the way to get them back to work.

With the introduction of pilot schemes such as 'Earnings Top Up' (ETU), an in-work benefit for childless claimants on paltry wages, the previous government sought to use the benefits system to stimulate the creation of low-paid jobs in order that British workers can compete with the sweatshops in other developing countries – this is now termed 'welfare-to-work'. Already, some £1.5 billion is spent each year on Family Credit to top up low wages and in the USA, which appears to be the model which British politicians turn to for inspiration, some 50% of people on welfare are also in work.

With 'Project Work' (Workfare), which was initially piloted in Hull, Medway and Maidstone in April 1996, and which has now been extended to a further 29 areas, the unemployed, like people convicted in the courts, are being forced into undertaking community service in return for their dole money. In Kent one scheme involved participants renovating Fort Amherst, a Napoleonic fort originally built by French prisoners of war. The scheme was dubbed the 'chain gang' (in *The Independent*, 27th February 1997) and one participant claimed that "there was nothing to do but light a fire to keep warm all day". In the USA the evidence suggests that 'Workfare' displaces paid workers and depresses wage levels. In New York, thousands of council jobs have now gone and are being done by people on Workfare.[4]

In reality, 'Project Work' is a punitive measure which aims to punish people for being unemployed and to coerce them off the

unemployment register. In practice many agencies have boycotted the scheme, seeing it for what it is, i.e. forced labour, and the previous government did encounter considerable difficulty in finding 'providers' to operate the scheme. In Hull, people who were involved in arranging visits to asylum seekers were inadvertently asked if they wanted 'Project Work' participants.[5] Moreover, the percentage of people obtaining paid work after being on 'Project Work' is minuscule and it may well be that people who have been targeted for 'Project Work' have transferred to other benefits after leaving the scheme or have gone and signed on in areas not within the 'Project Work' catchment area in order to avoid conscription. The Employment Service admits that they don't know what has happened to many of the people who have signed off in the Project Work pilot areas.[6]

The present Labour government led by Tony Blair also favours Workfare and has already announced a compulsory scheme for the under-25s. Labour also favours 'welfare-to-work' policies which essentially perceive the benefit system as a problem, in that it is seen to encourage dependency on state benefits and discourages work effort. Under Labour's so-called 'New Deal' programme, young dole claimants aged 18 to 25 years old are now to be offered four options, i.e. a subsidised job with a private employer for six months, work with a voluntary organisation, work on an environmental task-force, full-time education or training. Those people who refuse to take up an option are to lose all their unemployment benefits under Labour's 'New Deal'.

It remains to be seen whether Labour's proposals succeed in reducing unemployment in the long run or whether its 'New Deal' programme merely turns out to be another revolving door for the unemployed where they go from benefit to scheme and back onto unemployment benefits. However, whilst it is clear that Labour favours compulsion and tighter benefit regimes, such as the Jobseeker's Allowance, and tight limits on public spending, one must query what the unemployed are actually being trained for under Labour's 'New Deal'.

Whilst there has been a great deal of social commentary concerning rising unemployment throughout the European Community, some commentators have also alluded to the way in which paid jobs are declining throughout Europe in an era of increasing globalisation where multinational corporations, and indeed smaller business, can transfer jobs to various parts of the globe to seek out cheaper labour, development grants and tax advantages. In Britain there are now one

million fewer paid jobs that there were in 1979 and we are seeing more multiple job holding as well as people employed on short term contracts and on a casual basis. In fact only a third of the able-bodied population in Britain are still employed in the classic sense of being full time, long term, with benefits guaranteed.

One observer, Professor Charles Handy, in his book *The Empty Raincoat*, suggests that before the end of the century half as many people will be paid twice as much for working three times as hard. Similarly, Ulrich Beck, writing in *Der Spiegel*,[7] argues that global capitalism is killing off work and that, by divesting itself of responsibility for employment and for democracy in the West, is effectively undermining its own legitimacy and democracy.

As a consequence of global capitalism Beck argues that demand for work is declining whilst the supply of labour is rising because, in the information age, capitalism requires fewer well-trained and globally interchangeable people to generate more output and services. Beck suggests that myths about the flexible labour market and low labour costs, coupled with the belief in the service economy, as solutions for unemployment have proven illusory and have merely served to obscure the true state of affairs which is that all post-industrial countries are heading for capitalism without work. For instance, whilst automation displaces core jobs in the service sector such as in banking (and companies like American Express move entire administrative divisions to Southern India to take advantage of low wages) banks and insurance companies continue to offer loans and mortgages and underwrite policies on the assumption that people in employment have a long term guaranteed income. However, Beck believes that other contradictions of 'jobless capitalism' should be obvious.

For example, Beck argues that democracy in Europe and the United States was originally a 'democracy of work' which recognised that without material security there could be no political freedom. Similarly, whilst multinational companies continue to strip high-priced countries of jobs and tax revenues, Beck suggests that it seldom appeals to the directors of these multinational corporations to move to the places where they are creating low-paying jobs and paying low corporate taxes. Instead, they prefer to send their children to the publicly financed universities of Europe and to frolic in the relatively violence-free capitals of Europe. However, as Beck points out, their egotistic economic behaviour and profit-orientated policies are contributing to the destruction of this European way of life. Beck

asserts that those who profit from globalisation must be made accountable for the general welfare and that the definition of work as a public activity equated with remunerated employment for an employer must be broken in preference to a new concept of 'Public Work', involving a blend of formal work and voluntary organisation which receives a public stipend financed through taxation.

Essentially Beck believes that as global capitalism divests itself of responsibility for employment and democracy, and thus undermines its own legitimacy, a revised social contract is needed to lay the groundwork for democracy in a post-work society. As Beck points out, anyone who relies solely on the market destroys democracy and capitalism and leaves people at the mercy of old and new totalitarian regimes and ideologies. However, whilst Beck does much to highlight the absurdities of market capitalism and its inherent contradictions, is it really possible to have a form of capitalism which is not exclusively concerned with ownership and profits? I doubt it.

Surely capitalists go into business not to create employment but to make profits: if companies are not competitive, they go out of business. Likewise, given that economies develop unevenly, capitalists seek to exploit this uneven economic development to play one off against the other in order to maximise profits. Many jobs are disappearing in EEC countries and governments have sought to adopt measures to assist job creation. In Germany, which is one of the world's greatest exporters of jobs (despite having four million unemployed), wage restraint has been suggested as a trade-off for job creation. In Sweden government plans to restrict overtime and introduce a shorter working week met with opposition from many Swedish employers, who threatened to take their business elsewhere. In Britain the Tories' flexible labour market, which a recent OECD report denounced as a failure, only seems to have created job insecurity, low pay and very little else. In the long run, capitalism may well sow the seeds of its own destruction, as Beck eloquently points out (along with Karl Marx), due to its own inherent contradictions, but, as I see it, the problem is not how to manage capitalism better, but whether economic arrangements in society should be organised in the interests of the mass of people in society or in the interests of a parasitic few.

Clearly, unemployment as a concept only arises or becomes a 'social problem' precisely because of the way our society regards labour as a commodity under capitalism when 'marketable' and because our society defines 'work' as remunerated work for an employer or income

gained through self employment in the public domain. For instance, work done in the home is not really counted as a genuine economic activity because it is unpaid, but would count as an economic activity if it was carried out in another person's home for wages. We might also include voluntary work undertaken in hospitals or done for barter, and even DIY. Basically, what we really mean by unemployment is the state of being 'unwaged' and it is self evident that a lot of work which is undertaken, and which is vital for the reproduction of society, is unpaid work.

The American sociologist Robert Wuthnow argues that without the voluntary efforts of others, all modern societies would collapse immediately.[8] For example, eighty million Americans above the age of eighteen commit five hours or more each week, working for charitable purposes, and the monetary value of these efforts amounts to $150 billion per year. As global capitalism and technology create 'joblessness' throughout the post-industrial countries of the West, perhaps there is an urgent need, as Beck suggests to redefine what we mean by 'work'. Better still, we can get rid of capitalism and replace it with a society based on workers' control, mutual co-operation and the common ownership of the means of production.

Footnotes

1. R. Boyson, (editor) *Down with the Poor* (London: Churchill Press, 1971), quoted in *A Crisis in Care? Challenges to Social Work*, edited by J. Clarke (The Open University).

2. P. Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: QPD, 1990).

3. K.R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Routledge) Volume 2.

4. BBC *Newsnight* programme, 30th October 1996.

5. Conversation with Guy Cheverton, Hull TUC, 16th November 1996.

6. CPSA, *What's wrong with Workfare?* (Project Work), (ES Bulletin 29th January 1997).

7. Ulrich Beck, 'Capitalism Without Work' in *Der Spiegel* (No.20, 1996), article appeared in *Dissent*, Winter 1997.

8. Ibid.

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II
Learning to Labour?
experiences in a British Labour Camp in the 1970s

Andy Wilson is a fifty year old textile worker from Dukinfield in Greater Manchester. In December 1975 Andy was sent to a 'Labour Camp' – not in Siberia, but in Henley-in-Arden in Warwickshire. This ancient market town, which is situated some seven miles to the north west of Stratford-upon-Avon, lists among its main tourist attractions a fifteenth century Guildhall, built by Sir Ralph Boteler, and the Norman church of St Nicholas, which is situated nearby at Beaudsert. However, a less well known tourist attraction was its Labour Camp which was run by the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS). In the official jargon of the DHSS these camps were known as 'Re-establishment Centres' and back in 1975 Andy Wilson, along with others, was sent to this DHSS run Labour Camp for the crime of being unemployed.

During an interview with Andy Wilson (AW), which I did in March 1997, in his home, I asked him about his experiences and memories of the camp and I started by asking Andy how he had been referred to the camp and what his circumstances were at the time:

AW: I had been out of work eighteen months after being made redundant from the shoe trade where I had worked for 12 years. I can recall being asked to attend an interview at the social security office in Ashton-under-Lyne and was interviewed in a private room by a bloke from the DHSS, who was very aggressive. He told me that they were going to stop my unemployment benefit if I didn't go to a centre: the way he put it was that it was a place where I would get more knowledge of work.

DP: *How did you feel when you were told you would have to go to the camp?*

AW: I wasn't very pleased. At the time I was living at home with my parents and I wasn't getting full benefit – I was only getting £10 a week. I found out later that most of the people who were in the camp were single people and it seemed to me that the DHSS were picking on single people. I felt that they were trying to break me away from home because I was 27 years old and still living with my parents.

DP: *Did the DHSS tell you that you were being sent to the camp because you weren't making enough effort to find work?*
AW: They kind of said this, but at the time I had known people who had been out of work for three or four years and they hadn't been sent to the camp. However, most of these were married. I did apply for jobs and I got my card signed when I went for a job. I feel the object was to isolate me and to take me away from my environment – I think later events proved this to be the case.

DP: *How did you get to the camp? What was it like?*
AW: The DHSS provided me with a rail warrant and I got a train to Birmingham New Street from Piccadilly station in Manchester. I can remember that it was a cold snowy day and I didn't arrive in Henley-in-Arden until around four in the afternoon when it was going dark. After getting off the train I met four lads who were walking down the road and who were wearing overalls. As I was carrying a suitcase they seemed to know that I was going to the camp and said they would show me the way.

It was a bit of a shock to me when I arrived at the camp because I had been under the impression, from what the DHSS had told me, that I was going to a country house. In actual fact it was an ex-land army camp and was an E-shaped wooden hut with dormitories on one side, a canteen, a television room and an administration block. I can remember that the siren was still fixed to a tower.

On arrival I was told by a member of staff that they had not received my papers and because two more people arrived at the same time there were insufficient beds and one of the inmates had to sleep on a couch in the medical room. In the dormitory there were fifteen cubicles on either side of the room, each containing a bed, a chair and what was supposed to be a wardrobe. I was told by a member of staff to have a shower, which I didn't like, and when I came out of the shower I noticed that the contents of my suitcase had been disturbed. I was left in the dormitory until tea time, when I was given two slices of cheese on toast.

DP: *How many staff were there in the camp?*
AW: The camp was run by nine people who were all ex-military. They didn't wear uniforms and some of the staff worked in the kitchens, or the garden, or the workshop, or in administration. One member of staff, called Jock, who worked in the rooms, had an old age pension, an army pension and was also paid for working in the camp. The manager, who was in overall charge, was ex-RAF and he dealt with

everything and everybody in a military manner. I met the manager on the second day and I could see that he had my papers in front of him. He referred to the length of time that I had been out of work and told me that it was in my DHSS file that I was a union member and a 'Left Winger'. He said that he was aware that I had been involved in a bit of trouble in my last job and that he didn't want any of this kind of behaviour in the camp. He told me that if I left the camp I would be picked up for 'vagrancy' and that there were plenty of jobs in the shoe trade in Nottingham. I can remember telling him that I had read in the paper the day before that 10,000 jobs had been lost in Nottingham and that there seemed to be little point in going there.

DP: *What was a typical daily routine?*
AW: We used to get up at 6.30am and get washed and dressed. We had to fold our blankets in squares and pile them on the bed for a military style inspection. We then cleaned the yard and had breakfast at 8am. After breakfast you were given a job to do. In the camp, you either worked in the gardens or the kitchens or you worked in the wood shop making bird tables. One of the inmates used to sit in a shed all day chopping wood. I spent my first three weeks in the camp cleaning the dormitory. I think this was done to isolate me and to stop me mixing with the others. Afterwards I spent most of my time working in the gardens, which were outside the camp. We used to stop for dinner and then return for work until around 4.30pm when we finished. We then had a wash and got ready for our evening meal. In the evening, we either watched a black and white television or went for a walk or down to the pub. At 11pm every evening the lights were turned off and we were locked in the dormitory until the morning.

Most of the time you were bored, especially at weekends. Our dole money was paid over to the camp to pay for our food and accommodation and we were given two pounds per week spending money. I was told that it cost the DHSS £60 per week to keep us at the camp. One night a bloke in the dormitory, who we discovered was on a drugs charge and awaiting trial, went berserk and tried to stab a black bloke called 'Moon'. He had snapped because 'Moon' used to annoy people by roller skating in the dormitory all night. After the incident the police were called and the bloke was arrested.

The camp did have a bus which was supposed to take us on trips at weekends, but they never took us out. There wasn't even a picture house in the village. The camp had twenty books on a shelf and I started reading *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky, but didn't get

far with it because the lights were turned out at 11pm.

DP: *If a fire had started in the dormitory, how were you to get out if you were locked in?*
AW: As strange as this may seem, there was a sign in the dormitory which said 'In case of fire, keep all doors and windows shut'. However, underneath this notice was another sign which said 'Fire escapes, doors and windows'. How we were supposed to keep the doors and windows shut and at the same time make our escape through them, in the event of a fire, I don't know. It wasn't long before we formed a committee and got candles out of the stores. One weekend, one of the lads put some matchsticks in the cupboard lock where the light switches were and the staff couldn't get in the cupboard to switch off the lights. That particular weekend the lights were on all night.

DP: *What did the local people think of having this camp in their town?*
AW: Most of the locals knew we were from the camp because we were strangers and because we wore blue overalls and had rubber wellingtons on our feet. I don't think the locals knew what the camp was and I suspect they thought that we were offenders.

When we were walking down the road we used to see people pointing at us and we used to say that they were telling their kids that if they didn't behave they would end up in the camp with us lot. When we were going to work in the gardens we had to go through a private estate and people used to look at us like we were refugees. With our dark blue overalls and wellingtons we looked like Dad's Army walking down the road.

Most people at the centre were single like myself and were aged between 20 and 30 years old and had been unemployed for between one and two years. I can remember speaking to a young married bloke from Nottingham, who told me that his wife was upset with him being away. I told him to tell his wife to go to the DHSS and to tell them that she was thinking of leaving him because he was in the camp. This bloke was sent home a day later. Obviously the DHSS did not want to be involved in the break-up of this lad's marriage and neither did the staff at the camp. What really annoyed me was that the people who were assessing me were acting as though they were trained people and they were not. It was clear that you were there to be given a sharp, short shock. Even my mail was being held back because the staff knew that my family were sending small amounts of money.

DP: *When you were at the camp were there any protests by the inmates?*
AW: I can remember Barbara Castle [Minister for Social Services 1974-76] coming to visit the camp in January 1976. At the time a Labour government was in power and the Prime Minister was Harold Wilson. We tried to deliver a letter of protest to her which had been signed by all the inmates in the camp, but the staff kept her away from us and she never spoke to any of the inmates – she sort of walked in and walked out. One of the lads in camp used to protest by setting the fire alarms off in order to annoy the staff. I personally made a number of complaints whilst I was at the camp. I discovered that the colour television which we should have been watching in the television room was in the staff room and was being watched by the staff. When I complained about this I was more or less told to mind my own business and then I was told that the colour television couldn't be installed in the television room. Afterwards, the colour television was put in our television room and the staff got the black and white television.

DP: *How long did you stay at the camp?*
AW: I was told by the DHSS that I would have to do three months in the camp in order to get my dole money. However, one particular day I was asked to report to the manager who told me that I was going home that day. What he actually said was that there had been trouble in the camp and that they didn't know who was causing it, but I was going home. I think the manager thought I was causing trouble because there had been a few protests in the camp and he had already labelled me a trouble-maker after he had seen my DHSS file. Furthermore, on the day that I had arrived in the camp I suspect that Jock, who was the member of staff in charge of the dormitory, had gone through my suitcase and, although nothing had been stolen, I did have a copy of *The Thoughts of Chairman Mao* in my suitcase. No doubt Jock had gone running to the boss to tell him there was a Maoist in the camp. I did in fact only do seven weeks in the camp and when I went to sign on at my Labour Exchange they wanted to know where I had been for the last two months. Apparently the DHSS had not bothered to tell them and it took around two weeks to sort my money out.

Conclusion

Throughout English history, the 'idler' has been at various times, portrayed as an enemy of the commonwealth. The 'vagabond', the 'sturdy beggar', and the so called 'welfare scrounger' of today, are the archetypal historic figures. For John Locke, the principal architect of the liberal ideal, the duty to work, was 'God's Will', and he noted "God, when he gave the world in common to all mankind, commanded man also to labour" and that "He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational" (Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Book 2, paragraphs 32 and 34). Perceived as unprofitable members of society, the unemployed or idle have always been singled out for punishment whether it be at the end of a whip, or incarceration in the Victorian workhouse, or the work camps which the unemployed were sent to in the 1930s.

For those unemployed people such as Andy Wilson, who were sent to the labour camp in Henly-in-Arden during the mid 1970s, and who had first hand experience of what the then DHSS euphemistically termed 'Re-establishment and Training', the aim of this camp (which was run by ex-military personnel), was to punish people for the crime of being jobless and to give them a 'sharp, short, shock'. Indeed, it appears that the only training which was on offer, was making bird tables and most inmates seem to have spent their time engaged in menial tasks within the camp.

A letter which I received from the DHSS in May 1997, appears to reinforce Mr. Wilson's view of a punitive camp regime with little or no training on offer. I was told in this letter, that "The purpose of these centres was to get Social Security Benefits claimants, who were unemployed, back into the way of getting up in the morning, going to a place of employment, and doing some form of work. Penalties to their benefit payments were made for non-attendance, and in fact it may well have been a joint DHSS and Department of Employment initiative". I was also told that the need for 'Re-establishment Training Centres' (RETCs), diminished in the mid 1980s, when long term unemployment (then defined as over three months), became more prevalent than when these centres were initially established.

Many claimants like Andy Wilson went to the Labour Camp in Henley-in-Arden because they were told that they would lose their unemployment benefit if they failed to attend. However it is my belief that back in 1975 compulsory attendance at a Re-establishment Centre could only have been made a condition of receiving

unemployment benefit if the DHSS had obtained an order from an Independent Tribunal, on the grounds that a claimant was not actively seeking work. In fact, in May 1978, I attended an interview at the Ashton DHSS to support a colleague who was also being threatened with attendance at the Re-establishment Centre in Henley-in-Arden. He was told by the Unemployment Review Officer (URO) that, if he was not prepared to go to the camp voluntarily, the DHSS would obtain a 'Direction' from a Tribunal to refer him to the centre.

In retrospect, it may well be the case that many claimants like Andy Wilson, who were unaware of their rights and who placed trust in minor government officials to comply with the law, effectively allowed themselves to be confined in a Labour Camp unnecessarily and to be deprived of their liberty because they believed that others, in authority, knew better. Perhaps against their own better judgement, this deference towards people in authority and unquestioning belief in it, may explain why the likes of Andy Wilson and others allowed themselves to be treated like criminals and why they failed to take independent advice.

The site which accommodated the Labour Camp in Henley-in-Arden was sold to a property developer in the mid 1980s and today there are blocks of retirement flats where the camp once stood. The local library in Henley told me that the site had originally been used as a camp to accommodate refugees and displaced persons during and just after the last war and was occupied by Lithuanians. According to the library, the DHSS were using the camp as a training centre for the unemployed from 1964 onwards.

"The labourers have the most enormous power in their hands, and if they once became conscious of it, and used it, nothing would withstand them; they would only have to stop labour, regard the product of labour as theirs, and enjoy it."

Max Stirner in *The Ego and Its Own*

Guy Cheverton

The 7,000 mile picket line: the Liverpool dockers, two years on

In September 1995 Liverpool dockers were locked out and then sacked for refusing to cross a picket line, made up for the most part by their sons employed by the Mersey Docks Harbour Company subsidiary, Torside. Two years later they were still out.

When the arrogant MDHC bosses took on the Liverpool men and, as it turned out, women (witness the women's support group 'Women of the Waterfront') they no doubt expected a long strike ending at best with betrayal by the Transport & General Workers Union (TGWU). This has not happened. Two years on the dispute is, if anything, intensifying and it has led to three international strikes of dockers launching a global picket line, go-slows, boycotts, occupations and the foundation of a new international portworkers' organisation. For the first time in Britain, counter-cultural youth has been brought directly into strike support work with the actions in Liverpool and London of the Reclaim the Streets movement

The dispute has been waged on syndicalist lines, from the weekly mass meeting to discuss the embattled community's needs, to the insistence on practical internationalism, direct action and a determination, despite the bleatings of the Trotskyists trying to keep control of the struggle by keeping it unofficial. In these respects the Liverpool dockers' fight, whatever its final outcome, will have been a success, showing just what workers are capable of when relying on their own strength. Perhaps its greatest influence has been on trade unionists abroad. From my own experience of doing work for the dockers amongst Spanish trade unionists, the response has been incredible. In the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist CGT support has flowed to Liverpool from land-locked Burgos (which has its own dockers' support group!) to Malaga. A mere phonecall to CGT dockers in Vigo stopped the unloading of all containers being transferred from Portugal whose dockers have a policy of total blacking. When my daughter and I collected over £800 from delegates at the CGT's thirteenth Congress it was in sad contrast to

the recent TUC Congress where twenty delegates attended the dockers' fringe meeting.

I would not pretend that the syndicalist movement is of great importance in the European union movement, but through its support of the dockers it has gained the respect of the Mersey portworkers and has shown itself capable of serious action in its own right. When the syndicalist SAC members trashed the ACL shipping line offices in Stockholm, or saved the dockers' bacon with a timely £20,000 donation, they showed their support for the seriousness of our ideas and our practice. Besides, it is not labels that are important. It is actions. So, when on 8th September '97, South African, American, Swedish, Danish and Japanese portworkers took strike action in support of their comrades in Liverpool, they showed a syndicalist gut reaction far in advance of a minority of international anarcho-syndicalists who seemingly discount all outside their own narrow association.

If the response from workers, be they Australian, Indian, American or Swedish, has been exemplary, the same cannot be said for Britain. In August '97 I attended a conference of support groups in Liverpool. This was disappointing on two counts. Firstly because there were only seven or eight groups attending, with none from Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, etc. (I guess I was the only anarchist present) and, secondly, because in great abundance were the wider fringes of British Trotskyism from the furthest frontiers of the WRP and Sparticist League. The plagues of SWP and SP (Militant) members swarming around the dispute in the early months have disappeared (there are no members to recruit amongst dockers a hundred times more experienced than the average party member). Some groups (notably on Clydeside and in London) have done tremendous work, raising thousands of pounds from factory collections and even comedy nights, but this is the exception to the rule. Most active British trade unionists, despite the news blackout, know about the Liverpool struggle but do nothing.

We syndicalists, anarchists, libertarians active in the Labour movement, or simply in our own localities, could do something to remedy such a situation. Pub collections, workplace visits, and fundraising gigs, if carried out regularly, do make a small but significant difference. That is not to say that in Hull, Norwich, Glasgow or wherever, there aren't libertarians actively supporting the Liverpool dockers now, just that there are more who could be.

All this will be equally pertinent for future struggles. If this is the

first internet and fax driven dispute it will not be the last. The perfection of the dockers' tactics and philosophy has certainly given us inspiration for the future, but it should also have inspired us to do our bit to help win this dispute now. Without constant practice in the real world, anarchist ideas are nothing more than an interesting philosophical byway. To lead anywhere our road must be paved with deeds, that is, with a foundation of Concrete Solidarity.

"The Trade Unions are, by their very nature, reformist and never revolutionary. The revolutionary spirit must be introduced, developed and maintained by the constant actions of revolutionaries within their ranks as well as outside, but it cannot be the normal natural definition of a Trade Union's function. On the contrary, the real and immediate interests of organised workers, which it is the unions' role to defend are very often in conflict with their ideals and future objectives."

Errico Malatesta in *Umanita Nova*, 1922

Albert Shore

Managing the Unemployed

recent patterns of resistance to the government manipulation of the jobless

When the Job Seeker's Act (JSA) was going through the parliamentary committee stage in 1995 *The Observer*, in an editorial, condemned it as the "most draconian and anti-libertarian piece of legislation to reach the statute book this century". That was the year that Groundswell, the national federation of independent claimant groups and unemployed bodies, set out to organise its campaign of opposition, having established itself at a founding conference in Oxford. Today the Groundswell network claims up to seventy group affiliates across the country.

Initially the strongest and most influential groups were situated in Oxford, Brighton and Edinburgh. Throughout, the Oxford group has been the co-ordinating centre of the movement. Brighton is strongly allied to the CPSA, the low grade civil servant's union, and Edinburgh developed a direct action strategy aimed at abusive claimant advisers and their Job Centre managers.

In February 1996 a member of the Edinburgh Groundswell group came to Salford to address the Conference of the Northern Anarchist Network. He outlined a tactic which was to excite several of the anarchist activists present and to shape and influence the whole nature of the movement throughout the country, both inside and outside the anarchist and Groundswell ranks. This tactic was the now controversial 'Three Strikes and You're Out' campaign, which first warns claimant advisers to behave decently towards claimants and then finally, if they fail to comply with this request, exposes the offender to public shame by issuing their photo on a poster around their local area.

In April 1996 the government introduced JSA pilot schemes at several dole offices around the country. Cheetham Hill, in Manchester, was one of the Job Centre offices operating a pilot scheme. That month the Manchester Anti-JSA Group was formed and, together with Tameside Unemployed Workers' Alliance and

Salford Unemployed Workers' Centre, a campaign of opposition was launched against the implementation of the Job Seeker's Act in the North West of England. *Freedom*, the anarchist fortnightly, covered this project in detail and issued a leaflet entitled: *CHEETHAM HILL – House of Horror.*

In the early summer of 1996 in Bury, Lancashire, at the local Unemployed Centre, the Bury Unemployed Workers' Association was set up. This group joined in the Cheetham Hill protests. The Bury group straddles the Groundswell movement and the Welfare State Network. The Welfare State Network (WSN) is an organisation more closely associated with the Labour Party and the trade unions, which has from the beginning opposed the JSA and Project Work. Project Work is another Tory government scheme which attempts to place the jobless in forced labour projects, to get them off the register of the unemployed. At that time there were two pilot Project Work schemes operating, in Hull and Kent. Both were being vigorously opposed by the Trades Councils in those areas.

During 1996 Groundswell continued to have conferences at three monthly intervals. The Trades Council protests against Project Work were a success and each new job created by the government cost £39,000. The 'Three Strikes' weapon was used at Nottingham, Edinburgh and Cheetham Hill in Manchester. In the late summer the 'North West Against the JSA' was established as a regional organisation at Bury, which included independent Groundswell groups from Manchester, Tameside and, later, Oldham and Burnley as well as TUC Unemployed Centres like Bury, Salford, Bolton and St Helens.

A conference of the 'North West Against the JSA' was organised in Liverpool in November 1996. Throughout the year Job Centres were occupied at Cheetham Hill, Bury, Salford and at the Employment Service Centre at Ontario House at Salford Quays. Elsewhere in the country there was a similar build-up of activity, thousands of leaflets were issued, there were leaks from inside the Employment Service from disgruntled employees and Grounswell's stature and street credibility began to grow.

In January 1997 a question was asked in the British parliament about Groundswell. The Groundswell *News & Information Bulletin* for August/September 1997 announced: "Questions to the Employment & Education Committee; House of Commons; 17th January 1997 – Question 16 (Groundswell): 'Could you tell us more about this organisation and its activities and how the Employment Service has dealt with them?'"

In February 1997 the then Tory government extended its Project Work program to 29 towns across Britain. The scheme was not so much creating jobs as getting people off the unemployed register and reducing the headline unemployment figures. Despite this, the government of John Major lost office at the 1st May General Election. New Labour came to power. Today Groundswell notes: "As expected New Labour is doing nothing about the JSA and has plans of its own for workfare style schemes and a general crackdown on benefits".

The Euro March in May brought with it opportunities for occupations of Job Centres across the north. Job Centres in Bury, Oldham, Openshaw and Bolton all had invasions of protesters. In the summer of '97 Groundswell had several days of action against the 'Welfare to Work' (Workfare) programme of the New Labour government. In July the Minister for Welfare Reform, Frank Field, was confronted by demonstrators at his Birkenhead, Merseyside, constituency. In September, Andrew Smith, Minister of State for Employment, ran up against a Groundswell gauntlet outside Sacha's Hotel, on Tib Street, Manchester, before going in to sing the praises of Labour's 'New Deal' to the caring professions, trade unions, CBI and local government officers at a Conference of the Training and Employment Network.

The Welfare State Network has consistently campaigned against the Job Seeker's Act and declares itself to be "opposed to any form of workfare". We must wait to see what line it takes on Labour's 'New Deal' and Welfare to Work. A recent article in the July 1997 issue of the WSN paper *ACTION for Health and Welfare* reviewing *SchNEWS*, the weekly paper of Justice (the Brighton based group which has come out of the local anti-criminal Justice Act Group) claims "direct action tactics ... on their own can never be enough". The writer adds: "Occupying Job Centres ... or complaining ... to keep the manager tied up all day will not alone beat the JSA". But, the writer claims, "a politicised movement of Job Centre workers and claimants, making demands for real jobs and decent pay, a movement that relates the JSA to attacks on health, education and trade union rights and which advocates concrete systematic action can beat the JSA".

The Welfare State Network approach is close to the TUC position by implication if not explicitly. A TUC paper *Full Employment and the New Deal* declares: "Congress welcomes the rapid progress made in developing the New Deal programmes to help the long term unemployed gain recognised skills and qualifications to find jobs ... Congress believes the New Deal gives the opportunity for the

Employment Service to deliver high quality services to the public".

Essentially the WSN and TUC act as if there were a Golden Age of welfare before 1979, in which the staff of the Employment Service and Benefit Agencies used to help and care for those out of work. Experience of the National Assistance Board and Government Training Centres in the 1960s, or the Social Security (the 'SS', as they were called by members of the Claimant Unions in the 1970s), or the labour camp mentioned in the Derek Pattison interview, under the last Labour government, do not suggest a kind and caring profession was ever part of the history of either the Employment Service or the Benefit Agency. Rather it has been the image of the state policeman manipulating occupants of the dole queue. That at least has been the subjective view of those of us who were in that dole queue.

In this sense Groundswell seems to be closer to the experience and perceived reality of the jobless with regard to these institutions. The WSN and TUC seem to display a modernist spirit of wishful thinking for an age which was never quite what it seemed to the outsider. Groundswell is obviously more negative, and perhaps post-modernist, but this would seem to be justified from an historical point of view. Curiously it is the Marxists and the Socialists who, whilst claiming to take an historical view, persistently shut their eyes to past experience and go all glassy eyed and hopeful about the future.

The other thing is that in the government scenario; in their splendid functions and launches of the New Deal and Welfare to Work, the claimant is not in evidence. The politicians, the professionals, the Local Government officers, down to the merest tin-pot functionary or timid clerk, all are there to pontificate, but the noticeable absentee – the jobless claimant – the prime beneficiary of all this frantic activity is rarely invited and, if s/he is invited, does not turn up. Likewise neither the WSN nor the TUC fight for 'Claimant Control' of these schemes, for in the state set-up the jobless claimants, like the rank and file workers, are condemned to be the eternal extras and never the stars of the show. In this respect Groundswell and the libertarian approach is distinctive in so far as it tends to channel the voice of the rank and file claimant, however inarticulate and unsavoury that may sound in the ears of the well-heeled lower middle class individual.

Norman Stock

Grève Generale: surprised again by the mass-strike

Only yesterday, whoever dared even mention the words 'mass strike' as a real possibility in today's conditions, was living in 'Cloud Cuckoo Land', rejecting the realities of social analysis: the mass general strike was consigned to the dustbin of revolutionary mythology. Today such champions of inaction may sense the need, embarrassingly, to shift their position. Theoretical pessimism is really a way of conforming to the system, craftily camouflaged in radical analytical language. But those who are familiar with Gustav Landauer's theory of revolution can apply it to the present day and confirm that a revolution can occur in any phase of a social system and at any time. But it is after periods of stagnation , when the forces of emancipation have ground to a halt, that the revolution is most probable, when no-one can foresee, because its impossible to see, how the consciousness of the disenchanted, excluded and isolated individuals longs for change so much that it suddenly unites with others in one spirit. Often it is completely ludicrous miscalculations by the rulers which make the situation visible and indeed possible.

In France in December, it was the bigotry and complete head-in-the-clouds craziness of the right, which led the new Chirac Administration to try, with one blow, to realise their plans for necessary (from the ruling class point of view) social changes. Compare that, to the slower more piece-meal erosion of rights favoured by the likes of Kohl and his gang. Atomic testing and simultaneous social sell-out in order to cut expenditure – that was such dumb politics that it provoked a mass strike which after only two weeks led to a production standstill whose fall-out represented a grave threat to the whole European currency system, enough to make Germany, for example, think about the wisdom of their drive to dominate it. That strike demonstrated how and why today a whole country can be laid lame and a government radically challenged. And all that despite the in-built fail-safe systems of the state and the manipulative techniques of the marketing industry.

It was the strike of the public service workers which unleashed the economic fury, which in itself was surprising. Whilst the typical confrontations between inner city youth and the police highlighted the growing difficulties of the forces of 'law and order', they contributed nothing to the economic clout of the whole movement. The state had nothing to fear from them. With the exception of the miners, the strikers remained largely non-militant. All the more remarkable then were the previously unthinkable instances of spontaneous non-violent direct action. Airport runways were occupied, motorways blocked, and when the regime chartered private busses, the HGV drivers in many towns blockaded the roads; when electricity workers blockaded atomic power stations there were power failures in Paris. On Friday 1st December the government was considering using the military to guarantee local public transport. This was more than a hint of how the ruling class of any state can react when its politics are radically challenged.

Instead of standing staring in surprise at the French mass strike, we should try to draw conclusions from the history of mass strikes this century, in order to be prepared for the 'unthinkable when it happens here. It is important to recognise the unfolding dynamics and what the alternatives for action are.

The history of mass strikes: a tale of repeated surprises

Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century, in the burgeoning international workers' movement, especially in France, there began a form of social action which was to replace the previously dominant form of class confrontation: the mass strike would more and more be preferred to the traditional raising of barricades. The international anarchist movement greeted the strike as the authentic means of expression of industrial workers in their struggle for socialism. In discussions then, the barricades, a form of action essentially outside the factories, was seen as a typical expression of bourgeois struggle, with which the French revolution of 1789 had been won, only to consolidate industrial exploitation of the factory worker as the social norm of capitalist society. The bourgeois call to the barricades was essentially military, whereas the proletarian mass strike tended to non-violence. In any case that's how it was viewed by important non-violent anarchist theoreticians such as Rudolf Rocker, Clara Wichman, Bart de Ligt or Pierre Ramus.

From a non-violent anarchist perspective, the mass strike meets

approval for two reasons: one materialistic, the other ethical. The materialistic one goes like this: under capitalism ever more impoverished people had to leave the countryside to sell their labour in the factory towns, thus experiencing themselves to be a 'mass', because they all had to submit to the same humiliating conditions. To choose the mass strike as a form of resistance was therefore only logical, and the more that industrial concentration advanced, the more possible it became for the mass strike to transform itself into a revolutionary general strike.

The ethical /moral argument underlines the fact that the social aim of the worker was not to establish a new ruling class, as, for example, the bourgeoisie saw it, but was rather an inclusive humanistic ideal. The new socialist society has to differ radically from the everyday inhumanity of existing society. Because the bourgeoisie had become the dominant class through military means, inhumane means corresponding to inhumane ends, now, the socialist society has to be realised through socio-economic (non-military, non-violent) means – thus the humane means compliment the humane goal.

The first argument was largely shared by anarchists and communists alike; but there was radical disagreement over the second: the communists did not view the mass strike as a non-violent form of struggle, but rather as the precursor of a military uprising; neither did they see military struggle as something specifically bourgeois.These differences were to continually crop up in discussions about the mass strike throughout the twentieth century. I would like to mention a few of the arguments I think are the most revealing – and full of surprises they are too.

The first surprise in the history of the mass strike is that it was not in the most industrially developed countries that a mass strike movement first came into being, but in underdeveloped Russia. The Russian revolution of 1905 was essentially distinguished by mass strikes in which the hitherto largely unorganised strikers formed themselves into soviets, initiated with the help of the anarchist Voline. The aim of the soviets was to administer works and factories in the towns, rather like the agrarian• communal lands run by peasant councils (*mir*), albeit under a feudal system. When the revolution changed from one of mass strike to one of military uprising, it ended in the bloody military defeat of 1905.

It was the mass strike of the impoverished, still half peasant populace of Russia that was most energetically discussed in western Europe and proved a decisive event for the German Social Democrats and

for the Social Democrat dominated Second International. Against anarchist support for the mass strike in case of a war, advocated by the likes of Domela Niewenhuis, the arguments of, amongst others, Karl Liebknecht of the SPD (Social Democrats) for a parliamentary way were victorious. The mass strike in case of war was rejected. What Liebknecht had set in motion became brutally obvious when in 1914 a mass strike against the war did not happen.

But oh! Wonder of wonders (and this is the next surprise,) just in that period after the revolution of 1918/19, when power had fallen to the SPD and behind whose backs and with whose silent approval the reactionary forces licked their wounds and planned their comeback, it was precisely the political mass strike that pulled the plug on the military early-nazi Kapp Putsch. And that despite the fact that, maybe indeed because, the workers' unions were disunited in various ideological factions; because it was precisely this disunity which allowed the left-communists and the anarcho-syndicalists to bring about the general strike. There was nothing left for the SPD to do, but, in the interests of their own survival, greet that form of social action that they had long since rejected.

Thereupon, in the Rhineland and in the Ruhr, the revolutionary general strike gave way to the armed uprising. The Red Army of the Ruhr formed itself mainly from left-communist and anarchist contingents, but was in its turn and in the most brutal fashion, destroyed by the professional Reich Army which the newly rescued SPD themselves sent into the field. In this defeat and in the near total destruction of the anarcho-syndicalist union (Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands) is to be found one of the main causes of the practically unopposed ascent of the Nazis.

Within the remnants of the FAUD there was much discussion about the causes of the military defeat. The non-violent anarchist Pierre Ramus pointed to the degeneration of the revolutionary general strike into an armed struggle. On no account should the military be served up a centralised set-piece outside the factories, that is, outside the proper socio-economic field of action. The military threat needs to be met by the extension and consolidation of the strike whereby workers start to produce for their own purposes. Such a strategy was pursued by the left-communist unions in particular. However, the fate of the Red Army of the Ruhr had shown that more and more of the so called 'carabiner communists' (militant left-communists) in the ranks of the anarchists fell into command structures and ended by losing their sense of reality in military adventures.

This dispute between the anarchist union and the communist parties was not to be resolved. But after the military crushing of the radical unions it was already too late. The well organised social-democrat and communist unions were, towards the end of the Weimar period, no longer capable of the mass strike. Fascism was soon to triumph not only in Germany, but also in Spain and further afield.

Now our next surprise in the history of the mass strike was this: that out of next to nothing, one of the fascist-fighting movements in Spain succeeded in re-forming itself, and expressed itself, above all, through an action form contrasting vividly with the civil war model. After the military destruction of the Spanish revolution 1936-39 all workers organisations in Spain were forbidden. The complete lack of party or union centralisation worked dialectically against the Franco regime in the '60s and '70s when decentralised, basis-democratic 'Comisiones Obreras' were formed in the workers' underground. In the face of heavy state opression, they initiated at first decentral and regional, and later in the early '70s, countrywide mass strikes, which, with their demands for democracy, put the Franco regime on the defensive.

These strikes probably contributed to Spain's missing out on economic union with the rest of the then EEC. In any case, the mass strike as an action form had re-emerged under just those unfavourable conditions (dictatorship, splintered unions) and played the main role in the decline of fascism.

And for the next surprise we didn't have to wait very long. Paris, May '68, came quite unexpectedly. In the economically well-fed western industrial nations, revolution was not on the menu. But just because of the economic well-being, a need for freedom and self-realisation became apparent, especially amongst the youth and students. The rigid structure of industrial capitalism with its monotonous work and Taylorist production lines could not meet these needs. For once the workers did not project their hatred towards those who formulate and express these needs, but against the system which frustrates them. Workers and students in unison would have decided on the future of De Gaulle's regime, if it hadn't been for the Communist Party dominated CGT union abandoning the mass strike at the last moment when De Gaulle threatened military force. Whether he would have carried out these threats or backed down is open to conjecture.

Finally, the mass strike as social action form turned on the Communists themselves – the next surprise and for anarchists sweet revenge! In 1980/81 the Polish steel,workers of Gdansk struck and set in motion the course of mass strikes at whose end stood the final

demise of state socialism in Europe. Whereas in the capitalist states, the process of restructuring and reversing the trend for industrial concentration had long since been underway, it was state socialism which had fully realised this trend . And what stood at the end of it? Oh! irony of world history! Not socialism, but the vomiting up by the working masses of that which had been served to them as socialism.

The mass strike today: the individual in the crowd

Modern trends in the workplace include deregulation – the undermining of standards of social partnership through flexible work practices, sex- and race-specific distribution of work, and the general increase in unregulated business relationships; and what we shall call 'Toyotism' or 'Volvoism', meaning group or teamwork in factories whereby those who still have jobs learn to identify with their team and their product. These trends are producing a differentiated social structure in which the classical industrial worker accounts for only about 20% of employment. What then are the material conditions for mass strikes today? In France we have seen that the lean state follows closely on the heels of lean production in factories: it becomes difficult to feed the bloated bureaucracy/public sector (up to 40% of all employment) from reduced income tax receipts; furthermore, high interest monetary policies hinder investment, cause reductions in production and even less government receipts. This is no recipe at all for a public sector feast. Employees in the public sector are faced with the previously unthinkable – reduced real wages, rises in real tax and social contributions as well as massive redundancies due to privatisation. For bureaucrats, more than anyone, this is new territory, because compared to skilled workers, small business people and workers, their loss of the capacity for self-organisation is the most advanced and the recovery of that capacity the most difficult. Result: when the bureaucrat loses her/his role, the robes of status and career fall away and only the naked person is standing there; when the existential angst is at its greatest, the humanity of the bureaucrat can be rediscovered. From this sudden confrontation with the abyss, the realisation that one is no more to be suckled by the mother state, we can trace the readiness for struggle in France. It is so strong that it carries before it all other sections of society equally affected by social spending cuts, such as school children and students. And these bureaucrats (and public sector workers) strike so effectively, that the other workers don't need to strike at all for the economic effects of a general strike

still to be achieved. No-one gets through the traffic chaos and production grinds to a halt. Since the turn of the century and the beginning of the mass strike as a form of social action, the economic conditions for it have transformed themselves diametrically. Yet the mass strike is so immediate, and as effective as ever.

From a libertarian viewpoint, the rediscovery by the bureaucrats of their humanity was a decisive aspect of this mass strike. We can enter it in the accounts next to the purely external demands for saving jobs in the state bureaucracy. In addition solidarity was displayed with others affected by capitalist deregulation, and their spirits rose enough to join the struggle. It is not in question that the traditionally splintered union movement in France and the low level of union organisation (9% compared to Germany 40%) facilitated the strike. All over the country people formed basis-democratic strike committees which are difficult for union leaderships to control and whose members were against insufficient negotiations and compromise. The dissolution of strikes in the spirit of the social contract is clearly much less easy than in Germany, where only a few years ago the militant and strike ready refuse workers were hoodwinked into inaction by their own union.

These experiences of the strikers in strike committees and through spectacular non-violent direct action such as occupations and blockades, are contributions to the emancipation of the individual within a mass movement. A mass movement of social emancipation embodies foremostly the possibility of individual emancipation by planning actions and experiencing the necessity for taking part in basis-democratic decision making. Equally important, a striker becomes keenly aware of what professional life and social normality really mean; s/he recovers expropriated experiences and feelings, things killed off by the 'norms' of everyday existence. 'Mass' and 'individual' are therefore not to be viewed as being in conflict when we are talking about emancipation. Individualism is not something that should develop by renouncing the possibilities offered by a social movement.

Even though dangers do lurk in mass movements, as incomparably described by Elias Canetti in his book *Mass and Power*, this should not blur our vision of the emancipative quality of the social mass movement, but focus it. Dangerous, reactionary and reformist developments can then be recognised and resisted. Abstention in the name of individualism amounts to capitulation in the face of those social conditions which the French strikers confronted. In doing so they brought us fresh hope of freedom.

Brian Bamford

I
History of conflict in Puerto Real

The problems in Puerto Real, according to Pepe Gomez (see interview below), began in 1977 with the Trade Union Pact agreed between the two main unions (the communist CCOO and Socialist UGT) and the then conservative government of Suarez. This pact was cooked up between Suarez and Santiago Carrillo, then the boss of the Communist Party of Spain, in an attempt to outflank the socialist PSOE and its union the UGT. It failed. The PSOE got power in the early 1980s. The UGT became the biggest union federation. And Suarez and Carrillo are now political non-entities.

The socialist government of Felipe Gonzalez continued to try to reorganise and rationalise the shipyards of Puerto Real, Cadiz and elsewhere in Spain throughout their terms in office in the 1980s and 90s. They also tried to force mechanised and capital intensive agriculture on the peasants and land labourers of Andalucia, causing rural unemployment.

In July and September 1987 *Freedom* reported on a series of serious social conflicts in Puerto Real and the region of Cadiz city. There was disorder in the streets and telephone, rail and road links to the provincial capital were disrupted throughout the year. The socialist Civil Governor of Cadiz called in special anti-disturbance police to quell the civil resistance. At one point the shipyard and factory, which were occupied by workers, were invaded by this semi-military force who set fire to the joiners' workshop before being beaten back by the workers.

The anarcho-syndicalist Confederación National del Trabajadores (CNT) policy for the shipyard was that overtime must be banned (12,000 hours of overtime a month were being worked in 1987 in the Cadiz yard) and that the working week be cut to 35 hours. The CNT invoked the practice of the all-village assembly in which anyone involved in the dispute could take part in the decision making.

Talking to an anarchist militant: interview with Pepe Gomez in 1987

BB: *How do you feel about the general effectiveness of the CNT-FAI (Federación Anarquista Iberica) in Spanish society today?*
PG: In Catalonia, Madrid and Bilbao, the organisation is holding its own and exerting a social and political presence. Also, particularly in the north of Spain, there are many anarchist social groupings, ateneos or affinity groups which operate at a social and cultural level and which often collaborate with the CNT.

BB: *What about Andalucia?*
PG: In this region of Spain we are much more disorganised and weak. While we have developed a strong branch here in Puerto Real, elsewhere in this region we generally lack strength and co-ordination. In the provincial capital Granada, where the Andalucian Regional Committee is based, there is an effective organisation, but this is not reflected throughout Andalucia (Spain's largest and poorest region). The main problem is we lack a significant influence among the rural peasants in this region. Sad, when one considers that before the Civil War the peasants were our most traditional supporters.

BB: *Do we not have relations with the Sindicato del Obreros del Campo (Agricultural Workers' Union)?*
PG: Yes, up to a point, but it is not very easy to co-operate with them. Though they describe themselves as anarcho-syndicalists many of their leaders seek municipal office in the villages where they have influence. Some of their leaders are mayors and others are priests. No organisation with anarcho-syndicalist pretensions ought to encourage its members to pursue political office or become involved with the clergy.

BB: *How do you organise in Puerto Real?*
PG: In Puerto Real we have forty members of the CNT. But a few weeks ago we called a mass meeting in a public square and got a turn-out of 2,000. The thing is we have many supporters and sympathisers who do not affiliate. We have a well organised office and branch centre. In the shipyard we have good contacts with many of the workers, together with the social organisations on the housing estates. Particularly we work closely with the women's movement set up in Puerto Real to support the interests of the workers of Matagorda (Puerto Real's shipbuilding yard). In addition, we have links with the

apprentices at the training school, who have taken independent action on their own behalf by occupying their school and blocking roads: many apprentices were not being placed in the yard after serving their time to a trade.

BB: *Your attitude to the other CNT, (now Confederación General del Trabajadores – CGT), which split away in 1979, is not so hostile as others in your organisation. Why?*
PG: No, we are not so hostile. Indeed, we collaborate with the other CNT in the Cadiz dockyard, where that organisation has three delegates (shop stewards) on the works committee.

BB: *How do you see the conflict between the two CNTs?*
PG: The basic issue is one of participation or non-participation on the factory committees. The CNT-FAI boycotts the elections to these committees. But what is now sustaining the split is a conflict of personalities, mainly in Madrid and Barcelona.

When the initial breakaway took place in 1979 it was small and not serious, as the groups who split had little industrial influence. More grave was the 1982 walkout of several important unions over the issue of the CNT's participation on the factory committees. Without these splits the industrial map of Spain would have been different now; with the CNT playing a significant role rather than reduced to a marginal force. From Puerto Real we are continually pressing the Madrid secretariat to open negotiations with the unions of the other CNT. Either with a view to developing a working relationship or resolving the issues which divide us. Personally, I would prefer it if the national organisation was based in Bilbao, rather than Madrid. Madrid and Barcelona have long been centres where all the internal conflicts bite deepest.

BB: *Did you know the CNT's internal conflicts have caused friction inside DAM (the British Direct Action Movement now known as the Solidarity Federation)?*
PG: (With a grimace) I find it odd that a movement such as the DAM should develop internal problems over matters which are internal issues of policy in the Spanish movement.

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Continuation of Social Conflict

In July 1995 there was another mobilisation of workers in the Cadiz region against a further attempt to reorganise the yard in Cadiz and Puerto Real by the bosses. Over 100,000 gaditanos (citizens of Cadiz) went out on the streets in a demonstration in favour of the local shipyard workers. The shouts were all against the closure of the shipyard and against the President of the government, Felipe Gonzalez, and his wife, the Deputy for Cadiz, Carmen Romero.

The newspaper *Diario de Cadiz* wrote: "The emotion was felt by all the participants". One of the most special moments was when the head of the syndicalist demonstration came before the factory and they broke into applause with shouts of "No closure of the shipyards, you're going to kill us".

Again throughout July, August and September 1995 there were battles between the authorities and the workers resisting attempts to close the yards in Cadiz.

To the question "What will the CNT do?" the CNT reply was: "No redundancies! No closure of the yard, and retention of all the conditions of work won in the plan PEC ... Our alternative is clear: transform the society. Don't fall into the error of putting up an alternative capitalism to capitalism ... The question is simple enough, the political economy favours the workers, or adapt it on the contrary in the interests of capital which is what is happening now." (Statement to *The Raven* from the CNT/AIT Federación Local in Puerto Real)

Modern unions degenerate

In 1995, at the same time that these violent confrontations were taking place in Cadiz and Puerto Real between rank and file workers and police, as well as elsewhere in Spain, *El Mondo* (an independent daily) revealed that both the UGT (socialist) and CCOO (communist) union federations had for years been in the pay of major employers. *El Mondo* (21st January 1995): "Comisiones Obreros received 10 million pesetas from the company Elcano after a drastic restructuring resulted in the loss of 325 jobs in 1992". Later the naval company Elcano moved its ships to the Bahamas, where, according to *El Mondo* "there are almost no taxes, nor protection of the rights of the workers". In the marine sector in Spain, since 1984, there has been the loss of 16,000 of the 24,000 jobs.

Other pay-offs to the socialist and communist trade unions had

come from foreign companies like SKF, chemical companies like Campsa, Repsol Quimica and Fese Enfersa. Showing that, claimed *El Mondo* "UGT and CCOO habitually received money from the employers with whom they negotiated".

In this climate of trade union corruption the CNT in Puerto Real have had to develop and uphold the standards of decency of the old Spanish trade unionism. The 'Asemblea' used by the CNT in Puerto Real is adopted from the historic pueblos where, Pitt-Rivers writes, it was "the traditional meeting place of workers" in the centre of the poor quarter. In Spain, the term 'sin vergüenza', meaning 'without shame', is used to ensure that individuals stick to the moral standards of the community – the pueblo. The struggle in Puerto Real by the CNT is about assertion of community values against those of the state, and those of the modern degenerate trade union institutions.

II
A conversation with Pepe Gomez in September 1996

BB: *How did you come to get involved in the anarchist movement?*
PG: In 1978 I was a trade unionist in USO (Christian Democratic trade union federation) organising in the shipyards. USO is a reformist federation now, but before 1976 it had the intention to take on the spirit of the CNT (Confederación National del Trabajadores, the anarcho-syndicalist trade union federation). At that time USO upheld the ideals of autonomy, Christianity and the defence of socialism. USO's idea was to fight against the Franco repression. In the early 1970s, before the death of Franco, we didn't have communication with other parts of the country. We were isolated and insulated from events and developments elsewhere. When I went to work among the shipyard workers in Cadiz I met the anarchists and was inspired to join the Confederación National del Trabajadores (CNT). The first book I read which helped to confirm me in my anarchism was Proletario Militante (Militant Proletariat) by Anselmo Lorenzo.

BB: *When did the current movement begin to develop here in Puerto Real?*
PG: The CNT in Puerto Real began to develop after the start of the first re-organisation of the shipyard here in 1978. This enforced conversion of the yard by the government involved redundancies and 'downsizing'. Initially there were people's assemblies in both Puerto Real town centre and in the yard. This process continued to develop between 1978 and 1986, creating a strong organisation of the CNT and the anarchists. Each Tuesday we would have an assembly in the shipyard and each Thursday we would assemble in the town centre. Organisations of the women and the youth were set up as part of the campaign. Our motive in confronting the re-organisation of the yard in Puerto Real in 1987 was to resist unemployment and force the introduction of more work. After six months of this action the government introduced more work into Puerto Real. The important role for the CNT was to undermine the structure of the Works Committees through the process of the popular mass meetings. The Works Committees are permanent organisations and part of the industrial hierarchy. The assemblies of the CNT in the community and the yard were a fundamental element of the social life of the town.

BB: *What links has the movement in Puerto Real with other towns in the province of Cadiz? Especially those which have had an anarchist history.*
PG: For the first time, since the transition from the Franco regime to what is called 'democracy', there is now a CNT branch in Puerto de Santa Maria (the port famous for its connections with the exportation of sherry).

[In San Fernando, south of Cadiz city, there has long been a CNT branch. At Sanlucar de Barameda, which also has sherry connections and is the main depot for Manzanilla wine, a pale, dry, almost salty product, the CNT has also had a branch for years. In the city of Cadiz, there is a strong 'Ateneo' (affinity group) with many young members. In La Linea de la Concepción, there is now a very active group with plenty of influence of anarchism and the CNT among the young. La Linea, alongside Gibraltar, had a CNT branch in the 1980s but at that time it was less vigorous. In the inland towns of Cadiz province, in contrast to the coast, the CNT is not so well placed. Everywhere there is the generation gap created by the Franco years. In Medina Sidonia, Benelup (Casas Viejas), Grazelema and those pueblos where there was always an anarchist presence, there are now older compañeros and many young people attached to the libertarian cause. But in those towns there is a lack of organisation.]

BB: *How does the CNT stand now in the political landscape of Andalucia?*
PG: Hombre, it is very much a minority organisation! But now in Andalucia it is a very important moment, because of the search of youth for an ideal of fundamental significance. This pursuit of something fresh means there are many possibilities now for anarchism here.

BB: *What is happening with the other trade unions in Andalucia? The CGT (the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación General del Trabajadores); the SOC (Sindicato del Obreros del Campo); and the small trade unions and the developments in the big trade union federations as well: like the UGT (Socialist) and the CCOO (Communist Trade Union Federation).*
PG: The Confederación General del Trabajadores (CGT), though nominally anarcho-syndicalist, now has a banner with a lot of red in it, but not much black. In theory and practice the CGT lacks a strong anarchist input. Some of the leaders of the SOC still refer to themselves as anarchists, but they don't behave like anarchists. These same leaders have entered the institutions of the state and the municipalities. Some are involved in the politics of Izquierda Unida (United Left Party – a semi-communist party). The support for the

SOC is now concentrated in the province of Sevilla and has lost much of its following in the provinces of Cadiz and Malaga. The UGT (Socialist Trade Union Federation) is spiritually dead, it is corrupted by the continuous scandals of the previous socialist government of the PSOE and by its own dubious ventures into business and property. It is now very reformist and moderate, it has sacrificed all of its ideals of earlier times. Workers retain their membership cards despite the scandals, but only to get insurance and mutual benefits from the union. The contamination of this kind of political wheeling and dealing trade unionism has entered the minds of the workers who are forever calculating and penny-pinching instead of embracing any moral ideal. The CCOO has also been swallowed-up in this system. The leaders Antonio Guetterez and Marcelino Comacho are clearly part of the set-up and don't want anything to upset their substantial salaries – least of all a radical cause.

BB: *Please explain a bit about the ingredients which allow the CNT and the anarchists to integrate with the lives of the people of Puerto Real.*
PG: We have rooted ourselves in radical local politics. In the ship-yard. In the community. In the issues that affect ordinary people. At the same time we have built up cultural contacts with the public through artistic projects and endeavours. In Puerto Real we are fortunate in having a well supported Anarchist/CNT centre. This has helped bring in the young people in town.

BB: *After the miners' strike of 1984/5 in Britain the labour movement as a whole went into a decline from which it has yet to recover.*
PG: Yes, it is natural that the British trade unions should collapse after the miners' strikes of 1984/5. But I think the problem is structural – bureaucratic trade unions; professional, full-time functionaries; the laws; the rigor mortis of officialdom and works committees.

BB: *In a way I believe on the contrary, that the problem in my country is the excessive pragmatism and law abiding nature of the English workers. Their essential lack of anything approaching a libertarian vision. Direct action occurs at work among the workers, but middle class people are often more likely to take direct action in the community and commit civil disobedience in the streets. In England, and especially in Scotland, at this time, the movement that has the most potential for libertarians is the unemployed workers' movement called Groundswell.*
PG: The unemployed have been very hard to organise in Spain – because of the transitional nature of the status of the unemployed.

Yet a poster in Puerto Real's main passeo declares: 'More than 3,550,000 unemployed! COLLABORATION! Government – Employers – Trade Union Bureaucracy. Don't you know about the CNT?'

[Pepe was interested in the Groundswell campaign against the Job Seekers Act and particularly the 'Three Strikes and You're Out' activity advocated by some anarchists in the United Kingdom.]

BB: *What is your view of the anarcho-syndicalist Gibraltarian trade union leader Jose Netto? [Netto in the 1960s was for a time a member of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation (SWF) whilst he worked in London. The SWF was then the British Section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Working Men's Association. Until recently he was District Secretary of the Gibraltar Branch of the British Transport & General Workers Union.]*
PG: I do not consider him an anarchist! Either he is an innocent or is confused. To me it is not possible to occupy the position as a full-time functionary in a trade union and at the same time to be an anarchist. As anarchists we have to uphold some minimum standards, and it is not possible to operate as a bureaucratic functionary in a trade union and be an anarchist. It's the same with the leaders of SOC. They all say they are anarchists, but adopt the path of Izquierda Unida (United Left Party – a communist front) and take seats in the Cortes (Parliament) and in the Town Halls. Where does it stop? In the municipal council? In the Cortes? Or in the European Parliament?

It is the same with the General Secretary of COB (the Bolivian Syndicalist Union). Some years ago, at an international conference, I asked: 'How is it possible for you to call yourself an anarchist, when you have been National Secretary for twenty years?' These people draw salaries, you know! In the COB they did not initially draw salaries as officials, but they do now.

BB: *But doesn't all this depend on the context? Isn't the situation different in different countries?*
PG: No, an anarchist ought to be the same in Spain as in Italy or as in England. The situation is the same all over the world. The same standards must apply throughout.

BB: *You seem to put the blame for the state we are in on the radical and libertarian left on the contaminating consequences of institutions like the bureaucratic trade unions and structural incorporation of the workers into the system. But surely the structural strait-jacket is only one aspect here, in Britain there seems also to be a lack of vision among the population at large.*

Even the Solidarity Federation, the international ally of the CNT in Britain, shows some signs of being out of touch with events and entrenched in a mundane modern mind-set. They have been slow to participate in what they have called the 'single issue' – the campaign against the Job Seekers Act, they seem to shy away from specific causes in favour of vague generalities like 'community unions', they seem locked into a cultural cul-de-sac.

PG: It is necessary to embrace specific and particular actions to construct a movement. The development of a movement can't start from the top down with half a dozen members. This is not possible. The construction of an anarcho-syndicalist movement must draw on many activities directed at specific and relevant issues affecting the community.

III
Street-wise South of the Sierras

Any account of class struggle anarchism would have to consider Spain, and perhaps particularly south west Spain: the provinces of Malaga and Cadiz, in Andalucia. Malaga, I was told by a member of the FIJL (Anarchist Youth Group) in Paris in 1963, was an anarchist city in 1936 as compared with Barcelona which was an anarcho-syndicalist city. Cadiz, or rather the Sierra de Cadiz, was, according to the anthropologist Julian A. Pitt-Rivers, "the cradle of agrarian Anarchism".

In 1868, after the Italian anarchist Giuseppi Fanelli left Spain, Gerald Brenan says:

> The word was carried to Andalucia, where groups sprang up at Lora el Rio, Arahal and at Arcos de la Frontera in the province of Seville among the organisers of the new co-operative stores, and then at Cadiz and in the small towns of the Lower Guadalquivir. Converts were made by the thousand. Those who went to meetings came away feeling that their eyes had suddenly been opened and that they now possessed the absolute truth upon every subject. This gave them a boundless self-confidence. They defied in open debate eminent Republican politicians such as Castelar, grave professors and economists and patriarchal socialists like Garrido; they intervened on every possible occasion in discussions on sociology, economics and jurisprudence. And, if one is to believe their newspapers, they invariably emerged victorious, leaving their opponents speechless and dumbfounded.

Because of the way the Spanish Civil War developed, most of the popular documentation and shilling shockers like *Homage to Catalonia*, or Langdon Davis's *Behind the Spanish Barricades*, or even the recent Ken Loach film *Land and Freedom*, have tended to give coverage to anarcho-syndicalism in the north east of Spain and Catalonia. Coverage of anarchism in Andalucia has been left mostly to historians and anthropologists. Pepe Gomez, perhaps the most respected anarchist in Spain today, tells us that the book that influenced him to become an anarchist was written by Anselmo Lorenzo – Anselmo Lorenzo who, as a young man, himself attended a meeting addressed by the Italian emissary of anarchism, Giuseppi Fanelli.

Decline of Andalucian Agrarian Anarchism

How important is Andalucia to contemporary anarchism in Spain? Murray Bookchin in his book *The Spanish Anarchists* (1977) invokes Edward E. Malefakis's *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain* (1970) to illustrate what he calls "the eclipse of Andalucia":

> The predominance of Andalucia in the anarchist federations of the 1870s and 1880s had disappeared after the turn of the century and was but a distant memory. The two ancient centres of Spanish anarchism were no longer in any sense equal. Urban anarcho-syndicalism had far outdistanced rural; Catalonia far overshadowed Andalucia.

For Mr Malefakis, Catalonia, Aragon and to some extent Levante, as the regions which carried on the "Civil War for the Anarcho-syndicalists after Andalucia had fallen to the Nationalists" were the strong major centres of the libertarian CNT-FAI structure. Bookchin claims: "In 1873, when Spanish anarchism exercised a considerable influence in the countryside, Andalucia (both urban and rural) provided nearly two thirds of the old International's membership. By 1936 this proportion had declined to about a fifth."

What Edward Malefakis is saying here seems to be confirmed in a way by contemporary Catalan historians. Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy in his biography of Gerald Brenan (1992) says:

> ... there was a problem accounting for Catalan anarchism in industry. Gerald [Brenan] explained it by the migration of anarchist workers from Andalucia. In fact it now appears that rather few southern workers went to Barcelona. It was Catalan peasants who migrated. Catalan anarchism, that is, can be explained by Catalan events – a discovery, it will surprise no one to learn, made by Catalan historians.

Most academics now seem to accept that Bakunin was right to suggest that industrial workers in developed regions would become increasingly bourgeois and conservative in their instincts. Consequently, it is claimed that the radicalism of Catalan anarchism in relatively prosperous industrial cities like Barcelona could only be kept up by regular injections of migrant peasants from the countryside. Curiously, when it came to the Spanish Civil War, the anarchist historian Jose Peirats felt obliged to criticise the anarchist 'Townies': "the Spanish anarchists suffered from an excessively urban orientation in their revolutionary, or rather insurrectionary, plans. If the insurrection was lost in the cities, the villages were written off". Urban industrial organisation, even in Spain and among the anarchists, has been a twentieth century trend.

Ought we then to consider Andalucian anarchism a nineteenth century anachronism? I think not! Guy Cheverton, of Hull Syndicalists, claims the CNT in Andalucia concentrated its emphasis on the cities and industrial workers, and organised on an urban basis. Murray Bookchin says only 'half-hearted' attempts were made to revive the peasant movement in the 1930s, after the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera came to an end. The CNT had great strength in the big cities of the south – especially Cadiz, Malaga, Cordoba and Seville – and in some of the bigger towns and villages; one thinks of Ronda and the white towns. But it seems the ties between the cities and the Andalucian villages were weak. "Little effective co-operation", observes Malefakis, "existed between the anarcho-syndicalist unions of the major Andalucian cities and their rural counterparts".

For some, Mr Cheverton and others, the urbanisation and the industrialisation of Spanish anarchism the CNT/FAI was a conscious strategy. But there was some evidence of tension if not resistance from the pueblos to the implied centralisation under the syndicate and the CNT. In Andalucia, according to Julian A. Pitt-Rivers, the anthropologist: "The resistance to becoming a national organisation was very strong, for it was recognised that it involved the sacrifice of an essential value, the sovereignty of the local community". The contrast was clear at the Seville Congress of the Federatión del Trabajadores de la Region Espanola in 1882. The telegrams to the Congress which came from Catalonia and the north have phrases like "ideas anarco-sindicalistas" while those from the Sierra talk about justice and the just cause of the people.

Mr Pitt-Rivers in his book *The People of the Sierra* (1954) is keen to assess "in anthropological terms the problem of the relation of the community to the nation". For him it is the anarchist stress on the authority of the local community and the rejection of outside authority which is most fascinating. He insists: "The concept of the pueblo as the unique political unit was so deeply embedded in the outlook of the peasants that it became a corner-stone in anarchist policy".

Was this 'class struggle anarchism'? Yes, in the sense that pueblo means 'people' in the context of 'plebs' against the rich. But in the big towns and cities the CNT represented 'class struggle anarcho-syndicalism'.

'Class struggle anarcho-syndicalism' tempered the anarchist insistence on municipal independence, owing to the practical needs of the twentieth century which required a degree of centralised organisation. This was seen as a practical requirement rather than a

change of heart. It also created a dilemma for the anarchist movement, as Julian Pitt-Rivers shows at the time of the Civil War:

> The rise to power of the anarchists in the towns of the Sierra in June 1936 was followed by the establishment of 'communism'. Money was abolished and a central exchange bureau was set up in the pueblo which collected all produce and redistributed it in accordance with a system of rationing. Thus, though clearly the situation demanded extraordinary measures and this example cannot be treated as conclusive, the assumption of power by the anarchists rendered the pueblo not only, theoretically, an exclusive political group, but exclusive economically as well.

Then Mr Pitt-Rivers makes a telling remark:

> There are some indications that this conception of the pueblo in the minds of small-town anarchists created tension between the regional leadership and the local community. The anarchist leaders from the large towns attempted, in the interests of organisation, to interfere with what the small-town anarchists regarded as the autonomous rights of the pueblo which they themselves embodied, and in that they were often resisted.

Pepe Gomez, in his interview with me, called for 'Un Minimo' – "some minimum standards for anarchists". But Pitt-Rivers shows that social struggle and the values people adopt are context dependent.

The Cultural Relevance of Spanish Anarchism

In the interview with me, originally published in *Freedom* in September 1987, Pepe Gomez said of the peasants of Andalucia: "The main problem is we lack a significant influence among the rural peasants in this region. Sad, when one considers that before the Civil War the peasants were our most traditional supporters."

The indications are that there has been a shift to the coast and to the cities of organised 'class struggle anarchism'. This may reflect social migration in Andalucia, the best jobs for decades were on the coast and in the cities. But it may also suggest the impact of the CNT and anarcho-syndicalism, as detected by Pitt-Rivers in 1954, has undermined rural anarchism. Mr Pitt-Rivers concludes that "the spirit of the anarchist movement has changed and its centre of balance has moved from the pueblo to the big city".

Besides Puerto Real, Pepe mentioned CNT organisation in San Fernando, Sanlucar, Santa Maria and the city of Cadiz. Guy Cheverton informs me that the CGT are strong in the city of Malaga. The CGT is the anarcho-syndicalist breakaway union from the CNT.

It is now much larger than its parent, and had the biggest contingent on the 1997 Euro-March in Amsterdam. The CGT in Malaga is influential in the Health sector, and in Transport, Railways, Education, Tobacco, and Banking.

It seems that like the CNT, the CGT has little peasant support in rural Malaga. Though they have membership in the agricultural areas in Seville province and Granada province. The CGT has organisation on the Malaga coast at the towns of Motril and Almunecar. But Mr Cheverton claims it is "essentially a city based organisation". Apart from the vineyards around Jerez, it seems the CGT strongholds are in the cities of Seville and Granada, followed by local federations in Algeciras, Almería, Aracena, Cadiz, Córdoba, Huelva, Jaen, Ubeda – all cities or large towns.

And yet, in the mid-1980s, in Andalucia more than half a million land labourers were out of work most of the time. In January 1987, in the worst hit provinces of Seville, Cadiz and Malaga up to one in three land labourers were unemployed most of the year. At that time it was the Sindicato del Obreras del Campo (Union of Land Labourers), which was most influential in the Andalucian countryside. According to Pepe Gomez the SOC still claims to be anarcho-syndicalist, or rather many of its members do.

Though the CGT may be larger than any other libertarian force in Andalucia, the most spectacular actions in the last two decades have occurred at Puerto Real and Gibraltar where the CGT has no support. In the CNT base of Puerto Real there were riots and strikes against the government plans to rationalise the shipbuilding yards there in 1987 and 1995. In the Gibraltar section of the British Transport & General Workers Unions, where there is also an anarcho-syndicalist input, there was a virtual uprising and general strike in 1986. This was over the control of GibRepair – the ship repair yard – ultimately this led to the collapse of the government of Sir Joshua Hassan, who had been Chief Minister for forty years.

Pepe Gomez is critical of Jose Netto, former District Secretary of the Gibraltar Transport & General Workers Union. Netto has been a lifelong anarchist, and was a member of the British Syndicalist Workers' Federation in the 1950s. What they have in common is not just 'class struggle anarchism', but a certain street-wise quality about their approach to local problems. For them 'class struggle' is not an abstraction, a cliche, but an everyday reality.

What is important, and a lesson for us, about the work of Netto and Gomez is their street-wise methodology. Their popular approaches

have not been taken up in Britain but rather some, like the Solidarity Federation, try to impose the Puerto Real model into an English context for which it is inappropriate. What we should draw upon is their methods and approach, rather than the Gibraltarian/Puerto Real models. In Britain 'class struggle' often becomes a theoretical affectation, rather than a prescription for practical action.

In 1882, at the Seville Congress, the Catalans declared for 'ideas anarco-sindicalistas' while the people of the Sierra talked of justice and the just cause of the people. It seems to me that whether we are considering Manchester or Madrid or Malaga or the Andalucian pueblos the social setting is of self-evident supreme importance. A cult of class struggle to be effective must be culturally relevant.

Britain, an island of isolated ineptitude

For me the issue is not between 'class struggle anarchism' and 'pacifist anarchism' or even between working class and middle class. Rather it is that British anarchism lacks social relevance in most respects because it is rarely street-wise, or popular, and doesn't apply itself to the local culture. This century the British left generally has been no better – in the 1930s it took its "ideas from Moscow and its cooking from Paris", and today often comes over as clumsy and out of step with genuine public concerns. Compared to the street-wise Spaniards there is a gaucherie aspect to British anarchism and the British left as a whole lacks a kind of social competence. Cultural clumsiness seems to be the British disease.

To consider the contrast between the gaucherie and the streetwise in a given situation, the researchers into people's methods look at people thrown into new circumstances and see how they navigate. Two interventions by gaucherie into anthropologically strange settings occurred in Spain in 1963 and '64, with the departures of myself and Stuart Christie, separately, to that country on behalf of the cause of the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth (FIJL) and Spanish liberation. Both of us were then members of the Syndicalist Workers' Federation, and we were what he called 'class struggle anarchists'. He served an apprenticeship and I was just out of my time as a maintenance electrician. Each of us had cut our political teeth in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

It would have been hard to imagine a more gullible pair than myself and Mr Christie. Because we came out of a British respectable CND political tradition, where people seldom went to prison for more than

a few months for political acts, I fear that getting caught almost appealed to us. In my case I was lucky. I had taken a young wife with me, and my eldest son was born in Denia, Alicante in Autumn 1963. Because of this the activists in the FIJL drafted me to propaganda work: first in Barcelona and then later, in 1964, in Andalucia. However, this didn't prevent me from running risks. Returning from a trip to the Asturias, in 1963, where I had been covering some strikes among the coal miners, I was arrested hitching back through the province of Segovia, just north of Madrid. Rashly, I had not troubled to carry my papers, after all one doesn't carry one's passport around England. The Civil Guards in a small mountain village held me overnight while my identity was checked. When searched I was found to be carrying a 'letter of introduction' supplied by anarchists in Paris for a contact in Barcelona. As it happened there was nothing incriminating in the document, but there could have been.

In Stuart's case this cavalier attitude had more serious consequences. While in the UK he signed petitions protesting about Franco's persecution of workers and anarchists, which were delivered to the Spanish Vice-Consul in Glasgow. He even appeared on a chat show, *Let me Speak*, before setting off on his mission to help assassinate General Franco. When asked by Malcolm Muggeridge on the show, "Would you assassinate Franco?", Stuart in his autobiography says he had to announce to the world his intention. I can't think of another occasion in which a party to an assassination plan goes on television to proclaim his intentions.

When I met him in Paris before his mission he was kilted and had donned a red and black anarchist neckerchief. Almost inevitably his mission to Spain led to his own arrest within days of entering the country. But he was also forced to assist in the arrest of his Spanish contact, Fernando Carballo. Fernando, a seasoned anarchist, was sentenced to thirty years and served twelve, while Stuart got twenty years but only served three. This incident damaged relations between the Spanish and British anarchist movements, or that was my impression when I later visited Germinal at our 'safe house' in Paris, in February 1967.

Later, when he came to write about his experiences in his autobiography *The Christie File*, Stuart, in 1980, represented our kind of activities as artful. I did much the same in pieces I wrote for *Nueva Senda* in France, and *World Labour News* in Britain in 1963-1964. But neither of us can disguise the truth that to the Spaniards we must have appeared as two Anglo-Saxon innocents abroad.

The account of Stuart's answer to Malcolm Muggeridge's question "Would you assassinate General Franco?" – "What could I say but Yes?" – will surely convince most Europeans of our endearing unsophistication. How different we are, those of us who come from this island. Pitt-Rivers says "it requires training and intelligence to distinguish rapidly when the truth is owed and when it is to be concealed". People brought up on the post-war Welfare State with its free orange juice and subsidised milk on the doorstep, like me and Stuart, didn't have the kind of iron in the soul or experience of danger that, as Pitt-Rivers writes, allowed the Spaniard, particularly the Andalucian, "to acquire conscious control over facial expression" which is "an ability which takes practice from childhood". When Norman Malcolm claimed, on seeing a news vendor's sign which announced the German government's accusation that the British had attempted to assassinate Hitler, that "Such an act was incompatible with the British 'national character'," Ludwig Wittgenstein, the philosopher, reacted angrily to this "primitive remark". It is not so much that this kind of thing runs counter to the 'British character', it is that it runs against our cultural competence. An unaccomplished liar is hardly likely to make an adept assassin. Someone who lives under a dictatorship is someone who knows when knowledge is something to give or deny. Pitt-Rivers argues: "the British, who are poor liars and poor truth-tellers also, making do much of the time with a blend of half-truth and self-deception, are greeted in Andalucia with that particular mixture of indulgence and admiration – indulgence towards children who control their muscular reactions so gracelessly ... let us face it, we are all fumblers by Andalucian standards, but they envy us our innocence".

It must be something in our upbringing, but whenever a British person affects to be a revolutionary, it so often ends up in the kind of Brian Rix farce Stuart Christie describes. There is something rather incongruous about a Brit who tries to make it as a revolutionary or 'class struggle anarchist'. Once seen never forgotten. It is like noticing, as the French often observe, that Englishmen keep their socks on while making love.

There is an incongruousness on the British left which makes them unintelligible and even alien to most working people. Most of the time the anarchists don't use their greatest strengths and tap into the prevailingly apolitical culture and general distrust of power politics and big business. Except in the first chapter, with the account of his childhood schooling and apprenticeship, one searches in vain in the

Christie autobiography for any sense of the ordinary or everyday activities of a manual worker, or the concerns of an urban or suburban householder. What one gets is an idea of a déclassé, almost demi-monde, adventurer. All too many of us in the British libertarian movement fall into this particular class. That is something one cannot say of Pepe Gomez or Jose Netto, or many of the most seasoned militants in the Spanish anarchist organisations.

Since the war, in Britain, few anarchists, or even anarcho-syndicalists, became shop stewards or were prominent or even active in industrial disputes and the trade unions. In Spain, on the contrary, anarchism has been so central to the culture that governments in Madrid, on the pretext of modernising the country, have had to attack the very Spanishness of Spanish culture. We are constantly being reassured that the anarchist millenarianism of the Andalucian peasants no longer has a hold, and the peasants are patient enough to wait for government reforms. Meanwhile the former socialist government of Felipe Gonzalez worked hard to get the Spaniards to work harder, give up the siesta and get to the office in Madrid before ten in the morning. If British anarchism is to become streetwise, and rid itself of the inanities of the gaucherie image of the British Left, it must learn the rules of the common culture and apply itself accordingly.

"No revolution has ever set the rich and powerful on one side with the people over against them; a bayonet has a worker on each end in revolution as in war. If we keep on seeing anarchism as a class movement we shall be clinging to a myth that never did work very well and has now lost any effectiveness it may have once possessed."

George Walford in *The Raven*, No. 11

"To be a slave is to be forced to work for someone else, just as to be a master is to live on someone else's work. In antiquity.....slaves were, in all honesty, called slaves. In the middle ages, they took the name of serfs. Nowadays they are called wage earners."

Mikail Bakunin

"We prefer intelligent workers, even if they are our opponents, to anarchists who are such only to follow us like sheep."

Errico Malatesta in *Umanita Nova*, 1922

"The concept of 'class' used by socialists, Marxists and anarchists has never really encapsulated the realities of life for working class people."

Tom Jennings in *The Raven*, No. 11

"In capitalist society, you are the lower class. The capitalists are the upper class – because they are on your backs. If they were not on your backs, they would not be above you."

Eugene Debs, speech 10th December 1905

"The working class cannot be left wandering all over Russia. They must be thrown here end there, appointed, commanded, just like soldiers."

Leon Trotsky, quoted by Maurice Brinton in *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control*

Donald Rooum

Class Struggle, or Acting for Ourselves

Change to a classless society would be of most benefit to the class of people who are most exploited and oppressed. Anarchists argue that there would be benefits for everyone, but the gains for upper class people would be somewhat subtle, such as freedom from worry about the security of their property and status. The benefit to lower class people, by contrast, is glaringly obvious.

Anarchist propaganda often reads and sounds as if it is addressed to people of the lowest social class, and this is entirely appropriate. Revolution must be made by lower class people, not only because they have most to gain and least to lose by radical social change, but also because they are the majority.

The aim of anarchism, properly so called, is a condition of people without government, without bosses, without coercive institutions. Unfortunately, however, the term 'anarchist' is also claimed by people who do not share this aim.

Some think anarchism is simple lack of personal restraint, like the rich jokers who spent a fortune on cocktails, and called a drunken press conference to announce that they were 'consumer anarchists'. Some think anarchism is no more than people being nice to each other, like the chap who proclaimed that a dentist and a dental patient are anarchists, because one seeks to cure the pain in the other's mouth. Some think anarchism means using direct action in pursuit of any objective however authoritarian and call themselves anarchists when they invade bookshops to destroy pictures of naked people. (All the examples are genuine.)

We need to distinguish between ourselves who hold anarchist opinions and self-styled 'anarchists' who do not, and a convenient way to do this is to insert a modifying term. Bookchin usefully distinguishes between 'social anarchism' and 'lifestyle anarchism'.[1] Kropotkin and Berkman referred to their anarchism as 'anarchist communism'. *Freedom*, in its first edition, described itself as "a journal of anarchist socialism".

During the past twelve years or so, 'class struggle anarchist' has

become fashionable. The term 'class struggle' is not of anarchist origin, but introduced into the anarchist movement from authoritarian socialism. Some more traditional anarchists are worried that the term may drag with it ideas which are inconsistent with anarchism, and there is evidence that their worry is justified.

'Class not Country'

Periodicals sold in Freedom Press Bookshop may be presumed to have at least a vague connection with anarchism, but one of them bore the slogan 'Class not Country' on the front cover of a recent issue.

Remember the famous First World War poster of General Kitchener jabbing his gloved finger at us with the slogan 'Your Country Needs You'. Now imagine the same poster with the word 'Country' replaced by the word 'Class': 'Your Class Needs You'.

The expected response to such exhortations depends on the punter thinking: 'I belong to a country/class in the sense of being an inhabitant or member. Therefore I belong to that country/class in the sense of being the property of that country/class. If my country/class needs me to kill and die, I must kill and die'.

We know what happened to those who were taken in by the Kitchener poster. Many were killed and injured by those taken in by similar exhortations on the German side. A few were killed by their officers for 'cowardice in the face of the enemy'. The victorious survivors, despite the talk of 'homes fit for heroes', returned home to conditions no better than they had known before the war. Their country won, but they all lost.

There were successful revolutions in Russia, China and Cambodia, brought about by working people responding to appeals for class solidarity. A few prospered by becoming bosses themselves, but those who remained working class, under 'working class' regimes, fared rather badly.

Ancestry, place of abode, social status are attributes of individual persons. People may be classified according to their attributes, and names like 'the British nation' or 'the working class' are given to some of the classifications. Some people get confused and suppose that because a classification has a name it must be a thing in itself, different from the persons who constitute it.

Thus 'the country' may win while the citizens lose, and 'the working class' may advance at the expense of individual workers. To avoid

such confusion, standard anarchist authors wrote of individuals rather than classes. When Kropotkin incited the workers to revolution, he did not write 'Fight For Your Class', but 'Act For Yourselves'.[2]

The allegiance syndrome

In 1990, a periodical sold in Freedom Press Bookshop published a manifesto which included the following:

> Meanwhile the working class must continue to search out and eliminate pockets of bourgeois resistance, and to those who deplore the bloodshed which this would involve, we reply, there is no alternative.[3]

This is plainly incompatible with anarchism. All and sundry could not be allowed to go about eliminating, otherwise the pockets of bourgeois resistance might do some eliminating of their own. The working class would need to decide who was allowed to eliminate.

Translating from classes to cases, there would need to be a command centre directing the killing. There is a historical precedent: the killing fields of Cambodia, during the reign of the Khmer Rouge.

The manifesto was withdrawn and repudiated shortly after publication, presumably when the anarchist members of the group got round to reading the stuff for which they were collectively responsible. But the damage had been done. When anarchists adopt the language of class struggle, they are in danger of being associated with the ideas of those who originated such language.

To quote Malatesta:

> What is important [to anarchists] is that a society should be brought into being in which the exploitation of person by person is not possible.[4]

This means getting rid of the means of domination, most obviously whips, chains, the wages system, prisons, weaponry. But the most obvious means are not the most important or effective. The principle method of domination is to control the minds of subjects, by persuading them that it is bad to be selfish, and good to owe allegiance.

President John F. Kennedy's famous exhortation "Say not what can my country do for me, but what can I do for my country" turns out to be meaningless when it is examined. A personified abstraction cannot do anything for you, nor can you do anything for it. People can do things for other people, but that is a different matter altogether.

Kennedy's exhortation provoked rapturous applause in the hall where he was speaking and nods of agreement from countless television viewers. It fitted the way people have been taught to think.

There is a great (if largely unconscious) conspiracy among rulers, to preserve the status quo by training people to the habit of allegiance. As Voltaire put it: "If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent Him".

The effect of patriotic allegiance is that one surrenders one's power of decision, or part of it, to the 'leaders' of one's country. Similarly, racial or religious allegiance causes one to surrender to the 'leaders' of one's race or religion.

Some perceive the pernicious absurdity of patriotism, racism or religion, but not of the whole allegiance syndrome. They suppose they can mend matters by replacing country, race or religious community with a more acceptable abstraction, such as the whole human race, the planet, freedom, or the working class. They are mistaken. People can set themselves up as 'leaders' of any abstraction you can think of, and become exploiters and oppressors like the 'leaders' of nations. As long as people believe that it is somehow wrong to act for themselves, and right to act on behalf of their social class or some other abstraction, they are more likely to seek new bosses than to seek freedom from all bosses.

Anarchists use the term 'class struggle' to mean much the same as 'act for yourselves'. Others use it to mean 'sacrifice yourselves for your class'.

It might be better for anarchists to use a term which is less ambiguous.

Notes

1. Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism Versus Lifestyle Anarchism: an unbridgeable chasm* (AK Press, 1995).

2. Peter Kropotkin *Act For Yourselves* (Freedom Press, 1988), originally a series of articles in *Freedom*, 1886-1907.

3. Since the manifesto is repudiated, it would be unfair to identify the publishing group by name. They know who they are.

4. Errico Malatesta, *Anarchy: a new translation from the Italian original* (of 1891) (Freedom Press, 1974). The quotation is updated for clarity. The original says "domination of man by man", where 'man' means person of either sex, a usage which has become obsolete.

Jean Pollard

Class Struggle – No Struggle?

Through the ages, the strive for freedom has tended to be around certain issues and people have been galvanised into action by the force of events. This article aims to show that in anarchistic terms, there is nothing wrong with single issues, but that these cannot, on their own, be *the* struggle for anarchism. The aim should be for the mutual co-operativeness of the *human* struggle.

The class issue is an obvious example and one which has often led its adherents to see as the only struggle for anarchism. It is true that the class system exhibits the most blatant and unacceptable aspects of capitalism and that the 'working class' gets the brunt of it: the poverty, the wage slavery, or the debilitating rejection of unemployment. However, to see the struggle in terms of redistribution of wealth or destroying the middle and upper classes is merely to change the goalposts of capitalism, by continuing the hierarchical structure. History shows that the reorganisation of any group which is defined by capitalism is merely to give different leaders but not an anarchist society.

If there is any classification of people in terms of struggle, it must be between the controlling and the controlled. The class structure merely highlights the degree of control. To define in any other way is an illusion and leads to the conclusion that if the working class had more access to the same things as the upper classes, then they would be happy. This then marks out human existence only in terms of money and possessions and keeps them within the framework of a capitalist system. Ask why the upper classes keep their control. It is to gain more power and wealth. Ask why so many of the 'lower orders' spend their money on the prole tax (or Lottery). It is to gain more power and wealth. This is not necessarily overtly over their fellow people, but this is the net result .

Similarly, within the class division there are hierarchies. As a one-time employee of a large trade union, I recall the exploitation of the workers by those who were supposedly at the sharp end of working on their behalf. The sight of shop stewards piling into their cars for

meetings in London, and then each claiming the full cost of the train fare to make a profit, was appalling. They were taking the hard-earned cash out of their fellow workers' pockets. Similarly, the employees of the union had to be members of it. This led to the ludicrous situation where the union leader was also the office boss. Not surprisingly, this meant atrophy of the workers' rights and ability to negotiate.

Part of the difficulty is the brainwashing by the system, where the union representatives reflected the very excesses they challenged in the bosses, but failed to see how they did the same, albeit on a smaller scale. This is because the system has been internalised and accepted too long by everyone. It is also a truism that, as with the union, the working class are obliged to exploit each other and it is always those at the bottom of the heap who are exploited the most. For example, child labour appears to abound in China and the result of that is the cheap imports into this country. Who buys those? Yes, it's the people who are on low incomes who cannot afford the expensive designer products bought by the upper classes. Ironically, it may well be that working conditions for those who make the higher quality products are better than for those who produce the cheaper imports because in the latter case profits are being maximised at the workers' expense. As Emma Goldman wrote, "the people, the people: they conspire with their masters to forge their own chains and crucify their Christs".

The truth is that people of all social hues or classes are expected to see themselves and their fellows in terms of money and possessions and it is the pursuit of that end that government and its acolytes, the multinationals, instils in people forcing them to compete with and exploit each other. We must never forget that we, as anarchists, are also tainted by the brainwashing of the system; we all bear the scars of our personal struggle to get out of the mental mire of government control. On a simple level, remember going to school and learning the national anthem, the Lord's Prayer and how to count? All to bind us to government, church and capitalism: all hemmed in by the view that money and possessions make for a happy life.

However, what we have to remember is that the illusion is fed into *everyone*, whether at the worst comprehensive or the privileged reaches of Eton, the difference being that one group is to control and the other is to be controlled. The carrot for the latter group is that if it conforms and works hard enough, it might have an opportunity of being a controller or, if not, it's all for the 'common good' anyway. But in human terms, neither group has a monopoly on peace and contentment, of living in harmony with others and their environment.

I am not an apologist for the privileged, but we should not get sucked into the idea that they are living anything more than *materially* comfortable lives. They still bear the same psychological scars of government and capitalism as the rest of us.

Can anyone seriously consider it a humane thing to send small children away from home to boarding school? Someone once remarked to me that the lower classes have social workers; the upper ones, nannies. Both are dysfunctional families. I also recall a story of a prostitute explaining that not all her clients wanted sex: some just wanted to talk and one in particular was a doyen of industry responsible for a huge workforce. All she had to do for him was to spray herself with a perfume he supplied and put on long evening gloves. He would then lie in bed with the light off and she had to come into the room and stroke his cheek. After knowing him for some time, she got the background story. He had been brought up in a privileged, rich family but all he remembered of his mother was the act recreated by the prostitute – of a woman going off to yet another social function. In human terms, I consider that a pathetic story and, in practical terms, I find it disturbing because what sort of controller had he become? Being detached from feelings for our fellow humans is what makes people harsh and cruel. Treating people badly results in bad people.

As the Taoist philosopher Chang Tzu wrote in a parable:

> Horses live on dry land, eat grass and drink water. When pleased, they rub their necks together. When angry, they turn round and kick up their heels at each other. Thus far only, do their natural dispositions carry them. But bridled and bitted, with a plate of metal on their foreheads, they learn to cast vicious looks, to turn the head to bite, to resist, to get the bit out of the mouth or the bridle into it. And thus their natures become depraved.

William Blake, in the eighteenth century saw the pointlessness of materialism and wrote "for every Pleasure money is useless" and he saw that an excessive concern with money is also disastrous to the soul, turning a person into a miser who would only see a guinea in the setting sun.

The severance from others also gives government its currency. If we do not know what is going on with our neighbours and in our community, then we become easily fed with the tabloid-induced fear of others and retreat further into the illusion of the nuclear family, fed by a diet of MacDonalds and soaps. Mutual aid and co-operation look ever more distant and as people become increasingly dependant on government as the arbiter of human life, then they become willing to sanction without question all its brutalities.

So as people become severed from each other they become severed from their own humanity. A common sight these days is to see drunks or homeless people laid in the underpasses of cities. On one such occasion, a man lay motionless with a beer can at the side of him. Was he dead, or dead drunk? People walked past and ignored him. Many of those people would be concerned for him, but the multiple stories of attackers, of wastrels, of 'it's their own fault' and all the other brainwashed fears instilled in them, found their mark and people carried on, their lack of exercise of their humanity, of their natural need to help, was frozen. And if he was taken away and beaten up by the authorities, would they care or would they believe he 'deserved' it? And if he 'deserved' it, wasn't that because he didn't conform? In freezing their natural human instinct, they exhibit the triumph of government in crushing the individual and the rigid adherence to conformity.

So, if we do not have a *class* struggle, what do we do? We educate *everyone* and that includes the controllers. If we accept Colin Ward's view that anarchy lies as a seed beneath the surface, then we must accept it is below the surface of everyone, not just the weakest or less privileged. If we do not, then we cannot account for Peter Kropotkin or the nobleman Lao Tzu. Basically, we are all in chains, it's just that some are gold-plated and rattle much louder, but only like Marley's ghost.

Part of the problem is that many people feel comfortable and safe in those chains because they put their trust in government, in the naive belief that government knows best. They have to learn that only they know what is best for them and they are not living their lives to the full – they are living their lives as directed by other people whom they will probably never have met. Mostly, they are living in fear: of attack from their neighbours, of loss of pension, of war against an unknown enemy, etc. and they look to government for the protection they believe they cannot give themselves. They must be made aware that they have no need to control others or be controlled.

Therefore, the struggle must be aimed at everyone. People need to be aware of the illusion of government. Unless we aim to get people to free themselves from their chains, we remain merely pockets of radicals and revolutionaries, reacting accordingly to the excesses of the leaders of the day.

We must recognise that some of us may feel more strongly than others about certain issues such as environment, feminism, class, etc., but we should see them only as the different hues of anarchism and

to welcome, support and respect them as a manifestation of the individual free views. We should also help where we can.

But we must recognise that they are all single issue staging posts on the way to anarchism: they are not the foundations of the route itself. The hardcore of that road is the *human* struggle for freedom from all forms of restraint; the top surface is knowledge and all anarchists should be part of that roadwork.

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"When people hyphenate anarchism with something else (as in anarcho-communism, eco-anarchim, etc.) when push comes to shove, they tend to forget the anarchist bit. Put ecology ahead of freedom and you can become an eco-fascist Put class struggle ahead of freedom and you become a Bolshevik as did many World War One-era anarchists. Put feminism ahead of liberty and you become a feminazi."

Larry Gambone, *Freedom*, 2 November 96

Peter Neville

Some Thoughts on Class Struggle

Social stratification is the hierarchically organised structuring of social inequality that exists in society. As in geology it refers to the layered structure of strata, but in sociology the layers consist of social groups emphasising the ways in which the inequalities between these groups are structured and persist over time.

Social class is one of the fundamental forms of social stratification along with caste and estate (the latter is sometimes called feudal society by historians).

Many writers have examined social stratification but probably the two most important have been Karl Marx and Max Weber. Marx's view is based on the Hegelian interpretation of history. Marx believed that the development of societies is marked by periodic class conflicts which, when they become acute, can lead to revolutionary change. These class conflicts or struggles derive from the contradictions or unresolved tensions embodied in society, the most important of which are economic – that is changes in the factors of production. Marx saw class in economic terms in respect of the ownership or non-ownership of capital. He divided the population into two principal classes, those that owned property – the capitalist class – and those without property – the proletariat. The term proletariat means being landless which should also include much of the urban middle class, although Marxists use the term in a more simplistic sense to signify being working class in order to fit their model.

Marx recognised that many groups would not fall exactly into these two classes, such as peasants and small manufacturers, but suggested these were a hangover from a pre-industrial estate society which would vanish under a fully industrialised society. Two other groups which existed at the time, albeit of much smaller size than today, were the lower middle class which he referred to as petit bourgeoisie, and an underclass which he called the lumpenproletariat. These had unexpectedly grown at the end of this century and do not accurately fit Marx's model, yet those who support Marx's approach seldom revise their model to take account of these changes, for instance

frequently incorporating the lumpenproletariat wholesale as being working class whilst rejecting the lower middle class, from which many of them have come, as being non-working class. Is this a lack of class consciousness on the part of some activists?

For Marx, social classes were not just economic groups but more tangible collectivities and real social forces. As such he believed they would go through a process which would enable them to develop a class consciousness where, in the case of the proletariat, it would develop from being a class 'in itself', that is an economically defined class with no self-consciousness, into a class 'for itself', that is a group of workers with a class conscious view of the world ready to pursue class conflict. That other classes such as the lower middle class might also develop in this manner was not part of his model but is part of a reality and for Marxists part of the problem.

The other important writer was Max Weber, who took a more sociological approach. We speak of class, he comments, when people have in common 'a specific causal component of life chances'. This component is determined by the economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income within commodity or labour markets. So Weber sees class in terms of market situation. These need not be groups or communities but bases for collective action. On the other hand the term status indicates actual groupings of individuals. Status situation, as opposed to economic determinism, are typical components of the life fate of people determined by positive or negative social estimation or honour. Whilst status can be linked with class it need not be and may even counteract it.

Weber also, in rejecting the crude Marxist formulations, suggested class interests may often form the basis of collective and social action (a political action), for there is no tendency for class interests to lead to a class polarisation as envisaged (often hopefully) by Marxists or to lead to revolutionary change. Weber's ideas on class, status and politics have been very influential, forming both a buffer against the crude Marxist conflict theory and the foundation of modern sociology.

This is not to say that the Marxian and Weberian models remain as archetypical descriptions of social reality but do form the basis for those of us that wish to study the sociology of stratification in more detail. Much empirical groundwork in Britain has been derived from research done within the context of the Registrar General's census returns which were later classified in terms of occupation and then grouped together. This enabled later sociological work to be done especially in Weberian terms. It was not until the fifties that studies

of social mobility (movement between strata) began to be undertaken. Later on market research firms began either to use the Registrar General's classifications or develop alternatives, seeing the population in terms of market groups with differential spending patterns. Stratification studies have now become much more sophisticated.

Largely since the development of feminism a new criticism of stratification has developed, questioning why classifiers only looked on male occupations and male breadwinners as evidence of position in the strata, although this is often a red herring brought in to suit feminist dogmatics. Still, to place say a male brother who is doing an apprenticeship in a manual worker category, claimed as being working class, whilst his sister training to be a secretary, a white collar worker, is said to be middle class, does indicate how fragile much theoretisation can become, especially when ultimately the brother's income as a craftsman will be greater than a secretary's. Much work of the sixties was on the manual worker/white collar worker (working class/middle class) divide and the developments in higher education, making a fifth of the population graduates, made much of the Marxian categorisation ridiculous. This did not prevent something of a revival of Marxist class theory in Britain and America since the early seventies, but much interest in class struggle comes not from serious sociological research into the realities of social stratification but an ideological acceptance of the Marxian theoretical approach to social change by non-sociologists.

A classical approach to Marxian economics is the base/superstructure theory (often referred to as the superstructure/infrastructure theory) which says that the economic base (or economy) determines the structures of social relations (the family, education, work, etc.) and in so doing denies class struggle any important causal role. Class struggle is then not the motor of history but merely a reflection of its underlying forces. This leads to the problem for activists following the Marxian paradigm of how to reconcile the determining structures with their own activity as so-called revolutionaries seeking to change society through struggle. Much of this work has been further refined by Gramsci, Poulantzas and Althusser.

It therefore puzzles many as to how class struggle anarchists hold to a position already believed to be well on the way out by serious Marxian thinkers. That many class struggle anarchists clearly come from a Marxist background may be true but as a fellow anarchist recently said, their ideas may be Marxist in origin but they talk as if they are anarchists – however their whole approach to movement

activity, their organisations, their sets of dogmatic principles, their ways of decision-taking and their exclusivity is far closer to Trotskyism than anarchism. In what way can class struggle be seen as anarchism?

Terms such as class struggle are often defined by anthologists producing dictionaries of sociology but none of these relate it to anarchism, although a comment made by Michael Mann talking about anarchists:

> ... their critique of Marxism [is] on the grounds that its revolutionary organisation contains the seeds of a new dominant class has been reinforced by the treatment they themselves received at the hands of communist parties. (1983)

perhaps says it all. The anthologists are quite detailed on Marxism however.

Although I have a fairly extensive library of books on anarchism I have found little mention of the term class struggle indexed within an anarchist context, so why does this approach apparently fire up the imaginations of so many who nowadays call themselves anarchists?

Looking at those who did mention it: Proudhon was hardly a class struggle anarchist, rejecting Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat as leading to:

> ... universal servitude, all-encompassing centralisation, the systematic destruction of individual thought, an inquisitorial police, with universal suffrage organised to serve a perpetual sanction to this anonymous tyranny. (Peter Marshall, 1993)

How clearly this is related to Eastern European Communism.

Bakunin, again quoted by Marshall:

> Freedom can be only created by freedom, by a total rebellion of the people, and by a voluntary organisation of the people from the bottom up.

Nothing about the exclusivity of class struggle anarchism here. A less well known figure, Reclus, did claim the importance of class struggle. Is it to Reclus that class struggle anarchists owe their intellectual allegiance? I wonder.

I can find no justification for the acceptance of a class struggle linkage with anarchism. Perhaps the class struggle anarchists might enlighten me? What does puzzle me is the archaic nature of the class struggle approach in terms of Marxism in view of more recent debate within Marxist circles. Why then do these latter day saviours, these class struggle anarchists, try and lumber the rest of us within

anarchism with an approach to political and social theory which itself is at the least archaic and in a broader sense no longer intellectually respectable even within left wing thinking?

A possible reason is that having moved from Marxism into anarchism because of a disenchantment with trends in Marxian thinking they still find it more comfortable to work with people of a similar background, either fellow class struggle anarchists or Trotskyists, rather than non-aligned anarchists – which makes one wonder whether their use of the term anarchist is valid. It rather reminds me of the group of Native American Apaches, ever a wandering breed, who settled down next to and became friends and hunting partners with the Kiowas and then became known not just as Apaches but as a separate tribe, the Kiowa Apaches. I find it puzzling that the class struggle anarchists call themselves anarchists at all as they do not appear to want to have much contact with other more non-aligned anarchists within the movement, although they have yet to make a final break.

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John Rety

In the Womb of the Old

the rise and destruction of an anarchist village (Wandsworth, 5th May to 15th October 1996)

[The editors of *The Raven* asked me to put together my articles written about the Wandsworth occupation which appeared in *Freedom* at various dates in the 'Through the Anarchist Press' column. I realise that communications not being as good as they ought to be, most of this might come as news to your readers so I am reprinting them here chronologically and in substance while adding a short summary of what needs to be said at the end.]

At a meeting at the Battlebridge Centre, King's Cross, organised by The Land is Ours, which was attended by over seventy people, it was revealed that at least three large sites have been earmarked for the proposed occupation on 5th May. The occupation is to last for at least a week, during which time the vacant land will be converted by hundreds of activists from all over the country into a sustainable village, with gardens, farms and community projects. The excellently-run and organised preliminary meeting set up several sub-groups which held detailed discussions and then reported back to the mass meeting. Nobody should underestimate the importance of this project or the dedication of those taking part and its implications for the anarchist movement. Clearly this is an area where anarchist initiative passes into anarchist practice, and all readers living in London are urged to take part, or at least visit the site, which is kept secret for obvious reasons until noon on Sunday 5th May. Coaches, however, will leave for the site from the Hammersmith Unemployment Centre at 10am on 5th May [a telephone number was given for those who wished to join later].

We must reclaim the land for ourselves. Not elections, but direct action! The time has come to put land back into the hands of the community. This occupation is for real and it is hoped that once the land is reclaimed homeless people will be able to make their homes on a permanent basis.

For those who wish to help fully in the preparation of this project, here is your chance to involve yourself in whatever capacity you think best fits the occasion. [*From a leaflet issued at the time*]

[In order to show the thoroughness of the preparations an extract from the contacts list is hereby given (telephone numbers deleted).]

Contacts:

Builders / designers / carpenters / craftspeople: Ernest.
Perma / horticulturists: Lynn.
Entertainers / alternative energy riggers: Shane.
Press / radio / bureaux: George.
Legal skills: Jim.

Materials:

Scaffolding / bender poles / tarpaulins / wind generators / mural paint / tilley lamps / plywood / carpet / straw bales or any other building materials / hand tools / nuts and screws / vans / flat-bed truck / kango hammer / ladders / rope / firewood / wheelbarrows / seeds and seedlings / leaf-mould / sawdust / wood-ash / compost. If you can lay your hands on any of these things, telephone Jacklyn for a pick-up point or to tell you where to take them.

It is hoped that at least one tent will be put up for *Freedom* readers and contributors.

There will be numerous events and projects from solar powered telephone exchanges to talks.

As we said before (see *Freedom*, 13th May 1995) in connection with the tremendous Wisley occupation: "LAND is the big issue!"

Pure Genius

[The occupation took place as planned on 5th May, and the following report appeared in *Freedom* on 18th May 1996.]

I have now seen anarchy in practice and, so far, it works. The Land is Ours campaign, after three months of careful preparation, occupied a thirteen-acre site (Gargoyle Wharf, York Road, Wandsworth) and within minutes of arrival two coachloads of people set about transforming the derelict land fronting the River Thames south of Wandsworth Bridge into a 'sustainable village' including gardens, vegetable plots, imaginative housing and community projects for local people, who have given tremendous support all through the week.

In six days a basic core of about a hundred people, with over a thousand who have come to help on a daily basis, have made this

place both liveable, entertaining and worth coming to. There is no better cuisine in London, and the store-room is full of the choicest vegetables from donations and from the local New Covent Garden Market. A community of individuals! The vegetable plots are increasing at a daily rate, with some friendly rivalry between the new piled-on perma- culture where hands are the only tools and the traditional methods of working up the ground with pickaxes, forks and shovels.

The owners – if such a word is fit to use in the context – are the Guinness brewery group who inherited the site in 1986 when they 'took over' the Distillers Company, and ever since then the thirteen acres remained unused. Guinness, in partnership with Safeways, put in a lame proposition for a superstore which even the notorious Wandsworth Council had to reject.

The site is self-policed – again this is a ready-made phrase – which in effect means that there is a completely crime-free zone. Inside the site no money changes hands, although the initial cost of setting up the operation came to £3,000, mainly from donations, which was spent on a large mail-out, hire of coaches and building materials. Ever since then the local builders and other well-wishers have brought in supplies. There is now a rudimentary water supply for drinking and for irrigation. A proposal to use Thames river-water for irrigation is being considered.

The communal pavilion, 'Octavia's Love Nest', is a beautiful wooden structure in which Colin Ward gave his talk on 'Squatting Through the Ages'. This structure went up in three days, and a windmill generating solar power should be in place by today.

The place is swarming with reporters from all over the world and Tony Benn came on Tuesday 7th May as early as 7am and gave his opinion that homelessness "was a necessary discipline of capitalist society". He said that what he saw was admirable. When asked if he would stay, he nevertheless chose to return to his cronies in the Gas House across the river.

Guinness, of course, do not seem to exist in the summons which they issued against Nicholas Harris, George Monbiot, Steve Collier and Persons Unknown (could it be you, dear reader?). The plaintiff is named as United Distilleries plc for the hearing on Wednesday 15th May at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand. The shares of Guinness stand at about £4.60 a share at the moment and the site is also worth a cool £20 million. A drop in the Guinness fortune, and it is rather irrelevant that, rich as they are, they are prepared to go

lying into court (some solicitors have neither shame nor brain) for the summons testified that the "land herein mentioned are not residential in nature". Then what was that about their planning application for 110 (unaffordable) flats skirting the superstore? And what are these people, these Londoners, who at this moment are residing here, their laughter filling the air as their hammers knock the wood into its place and pushing the good mulch in their wheelbarrows. Irish mist?

This is anarchy in action, and I'm cautiously optimistic that it is here to stay.

Wandsworth land occupation

[The following report appeared in *Freedom* on 3rd August 1996, and clearly shows that a community has established itself in two and a half months on a piece of land which was left derelict for ten years.]

The thirteen-acre site in York Road, SW11, is still in the hands of the occupiers. Although Guinness have got a possession order, they have not activated it and within the next few weeks the order will lapse. Although publicity in the press and television has ceased and as such the occupation is slowly becoming a fading memory in communal consciousness, the occupation still remains a remarkable achievement. For anarchists it is also an equally remarkable opportunity to observe an embryonic anarchist society in the making. The place is unique, at least in London, with its mixture of the newest and of the oldest technologies. What is so marvellous about 'Pure Genius' is its adherence to strict anarchist dogma with full respect to individual and communal needs.

The intricate wooden structures are mainly designed at the camp-fire, discussed at the meetings and put up by small teams of ever-changing people. There is ample food excellently cooked to the highest culinary standards. The flourishing vegetable plots have begun to produce food for the table. But what is most appealing to me is that people organise their own timetables yet are also willing to do communal tasks. Whether it is a 'skip run' for timber, metal and other building materials or the daily visit to the nearby Covent Garden fruit and vegetable market, on whose explicit support the occupiers have relied on since 5th May, or work on maintenance or for the putting up of communal buildings, there are always willing hands.

The need for money has been reduced to the minimum as food is free and the communal store room (a large circular bender well insulated and shelved) is always fully stocked with the choicest fruits and vegetables, bread, rice and condiments.

This is not to say that all the occupiers are anarchists – but that they live in an anarchist society is indisputable.

But look at the shadows, so to speak. A comparison which comes to mind is the exclusion order round Stonehenge which costs Salisbury Council many millions each year. A council can 'get away' with such a monstrous expenditure to keep out about eighty people intending to visit Stonehenge at solstice time. The permanent population of the Wandsworth 'Newbury on Thames' is about the same figure (although at short notice many thousands would arrive to defend the place) and a similar expenditure by such a large amount by a Stock Exchange quoted company could seriously affect the share value of the company. So there is a slight feeling that Guinness will at least wait for the decision of the public enquiry on their planning application, together with their old friend Safeways.

As to what Guinness will or won't do is also very interesting to consider. The land, by and large, belongs to them except for four 'plots'. The arches by Wandsworth Bridge are owned by the local authority, the disused large jetty belongs to the River Authority (parts of it standing on the Queen's mud), the disused electricity sub-station is the property of LEB and there is also a very pleasant stretch of land by the river of which nobody, at the time of writing, knows its owner (possibly dear old Shell). In order to gain possession of the whole site it will be necessary for these exemplary authorities to co-ordinate their actions with Guinness and such negotiations are both costly and difficult.

Should Wandsworth Council become part of the eviction attempt then they will have to rehouse all those families with children, for example. The other difficulty for the Guinness firm is the possibility of very bad publicity at the time when the public enquiry's decision is still pending and might not be known for several months.

In the meantime, I urge readers of this paper to visit the site while the going is good. This is an ecologically safe zone for those with a zest for life.

Whose violence?

[This article was written when the rumours had reached the camp that Guinness were sending in their bailiffs to the occupied site at Wandsworth, and appeared in *Freedom* on 19th October 1996.]

By the time these words are printed Guinness may have sent their bailiffs to the occupied site at Wandsworth, London.

A telephone call was received at the offices of Land is Ours in Oxford giving a 'tip-off' that Guinness were intending to pounce in the early daylight of Tuesday 15th October. The caller gave no name. Rumours like this have spread before, but this one is taken seriously. Should the warning be deemed to be true, a very vast telephone tree will be activated and people will come from all over the place to see out the eviction attempt.

The thirteen acres have been occupied since 5th May and have been held in common by a basic core of eighty people with a massive support from all sections of the surrounding population. It is remarkable that the occupation has lasted so long and for anarchists it is of exceptional importance and interest. Here is an embryonic anarchist society in the making, although it would be difficult to say how much of its anarchism would remain in its natural evolvement. The community has dealt with its external problems very well and Guinness have made no headway. They left the land unoccupied for ten years and their plans for the site have been rejected. It is even a possibility that the property world being what it is they do not after all own the entire site. Nevertheless, the courts have given them an eviction order and there is no guarantee they won't use it even if they have no immediate plans for the site.

It is remarkable also how well the community dealt with its internal affairs, although as can be imagined individual problems, both real and delusionary, take a lot of time to sort out. The last meeting tackled the question of violence and non-violence. Typically, the rumour of imminent eviction was given very little time. It is difficult to come to any conclusions. Individual violence may be a terrible thing, but communal violence is a thousand times worse.

It was interesting nevertheless to listen to this open soul-searching. It is inevitable that such a random group of people with different ideas and upbringings would take some time to work out its *modus vivendi.*

Authoritarian structures are difficult to eradicate, but they are in constant conflict with spontaneous action. Anarchists have no history of societies living together, and your definition of anarchism may well be anathema to another bunch of anarchists.

As I have written before, the most we can hope for is to be understood by people with different understandings. It is no news that different forms of anarchism give different answers to the question of violence and non-violence. In this matter I cannot take sides, except to note the difference of emphasis.

I have come to the conclusion that it is more important for me to live in

an anarchist society than to insist that every cat and dog in it should be anarchist.

The threat of bailiffs will bring everybody together. The external enemy will bring solidarity within.

Whatever, here is a place where money has been reduced to a minimum, where food is free, where nobody needs for the simple necessities of life. A breath of fresh air and freedom. I urge you to visit Pure Genius while the going is good. It is a rare and safe zone for those with a zest for life.

Guinness: brewers of destruction

[Many people in London, which is a very big place, did not even know about this village until it got into the news on its destruction. The following article appeared in *Freedom* on 2nd November 1996.]

As mentioned in the last issue of *Freedom*, the rumour that the disreputable firm of Guinness will evict the inhabitants of the Wandsworth 'eco-village' had become a reality in the early hours of 15th October 1996.

Thirteen acres of communal endeavour were destroyed in just about six hours. *All the edifices were razed to the ground.* Anybody walking past today will see the land made derelict again. All this under a legal pretext of a piece of paper issued in the High Court. Guinness have shown themselves expert manipulators of the property system and their board of directors are what I categorise as 'commercial brigands' who have earned their right to apply for the medal for outstanding stupidity.

To have seen what happened is to have seen the holocaust in its preliminary stages. Here was the Balkans brought to the banks of the silver-flowing Thames (or some other pollutant). The old word 'pogrom', transmuted to ethnic cleansing, was even on the lips of the fluffy police, all four hundred of them, as they watched the hired riot police (oh, it's not us, it's them) assault the peaceful inhabitants and assist the two hundred bailiffs hired by Guinness to evict the people from their homes, which they have built since the occupation started on 5th May. All the beautiful gardens and nature reserves then were bulldozed, including the communal building.

To talk about the destruction of Bosnian villages in this context is painfully relevant. Not only were the homes destroyed, but everything in them. Nobody was allowed to rescue anything. The police assured people that their 'belongings' would be put in a container. The

following day all was under mounds of earth, burnt, bulldozed, and the barren ground patrolled by security pulled out of the labour exchange for a few days 'work'.

The press were there, many of them working for Guinness or the authorities, who made sure that neither television nor the world's press and their photographers were witness to the action or inside the gates of the site during the eviction. Because of the scant reporting most people here and abroad still do not know the extent of blind destruction which took place. While the police watched impotently, the mature plane trees around the perimeter were cut down ('Land is Ours' leaflet, Tuesday 15th October 1996).

It is too early to draw any sane conclusions. Here was an anarchist society in the making, under great stress, and they have created a thing of beauty, which by Keatsian definition is 'a joy forever'.

In many respects I agree with George Monbiot of the Land is Ours campaign, that as such we have come out of this sorry mess with honour, even dignity. *Whatever happened in the end, it bodes well for the future of anarchism, both in idea and practice.*

This is not the place to discuss all that has been learnt. A shabby piece of paper issued in the High Court ultimately triumphed over natural justice and the common ability of the people. The buildings (surely Anya and Brendan have built architecturally outstanding structures which this land has not seen or equalled for the past four thousand years) made communal life a pleasure and the stars above visible.

One day we shall win, comrades, but for me even to have lived among anarchists in good fellowship, even for a few weeks, have given me strength for the days to come.

Guinness may have erased the ground momentarily, but something that was planted there on 5th May will survive them.

The aftermath

Over a hundred people gathered together on 5th May 1997 and visited the site, which looked dismal. It was flattened out of all recognition, the contaminated earth churned up with the wind blowing the dust into the municipal houses opposite. All the plane trees were chopped down. Inside the perimeter fence Guinness's security men stood bewildered. All we could see were a few cabins and a portaloo. The demonstrators threw balls of earth with seeds of re-growth over the wire fences. There was neither press or television

there to mark the occasion. There was nothing newsworthy in an empty thirteen-acre site near the river.

Summary

To deal with the inherent difficulties of finding a suitably large place in London, the organisers had to choose a piece of land which was contaminated by previous industrial use. That this was acknowledged right from the beginning could be seen by the efforts of the permaculturists who decided to pile good earth of sufficient depth onto the land so that whatever was growing could also be safely eaten.

For the community to be completely self-supporting was something that could not be fully achieved in the limited time. Nevertheless, the surrounding communities, including the market workers at Covent Garden vegetable market, showed great generosity in providing fruit and vegetables which sustained the population.

The nature of urban life also brought along a number of people for whom it was their first opportunity to live communally, and many could not cope. The site meetings achieved a measure of harmony, despite the problems of individual exuberance. The decision-making on wider issues were left to supporters who no longer lived in the village. This could not be helped, for dealing with legal, planning and general publicity work was left in the hands of the Oxford office, too remote for instant decision-making.

All alternative technology was attempted, including the palladian compost loos which, in the opinion of the Wandsworth health officer visiting the site, were the cleanest and and safest public conveniences in the borough.

When Guinness decided to send in the bailiffs there was no preparation for alerting the sympathetic population of the surrounding areas or the wider anarchist movement. The beautiful buildings and structures that were erased deserved a longer life.

There are many other points which need not be detailed here. Nevertheless, these are very small matters compared to the real achievement in the midst of a very organised and well-surveillanced city. Here was, by the side of the Thames, a blueprint for a future society. Here people lived, talked, shared their lives and their dreams together, gaining strength each day from their own efforts and by the early autumn not only could they look around and see ingeniously designed structures but they could also have vegetables of their own growth in their stew.

The population was of all ages and backgrounds and provided their own entertainments and discussions with visiting speakers, such as Colin Ward, and even a conducted tour for visitors pointing out the 200-odd varieties of vegetation that flourished on the site. But the main achievement of this anarchist village was as a living proof of the possibility of a harmonious anarchist society where money was abolished to a great extent and where people came and went as they wished.

I can only repeat what I said before: "It was a rare and safe zone for those with a zest for life". The next time it happens I hope that it is more permanent.

*[**Postscript:** It emerged in August 1997 that a planning application is to be submitted for a £175 million development on this thirteen acre site for a leisure and residential complex which will include themed restaurants, a 200-bedroom hotel, a 140-bedroom healthcare and nursing facility, a number of slender high-rise blocks of apartments enjoying spectacular views and, possibly, a police station. We doubt whether any of those who took part in the 'This Land is Ours' occupation will be able or wish to avail themselves of these amenities. Editors]*

"People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints, such people have a corpse in their mouth."

Judi Bari who died 2nd March 1997 aged 47 of cancer but who had never really recovered from the assassination attempt by the FBI seven years earlier in which a bomb placed under her car exploded, breaking her spine and cracking her pelvis in ten places.
Judi was an active anarcho/eco-warrier and a prominent member of the IWW Earth First

Kate Witham

I
Anarchy at the Peace Camps

There's a lot happening in the peace movement in the '90s, despite its marginalisation by the media, public conception and parts of the protest movement. Many peace activists are anarchists and contend that their struggle is an important and relevant part of the struggle towards an anarchist future.

In Britain there are presently six peace camps – both permanent and not. Faslane Peace Camp has been outside the Trident submarine base in Scotland for fifteen years and is still a permanent and active peace presence. There are now three of the four Trident submarines in operation and the Campers are continuing to take action, taking boats out on to the loch, swimming into the base and boarding submarines, as well as halting every convoy that brings regular supplies of nuclear warheads to the nearby weapons store at Coulport.

WoMenwith Hill Women's Peace Camp in North Yorkshire has now been permanent for three years, outside the National Security Agency run US spy base. Whilst this base continues to expand, the women infiltrate it to reclaim the land, damage aerials and radomes and reveal information to break the silence surrounding this very secret base and its operations.

The women's peace camps at Aldermaston, Burghfield and Sellafield are working to expose and stop the radioactive contamination, make public the links between the 'civil' nuclear industry and nuclear weapons production, the harmful effects of secrecy, the leaks and government cover ups, and break the nuclear-military chain. There are also still some women at Greenham.

A 'single issue' campaign is only a single issue until you scratch the surface. To me the campaign against Trident involves many issues:

- nuclear testing;
- uranium mining on native people's land;
- reclaiming the land used by the military;
- environmental destruction through the use of nuclear technology;
- the constant risk of accident;

- the economy based on military rather than social needs;
- the economy's reliance on the arms trade;
- the use of Scotland to keep Trident safely 'out of sight, out of mind' of much of the British public;
- imperialism and the possession of nukes to ensure global threats and influence;
- and, of course, the Government and power structure that enforces and necessitates all these evils

Each of the Peace Camps has a specific focus for its campaigning and yet they have a much wider aim of ending the power of the state which is based on the control of nuclear weapons, the ideologies needed to sustain the military and arms trade, and all the oppressions tied up in that. Followers of the non-violent tradition recognise the fear, hatred and violent behaviour encouraged by the warmongers, and how they are used in our communities to recreate power abuse and oppression. Whilst freeing ourselves of state power we also have to learn to live and work in a non-violent and non-oppressive way on an individual level. For me, non-violence is the essence of anarchism. It seems impossible to follow theories of either anarchism or non-violence to its logical conclusion without also practising the other.

I believe non-violence is an effective campaigning tool as well as an essential process for change. For me, non-violence is a lifestyle rather than just a tactic. Cooperation, trust, compromise, humour and support, freedom and equality are important as I work now, rather than something I am working for in the future. Gandhi had the right idea: "there is no way to peace, peace is the way".

Peace camps attempt to create anarchist communities, free of hierarchy with the sharing of skills and work, equally valuing activism and support, eliminating societal inequalities and working by consensus. Of course we often fail and sometimes immediate campaign needs seem to override 'other' concerns, but building new and positive ways of living and working are essential parts of bringing about change and actually making change happen now.

Peace Campers and activists involved in non-violent direct action and civil disobedience are taking back power from the state while learning how much power individuals can have. Dealing with the police, courts and prisons is direct confrontation with the state and non-cooperation with these systems can challenge them further. Confronting fear by taking action is very empowering. Breaking into bases protected by armed guards or stopping a lorry carrying nuclear

warheads scares me every time I do it, but the fear of getting arrested, appearing in court and going to prison has largely evaporated. After defending myself in court, and spending time in prison, the only punishment that the state can threaten me with has been overcome, and I can now act according to my conscience rather than according to the law.

Working in anarchic ways also makes it harder for the police, courts etc., to deal with us. They are always obsessed with finding and talking to the 'leader', failing to grasp that there are no leaders and we all speak only for ourselves. They still can't seem to grasp that they will never put an end to actions by locking up or arresting the non-existent leader. Not being part of any particular group can also be very useful – in the event of a group receiving an injunction it simply becomes another group. By defending yourself in court, and forcing the judge to listen to someone not wearing a black gown, you can challenge the whole system of privilege, ritual and injustice, or at least show contempt for their petty power games.

Cooperation is an important part of our campaign – both within that campaign and with related campaigns and campaigners. Magazines such as *Green Line* and *Peace News* have recognised the interconnectedness of grassroots campaigns, and even the Government has helped solidarity grow through legislation like the Criminal Justice Act and the Job Seekers Allowance. We are all chopping away at bricks, but that's an effective way of breaking down the wall.

Obviously not all peace campaigners are anarchists: some working very specifically against nuclear weapons or a particular conflict can have very specific aims. Glossy campaigns, such as Greenpeace, often seem to be more concerned with the wages of 'campaign managers', and a good press image, than having a revolutionary impact.

Many campaigns could be seen as a 'single issue', but really that only represents a lack of understanding of all the issues involved. There are plenty of anarchists in the peace and green protest movements and anarchy is integral to our campaign, as are such campaigns to anarchy.

II
From Protest to Prison in three easy steps

The walls you put around me, dissolve and fade away
They're only stone and metal, and they're all you have.
Our voices won't be silenced, by locking us away
it's you who are the prisoners, though you tell yourselves you're free.
And when they lock the doors behind us, they only fan the flames,
By giving us a number they don't rob us of our names.
There are no walls to hold us,
No laws to kill our spirit
and they can't take away, no they can't take away
they will never take away our Freedom.

1. The Action

Tracy and I ran across the road, into the path of the first warhead carrier. It didn't slow down, so we leapt aside then stood firm in from of the second. Fortytwo tons of lead-lined lorry carrying two Trident nuclear warheads slowed and then stopped, along with the other ten vehicles in the convoy behind it. Tracy dived underneath the cab and wrapped herself around something solid. I climbed up to the roof of the cab and poured red Hammerite paint on to the windscreen. Rachel was videoing the action from the other side of the road, and keeping an eye on Tracy.

Cops came running from all directions and all concentrated on trying to pull Tracy out from underneath the lorry. They didn't notice me until every inch of the windscreen was red and dripping. Two very polite officers climbed up beside me and gently escorted me back down to the road – a very pleasant change from the month before when I'd had a kwik-cuff snapped on to my wrist and was pulled down to the ground, nearly breaking my wrist and leaving me very shaken.

The convoy – comprising five warhead carriers, fire engine, police and marine escorts, workshop and communication vehicles – was strung out along a bridge over the A1, a few hundred yards from RAF Leeming. These convoys travel once a month carrying the warheads from where they are made, in Berkshire, to Coulport in Scotland

where they are loaded on to submarines. As part of the obvious objection to nuclear weapons, Nukewatchers up and down the country track and take action against the convoys because they represent a huge danger. In the event of an accident, highly radioactive plutonium could be scattered over a huge area. Almost every convoy is stopped on its journey by protesters for between two minutes and two hours, by perhaps just one or maybe one hundred people.

It took almost an hour for the windscreen to be cleaned and the vehicles checked. All three of us were taken to a police station and released once the convoy was well out of the area. Luckily when we were locked into the back of the police van we still had the video recorder and mobile phone, so were able to call friends and arrange for the press to be contacted. This was the first time the convoy had been stopped in North Yorkshire and we wanted to educate the press and public as widely as possible.

2. In Court

Four months later the case came to court. The others had not been charged, so I alone was accused of causing £650 of Criminal Damage – very expensive paint!

I decided that there would be two main lines to my defence: firstly that Trident was illegal under International Law – particularly after the World Court opinion on nuclear weapons – therefore my actions were to prevent 'greater crimes' and, secondly, that my actions had a 'lawful excuse' as I was protecting people and land from the immediate danger of a nuclear accident. I represented myself because, while being pretty scary, at least I can then be sure of making my point and speaking about my beliefs. Doing this can also be a very empowering experience as it doesn't just challenge points of law but challenges the whole way the court operates; magistrates, prosecutors, ushers and clerk all have to talk to me instead of about me and cannot dismiss me just because I am wearing an old sweater with a peace slogan on it instead of a black gown or white wig.

Northallerton court was a surreal experience. A bunch of reporters were waiting for us on the steps, but the rest of the building was deserted as they'd opened especially to hear my case. I felt honoured until it became clear that the magistrate was more interested in her hairstyle than my defence. The prosecution produced lots of witnesses to prove things I wasn't denying, and we managed to fluster

each other enough to get them to admit that nuclear weapons really were carried on those lorries.

Unfortunately the magistrates didn't listen to, or understand, my defence on International Law and eventually told me to shut up and sit down. They did however consent to watch the video but didn't look very impressed as two very small women stopped the very big lorries – but the press gallery enjoyed it.

Unsurprisingly I was found guilty although the magistrates failed to explain why they ignored and dismissed my defence – another fine example of British justice!

Despite managing to raise very important issues in the court room, it is always totally disheartening that magistrates are so rarely brave enough to challenge their own principles and the norms of legal judgement. I remember being very inspired by two women in court who didn't try to justify their actions (a blockade of Sellafield), instead they challenged the law: one woman told the magistrate that she could not expect to be judged fairly as he sat beneath the Queen's shield and Sellafield operated in her name, while another explained how law took hundreds of years to evolve whereas damage due to radiation happened immediately, so there was no way that the law could transform quickly enough to deal with nuclear issues. They were both found guilty but the magistrate did look troubled.

However, no matter how depressing the court system is, people coming and supporting me in court and sympathetic press coverage are great stimulants. Whilst the magistrates discussed my guilt we sang outside the court room, played penny whistles and danced, ate chocolate cake and hung out our banners – if this is the revolution we might as well enjoy it!

3. In Prison

Six months later I am summoned to court for not paying my fine. By this time the fine totals almost £1,000. It seems unlikely that I'll get longer than a month, and almost impossible that I'll only have to spend the day in court.

I sent out press releases, packed a bag full of books, asked friends to come and support, and got very drunk. I've been to prison several times, so am not as scared as I was the first time – but it's never relaxing and although very survivable I certainly don't look forward to it.

Surprisingly the magistrates asked why I hadn't paid the fine, and

were prepared to listen to my explanation of the illegality of Trident, the injustice of the British legal system and the moral necessity for my actions. Although they did look vaguely sympathetic they finally sentenced me to fourteen days. Group 4 led me off in handcuffs and all the friendly faces in the court room cheerfully waved me goodbye.

New Hall Prison, near Wakefield, is the home of about 100 women. The prison has a working farm and garden but I haven't seen anything beyond the cell blocks. My books, tobacco and paper were taken from me on arrival, even though I am entitled to keep them with me. Rules mean little when the personal power of the staff is absolute. My cell is about five feet by ten feet, but at least I have it to myself. I have a bed, table, chair, sink, toilet and tiny wardrobe – it doesn't take long to unpack my one change of clothes, two pens and toothbrush.

The worst things about prison are the power exercised by the staff, the boredom and the frustration. In theory nothing is impossible while you are in prison. In practice almost nothing is possible. You'll always fill in the wrong form, speak to the wrong person, be at the wrong place at the wrong time, or find the rules have changed. I have two booklets I received on arrival, telling me about all the things I'm entitled to have (books, pens, tobacco, phonecards) and all the opportunities open to me (gym sessions, a choice of seventeen evening classes, visits to the library, shop and social workers). In fact I have not been able to enjoy any of these and have spent twenty hours a day locked in my cell. Luckily I have some inner resources and have spent much of my time singing peace songs, scribbling notes on the blank pages of my introductory booklets and making up elaborate and time consuming exercises. Only three and a half days to go ...

Tobacco and phonecards are the currency in here and boredom the punishment. For any misdemeanour you have to spend more time in your cell, and obviously the more bored women get the more they will misbehave. A vicious circle in which the women prisoners are always the losers. The women I meet in here do not deserve to be locked up. Their crimes are mainly small scale financial fraud or drug related – often at the instigation of their boyfriends and as a result of their positions as victims in this patriarchal-capitalist state. Women are more often jailed for their first offence than men and are punished twice – for their crime and for daring to step out of the expected role of women. The true criminals in too many situations are not punished, only the small fry get caught and convicted. You don't need me to tell you this, but I need to tell you. The pain, horror and hopelessness of many of these women's lives is constantly present as

they fight viciously for their place in the dinner queue or scream during the night. I remember a line from an old Greenham song: "I hold their pain close to me, it shakes me in the night. Sometimes it makes me desperate, sometimes it helps me fight ..."

My situation is very privileged. My privilege has enabled me to take action and dare to come to prison. I always have a safety valve: if I can't stand it, I know supporters could be found to pay my fine and get me released. I am also able to use my privilege to help other women inside the prison – I'm here for speaking out against injustice and I can continue to do that in here, to get an extra blanket for someone, question the vitamin content of the food, or demand all those things I have a right to but have so far been denied.

Time moves slowly and my moods swing rapidly. My head runs at double speed at all times, keeping me strong, reminding me of all the support I have, calculating how long until my next cigarette or the next meal, making up ridiculous tasks to keep me busy, and keeping me aware of the women and screws around me. But I know why I'm here and that keeps up my spirit. My time does serve a purpose – a small stand for peace and freedom and against nuclear weapons and war preparations. I am not a criminal. My only 'crime' is trying to prevent the government and MoD from jeopardising our future.

On the whole my fellow inmates treat me well – they think I'm a bit of a nutter, but an amiable one. They are all amazed that I've been jailed for protesting and support my stand. I try to tell them that they too have the power to alter their situations, but their whole lives have taught them they are powerless. There's an odd sense of community among the women here; if someone is upset and missing their family someone will give them a hug; if you have no tobacco someone will give you a roll-up. Only the minority are intent on causing trouble in an effort to gain some kind of control or respect, in the only way they know how.

Many of the activities available have been restricted due to staff shortages, caused apparently by stress-related illnesses. Is this because the screws are really humanitarian liberals who can't bear to witness so much suffering? Due to overwork caused by underfunding and overcrowding? Or simply because it's such hard work containing us 'criminals'? I remain cynical.

But I am lucky. Every day I receive beautiful and cheering cards from friends and supporters. I know that friends are looking after my partner and lovely people will visit. In this barren land the oases are wonderful. A fellow inmate shares a cigarette with me, a screw has an

interested and approving conversation with me about political protest, or we have salad for lunch. Today is a good day, my cup overflows with sudden joy: a bunch of flowers has arrived from Womenwith Hill women's peace camp, I've found a book of lesbian short stories in the prison library, tracked down a copy of *The Guardian* and finally managed to buy some tobacco, sweets and stamps. It's also my last day. Although I'll be sad to leave many of the women in here, I can't wait to leave. My time here will stay with me and, yes, I will be back.

"No doubt I shall be excommunicated as an enemy of the people, because I repudiate the mass as a creative factor. ...my lack of faith in the majority is dictated by my faith in the potentialities of the individual."

Emma Goldman in *Anarchism and other Essays*

Mick Cropper

A Personal Experience of Direct Action

My first experience of a demonstration was in London on March 31st 1990 at a national demonstration called by the 'Poll Tax Non-Payment Campaign'. We travelled from Ashfield, North Notts courtesy of the Socialist Workers Party who had been canvassing heavily in the area in an effort to keep the British Nazi Party down (like the vermin that the BNP are).

In a convoy of green double-decker buses loaned by or hired from the Labour-controlled Nottingham Council we travelled down the motorway, collecting ever more coaches the nearer we were to our destination. Inching our way through the heavy traffic of the metropolis our transport eventually arrived safely at Kennington Park. Never had I been among such a throng of people all at one time. What an amazing array of banners, placards, crude messages, slogans and cartoons. So much colour, so many designs. And the inevitable black or red and black of the anarchists: good old fashioned black, pendants, triangular and square all flapping above the heads of the mass of humanity like wounded rooks.

Then we were assailed on all sides by the paper sellers of the collective left and the entrepreneurs with their badges, whistles, T-shirts and collection boxes for vague causes and the more obvious Militant, very strong at this time. The mixture of people I came across was just a little extraordinary: miners, housewives, nurses and even tory voters carrying placards – 'Tories Against the Poll Tax' – together with many other groups too numerous to mention.

Finally we made our way to Downing Street although I can't be sure this was the original intention, and it was here that I first saw direct action against the forces of law and order. Danny Burns, in his excellent book *Poll Tax Rebellion* (AK Press) tells us that the police carried out two brutal arrests as people sat down peacefully opposite Downing Street. Twenty people took part in this passive demonstration and I quote from the account given of the event in the TSDC defendants' legal minutes. "A man in a wheelchair was attacked and arrested by the police, separated from his wheelchair

and thrown into a police van and a woman was stripped of her clothes in front of the crowd". Both arrests angered and incensed the crowd as it was an obvious police provocation of a peaceful demonstration. Three hundred people then sat down and missiles rained down on the police who were forced to retreat.

Finally we were driven into Trafalgar Square where I saw harassed Japanese tourists, cameras flying, fleeing from the confusion. Unable to converse we ran our different ways, me gesturing wildly for them not to try to go down to the tube station which had been closed. Fires had been started in a portakabin on a close-by building site and a fire had been started in another building which I later learned was Africa House. Police vans careered crazily through and at us, the crowd. With the police so completely out of control we should all consider ourselves fortunate that there were not more casualties.

So here I had been witness to direct action of a violent kind, although I have no doubt that if the police had been more sensitive in their initial approach circumstances might have been different. This was my first, although not my last demonstration, and I found it pretty hairy but at the same time I acquired a huge indignation at the police brutality which remains with me to the present day. More recently I have taken part in more peaceful actions within the environmental groups and to a lesser extent the Animal Rights Movement.

Leave the M1 at junction 27 and travel north on the A608 towards Annesley and in about two miles you come to some land that Kodak sold off as being surplus to requirements. Some 300 acres of mature woodland, hedgerows and fields that succumbed to the local council's plans to upgrade the A608 and create the Sherwood Business Park at an estimated cost of 3.08 million. According to the *Ashfield District Council Official Guide*: "New road building has released greenfield sites for development as well as providing fast access to the two motorway junctions". Local opinion was against the proposals and Ashfield Against Road Development maintained that "the council policies are actively encouraging destructive large scale developments on greenfield sites: offering huge incentives to a potential developer. The upgraded road would greatly increase the volume of traffic throughout the area and create health problems".

The council ignored popular concerns and work started in the summer of 1995. One morning however two men chained themselves to a huge, steel, hydraulic shuttering device that held up the sides of a deep excavation. This was our one and only 'lock-on' attempt. Workmen found us first thing and after much verbal abuse called the

police who ordered our release, using bolt cutters – a short-lived experience of peaceful direct action which gained us some publicity for our cause in the local press, albeit inaccurate, because they stated that we chained ourselves to a fence rather than the huge metal structure in the deep trench. But such are the lies that the press pursue with glee. This brings to mind our friend Daniel Hooper, aka 'Swampy', who at the time of writing is the darling of the media. He is due for a fall if he doesn't watch out, for the capitalist press that sets you up can just as easily mow you down. In the 1960s we heard a lot about Che Guevara, a would-be revolutionary active in Bolivia: Capitalism had no problems in exploiting his image for all it was worth with Carnaby Street shops, as older comrades will remember, selling Cuban hats and Che T-shirts to both sexes. Galbraith, the guru of the liberal right, had it in a nutshell when he wrote "Capitalism can exploit anything, even that which is a potential threat to its very existence". He also suggested that the poor people of the world should learn to live off the effluence of the affluent and hasn't it always been so? If Eco-warriorism becomes fashionable then it could be the end of it. This could be a form of direct action that could go wrong. The *Sunday Mirror* gave 'Swampy' a benevolent platform, for a time, from which to speak and it would appear that a lot of *Mirror* readers at least endorse his actions. We live in hope.

"The anarchist revolution that we want transcends the interest of a single class. It envisages the liberation of all humanity which is at present enslaved, either economically, politically or morally."

Errico Malatesta

Julian

Runway Two

Dawn creeps up on us, followed by a cacophony of bird song. Then the tremendous, earth-trembling, undeniable decibellic range of the first aeroplane taking off, reaching peak thrust just over my treehouse, then another, then another. They come in staggered batches. I drift off to sleep, with a tolerance unimaginable to the newcomer.

Considerably later, I descend across the mundane, dice-with-death walkway to the hearth, rekindling the fire for the first brew, treasuring the reserve of the early morning. Protesters are mostly young and highly active. Consequently they sleep far longer than they will admit. Tacit shifts operate, some stretching far into the night. Early morning is a time for peace and clarity.

Cocooned in a sleeping bag beside the fire, an unidentified body. Stirrings in the communal bender. A toussled head emerges. I start to arrange the squalor and detritus of the night before, concentrating on the tea ceremony, cleaning perfectly the home-made table-ette, arranging mugs, sugar, tea, coffee, milk, soya milk, cleaning pig-sty remains from around the fire, leaving other areas to fester. Over a stagnant stream, the vista stretches three hundred feet across pasture and weir to an array of meat wagons *et al.* Two security lounge on the fence, looking across at us, wondering what we are doing, what new devilry, what impenetrable mental schema, what decadent drug besodden dream, what boredom, what beauty.

The beauty we share. All on site complicit in the co-penetration of nature unnatural, reality surreal, as the planes reverberate and the machines machinate our inexorable end; stasis, eternity encapsulated in a drop of water which swells, swells to bursting, and then releases into free fall, to shatter.

In this place, our own sordidity seems somehow less important. The space around, which we slowly degrade, will absorb our midden, the overbearing destruction will absolve our lazy guilt.

People learn, like the old hunter-gatherers, or perhaps the inarticulate Neanderthal, to sit in contemplative or perhaps completely vacuous silence together, perhaps for hours. Speech may irritate. The loud

thrusting voice of the newcomer, asserting his or her credentials: 'the movement, the motive, the morality ...'. Verbal grooming, intensity, establishing an identity, a legitimacy, a place in this uncertain ephemeral society of mis-matches. After a few such encounters, the ritual is understood. A manifest desire for silence, or for laughter, frivolity, takes over. The group appears closed, taciturn to outsiders, and in fact creates its own opposite flaws, learning to talk only on the surface when gathered together, to assume a sessile hierarchy of attentiveness to each speaker. Of the deeper, darker, more disturbing side of the protest, this surface does not speak, except in song or allusion. Only in small, established pairs and groups, away from the fire, or in hurried coded communications around it do these things gain an existence.

Meetings loom as painful, embarrassing experiences to be avoided if at all possible, where the brash and the loud and the dominant and the already sewn up vie for position. Meaning is then contained only in the interaction between us, the expression of pent-up social hostility, affiliation, support. Rubber stamping, pre-determined agendas and outcomes, stigmatisation of whole areas of socio-political interaction reduce meetings to a mockery. Nobody likes meetings, and this is how those who make the meetings like it.

Our confidence is arrested and defined by our individual physical actions, the act of building a tunnel, a treehouse, a walkway with our close friends, with whom we retreat as well into the tunnel or treehouse we have made, to share company, to sleep. Maybe this is the reason protests have worked, the Thatcherite individuality, the 'there is no such thing as society' paradigm, eating into our experientially challenged younger generation, finds its successful expression in protest for the simple reason that everybody can 'do their own thing', a mere material coincidence of interest.

Maybe this is also the reason protests will not continue to work. As they mature, and the iterative links of this moveable feast of a parliament or ambulant court develop into a deep, rich group structure with sub-political entities, the fracture lines begin to open, the shear fissures slip and stretch, and the movement breaks out, leaving the hollowness of individualism to collapse in on itself, and reabsorb us. Because we have never, really accepted our sublimation in the group, our activities seldom approach the level of co-operativeness of a game of football. Our fractiousness is too coercive for the lawless sphere we have chosen to define, too tough for any except a small, canalised and self-suppressed group of ex-society

weirdos to survive, our traveller-site models inappropriate to the diversity of those we would have as our bedfellows. 'Break out! And become again'. This not the time for repetitive re-enactments of the invention of the wheel.

We are not designing an island Utopia, nor an internally sustainable society. Nowhere is it more apparent than on a protest, the consistent intrusion and violation of the State forces of intolerance and social control which define our existence. Yet we choose to invest self-belief in our viability, insulated in our country haven, survival environmentalists demarcating a brave new alternative world, living in our dream bubble even as the undeniable stress of evictions becomes ever more imminent, till we take to hurling abuse at those who threaten us, like a group of howler monkeys at the pre-sunset hour, before subsiding into quietude. Like the serial lover, we harden hearts against the pending break with the land we have grown to love, taking strength from the arid intellectual concept that our protest is part of a cumulative process of enrichment ending in victorious requitement. We lie!

And because we lie about our nature, the attritional process of emotional self abuse takes its toll, the world weary cynicism of method takes over from the unfeigned joy of each new discovery. The weak force of our attraction to these sites of special social interest is not enough to resist the strong force of the exo-society we come from. Each human cluster crashes like the trees whose spinal crack into oblivion we cannot endure to face. And our fragile mini-society lies in deconstructed ruin, like a multi-layer broken mirror to the flawed society which we have vowed to lay low. In our masochistic martyrdom lies the failure of the Western, Christian paradigm. Too much to take, not enough to make. Panegyrists and hagiographers, our faithful press hounds will write us into the meaning of history, but we will not *make* history if we remain no more than this.

No more than this. To reach out and inspire, influence and change, catalyse and reactivate, protesters need to develop greater and nobler, rather than lesser and triter aspirations. The mere idea that we are there to 'cost them money and cause them trouble' as a bottom line! We are *here*. We are here to illuminate ourselves and the society that bred us, to show that *modern* life as we knew it, closeted in boxes, is empty, giving less sustenance than *primitive* life under the stars that post-modern society must mesh with, not abjure the living world, that protest society is part of us all, old, young, infirm, not simply a miasma of directionless youth.

As one of the only foci for free-standing assembly and dissent from a patently bankrupt socio-political paradigm 'on the road to nowhere', we have to *live* our democracy, *create* our consensus, *manifest* our dissent and freely *debate* the meaning of what we do. Non-violent direct action may to some be a tactic and to others an internalised belief. But its core meaning actually lies not in these false friend polarities, but in the absence of institutional intimidation or coercion. It is pointless to mount a protest if we do no more than adopt the proven methods of our adversaries in order to succeed, craven to ape their mannerisms in sound-bites, ultimately sick to see our own hidden elites moving slowly up the ladder of integration until they become assimilated into the rich and famous world of mutual self regard which opens out before them. Alternative society? 'Under new leadership' is no new vision.

"The living, vital truth of social and economic well-being will become a reality only through the zeal, courage, the non-compromising determination of intelligent minorities, and not through the mass."

Emma Goldman 'Minorities versus Majorities'
in *Anarchism and other Essays*

Postscript

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

These oft-quoted words are as succinct a statement of core anarchist beliefs as one could desire and are needed today more than ever, distinguishing clearly, as they do, the historic anarchist traditional from both the contemporary right wing libertarians who reject the state (almost), but embrace the inequalities of capitalism, and the authoritarian socialists who would abolish capitalism but leave us exposed to the tyranny of the state.

Some groups and networks whose primary concern is to emphasise the economic relationships which produce the class divisions and inequalities of capitalist society often call themselves class struggle anarchists and sometimes insist that only they are worthy of the name anarchist, calling others, who take a broader view, woolly minded middle class liberals. For them the conflict with capitalism takes place at the point of employment, traditionally the factory floor. Class struggle anarchists can and do demonstrate solidarity and support for workers involved in industrial disputes in their neighbourhood, but since the '85 miners' strike the virtual disappearance of factory mass production, or at least its automation, opportunities have become less frequent. However anyone who thinks that the class struggle is no longer a significant factor in today's society should look at the response to the Gallup Poll question asked in 1996, "Do you believe that there is a class struggle in this country?" Over 75% responded Yes. This was up from 56% in 1961 and 79% in 1991. Perhaps the class struggle anarchists have got it right.

However the political scene on the libertarian left is at present dominated by the single issue movements of social protest. As well as the symbolic land occupations of 'The Land is Ours' campaign and those against new major roads, airport runways, blood sports and militarism, there have been many on purely local issues. These campaigns have had some successes. The anti-roads campaigners have certainly cost the capitalist construction conglomerates millions and the non violent direct action efforts of the peace activists are a much bigger threat to the state than any class struggle anarchist network. Whether anarchists should become involved in campaigning

on a single issue is something for the individual to decide. There are benefits in working with others who do not share all our assumptions, which means that we are constantly testing our ideas in practice and the others are experiencing what it is like to work with us. We have an opportunity to demonstrate the rewards and effectiveness of non-hierarchical networking systems of organisation. It avoids the ghettoisation which can be experienced by anarchist groups who sedulously guard their purity. These social protest campaigns are now setting the moral agenda and share with anarchists a rejection of the parliamentary pathway, conscious of its failure to serve the interests of the community. The most convincing argument we have heard against anarchists getting involved is the purely practical one that it may gradually absorb all their time and energy, becoming eventually an end in itself leaving nothing over for anarchism. But is it not a risk worth taking? This is no less a problem than for the class struggle anarchist who chooses to become involved in the main stream trade union movement, where there is a risk of becoming bogged down in bureaucratic procedures.

Within the movement the difference in approach between the class struggle anarchists and others has engendered some lively and at times acrimonious exchanges, but we do not agree with a recently expressed opinion that there is great diversity of thought but little consensus on anything. Should we not recognise that it is but a difference of approach and that our ultimate aims are the same? Certainly within the broader libertarian movement we are witnessing both a gradual realisation of the common interests between the various single issue campaigners and between them and the trade unionists. Trade unionists on the Euromarch '97, for example, declared their support for the Manchester airport second runway protesters, and social protest movements such as 'Reclaim the Streets' are actively supporting the Liverpool dockers in their long dispute with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

As *Freedom* commented on 19th October 1996 Is this the end of the single issue? Whatever happened to the single issue so beloved of the mass media? *The Observer*, 29th September, called Saturday's parade through Liverpool an unprecedented coalition of dockers, trade unionists, ravers, environmentalists and animal liberationists. Of course a week later the media have lost all interest, taken aback briefly by the unprecedented, but then reflecting that really it's all happened before. But we can welcome the three-day event in Liverpool in its bringing together different strands of dissent and in such a public

fashion. The oppression we all experience is from the same source ... so let's resist it together, said an organiser's poster. There is no getting away from the single issue – just how many different jobs can you hold down at any one time? But anyone who has been involved in direct action can easily make the links: if you stand in the way of one of the central driving forces of the economy you are opposing capitalism per se; if you willingly break laws you are opposing power. You are refusing the system they are trying to force feed you with. With its connotation of selfishness and irresponsibility, the appendage 'single issue' applied to direct action is used to undermine our perception of the most effective way of achieving the real change. In Liverpool at the end of September all those issues melded into one single issue – the destruction of capitalism and power.

"Today the revolution demands, in the interests of socialism, that the masses unquestioningly obey the single will of the leaders of the labour process."

V. I. Lenin, quoted by Maurice Brinton in *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control*

Class n. ***the system or situation in any community in which there is division of people into different social ranks."***

One of several meanings in *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*

"Work is the curse of the drinking classes"

Oscar Wilde

"The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern. Every class is unfit to govern."

Lord Acton

"... the obiter dicta laid down during Thursday night's Question Time by Harriet Harman. I quote her words exactly: 'Racism and sexism is not a class issue'. Oh yes, they is Harriet. Oh yes, they is ... If you are single, unemployed and living on less than £50 a week, everything is a class issue. Poverty exacerbates all other deprivations."

Roy Hattersley, in *The Guardian*, 10th March 1997

John Pilgrim

Review of Culture and Anarchism*

When Freedom Bookshop was generously offered the remaining copies of Professor Barclay's *Culture: the Human Way* (1986) five years ago it was delighted to accept but everyone was surprised at the rapidity of its sale. Sensibly they asked him to put together a selection from his writings relevant to anarchism, and it is this anthology that has now appeared under the title of *Culture and Anarchism*. The book falls into three main divisions – 'Culture: An Anthropological and Anarchist Perspective', taking up over two-thirds of the book. Part two discusses 'Utopian and Social Movements', and a there is a final section on aspects of anarchist theory. So there are key extracts from *Culture: the Human Way*, from *People without Government*, and short pieces and reviews from a number of journals so that the overlap in any specific reader's library should not be too great. The whole is controlled by Harold Barclay's view of a desirable society, informed by an anthropological knowledge of human nature's plasticity and the bounds of possibility that knowledge suggests.

The question of plasticity is important because the idea of a fixed human nature is one of the most effective of the conservative forces in society. It is a perennial justification for the existence of government, police, and armies. In Britain it was trotted out as a justification for an ethic of possessive individualism by the 'new Conservatism' and seems set to be used in much the same way by the Ineffable Blair and New Labour. Belief in its basis is a characteristic of Essexpersons wherever they actually live, while the jackbooted wing of feminism has used it in the form of sexual essentialism to justify dangerous censorship ideas, along with the attempted abolition of distinctions between private and public spheres. Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia provide dismal examples of 'the personal is political' being put into practice.

The concept of a fixed human nature with its basis in the idea of original sin is a fallback position for any upholder of the *status quo*. In

* *Culture and Anarchism* by Harold Barclay, published by Freedom Press, 1997 (ISBN 0 900384 84 0, 166 pages, £6.95).

the form of biological determinism it's another manifestation of the Great Chain of Being:[1] the idea that the universe has a fixed natural order with humanity at the top of the animal kingdom, but usually with women necessarily just a little below men of course. In the past it has been bitterly attacked by Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill but it has continued to recur in the various attempts to prove that mental traits are constant and inherited, that 'criminality' runs in families, that women are inherently pacifist while men are inherently aggressive and so on. It has been at the root of most attempts to justify colonialism, to maintain particular social systems, to justify existing forms of domination.

In contemporary form this is expressed in the form of genetic determinism – the idea that human action can be reduced to a cluster of genes. An argument is then developed which says that as you cannot do anything about a genetically fixed human nature you had better accept the world as it is.

This is a revival of instinct theory in modern dress. People twiddle their thumbs and it is the thumb twiddling instinct which moves them to action. They fail to twiddle their thumbs and it's the thumb not twiddling instinct which motivates them. Thus all is explained by magic – word magic, which in fact explains nothing. Yet in its name we build more prisons, transfer public wealth from the poor to the rich, destroy such welfare provision as was developed in the post war world and fight a prolonged rearguard battle against sexual economic and racial egalitarianism. What a boon to Thatcherism and its Blairite successors sociobiology was and is! Interesting too that at a time of massive university cuts, when philosophy departments were being axed all over the country (philosophers ask awkward questions) money for sociobiology departments, like military budgets, could seemingly be found with little difficulty.

Of course all political philosophies ultimately appeal to a view of human nature. For the left, generally, human nature is a variable to be culturally shaped. For the right, again generally, it is a fixed quantum. From the idea of original sin, through Hobbes, to the Social Darwinists and down to sociobiology today the idea of a constant human nature is used to justify a competitive and repressive outlook. In sociobiology even cooperation and altruism derive from an underlying competitive mechanism. Steven Rose, Professor of Biology with the Open University sums it up well:

Sociobiology, drawing its principles directly from Darwinian natural selection, claims that tribalism, entrepreneurial activity, xenophobia, male domination

and social stratification are dictated by the human genotype during the course of human evolution.[2]

Most biological determinists, sociobiologists among them, make the logical error of moving from descriptions of the animal kingdom to a suggestion of inevitability for human beings. Whatever their intentions they thus provide a *rationale* for any given *status quo*. Thus the increasing inequality of the Thatcher years saw arguments stemming from sociobiology that inequality was somehow 'natural' and that twentieth century attempts to rectify the more glaring inequities a waste of time.

To an extraordinary extent this idea became common currency again and the postwar drive (however tentative) toward greater equality was blunted, even as a pious aspiration for the Labour Party. So we are fortunate that this selection of Barclay's work should become available just now. It corrects a lot of the received ideas about human nature that became so prevalent in recent years and provides an excellent starting point for any who are thinking, as anarchists must surely do 'What is to be done?' It also fells one or two anarchist sacred cows as well but constant rethinking should be part of the anarchist lifestyle.

Starting from the premise that "the mind is a structure which organises and categorises external reality" Barclay points out that "at the same time with humans, the mind is saturated by a learned culture which further imposes a structure through which external stimuli are arranged and organised". In other words, given individuals analyse and react to the world around them, creating their own reality, but they do so in terms of a culture which they have been absorbing since birth.

Thus culture, not biology, should be the basis of any explanation of human behaviour. Culture – the unifying concept in anthropology – is still the most satisfactory explanation for the enormous range of behaviours that have developed. Despite the arguments of sociobiology (Barclay has a nice section on this) human beings do not have the sort of genetic programming that we observe in the nest building of the weaver birds or the constructions of the mason wasps. Our instinctual behaviour is confined to a few simple reflexes, the rest, as Barclay says, is overwhelmingly culturally shaped.

The essential nature of human beings then is that not only are they capable of learning but that they are dependent on learning to a greater degree than the rest of the animal kingdom. This is something that ethologists and their facile analogies with stickleback courting

rituals tend to ignore. Because human behavioural patterns are culturally transmitted change may often be slow but it is the very act of cultural transmission that makes change possible. For all the advances in genetic engineering, changing genes to change behaviour is not yet an option and it is this that has made sociobiology so attractive to conservatives of all political parties. Genetic determinism would remove our visions of Utopia, it would create freedom from some kinds of conflict possibly, but choice, 'freedom to' would vanish in the process and Huxley's nightmare would become a reality.

So anthropology and ethnography provides us with data on the diversity of human behaviour, on the concept of 'human nature' as a variable. As Barclay points out there are a few universals, e.g. all human beings are social but the multiple forms of expression found in human societies preclude biological reductionism. It is historically derived and learned ideas – culture in other words – that:

> ... creates the complex edifice that allows us to understand human behaviour around the globe. We require the concept of culture to explain how altruism (or aggression, or jealousy) can be expresssed in such a multitude of forms.

This is a pleasant and readable volume. The most difficult section for the lay person is probably at the beginning where Barclay makes a valiant attempt to clarify some of the philosophical problems involved, in terms comprehensible to the non-specialist. I think he succeeds. I almost understood them myself for a minute or two and I shouldn't think *Raven* readers in general would be intimidated. One of Harold Barclay's abilities, stemming no doubt from his earlier writing of introductory textbooks, is to take concepts like race, society, culture, populism and law and clear up the confusions that have accrued, giving diffuse concepts a clear meaning within the context of his writing. One would wish that a compendium of his conceptual clarifications could be placed on the desk of every newspaper editor and leader writer. We might then avoid nonsense constructions like 'English race' which still confuse and muddy discussions of ethnic groups and immigration for example.

This concern for conceptual clarity can lead to departures from his normally mild manner. Thus the review of Holterman and Van Marveseen's volume *Law and Anarchism* dismisses most of the contents harshly as "obscurantist, confusing and obfuscating". A bit over the top one might have thought until we read that Holterman defines the state as "the organisation of relationships which have been characterised as problematic". Oh dear. No discussion of the monopoly of 'legitimate

force', no discussion of hierarchy, only a definition that might apply to anything from British Airways to Freedom Press. Again he attacks this collection for consistently confusing *law* with *norm* and *custom*. This is an old chestnut usually given to first year anthropology students in their first weeks and I am mildly surprised to find eminent jurists capable of such elementary confusions. Harold Barclay is more than mildly surprised. He seems quite cross and I for one cannot blame him.

However I do not want to give the impression that this excellent volume is all conceptual analysis and ethnography. There are enlightening discussions of utopian communities, of twentieth century peasant wars, and a neat little demolition job on the facile parallels sometimes drawn between chimpanzees and human beings. There is some useful writing on Proudhon, whom I've never been able to read, and Josiah Warren whom I've missed for some reason.

Adrian Walker, writing favourably in *Freedom* of this collection, recommended it on the somewhat curious grounds that it saved the reader having to plough through a separate book on each area covered. In fact the effect of this excellent collection, like all good anthologies, is to encourage the reader to seek out the originals, to read further in areas previously neglected, to find out more.

When I reviewed *The Human Way* in *Freedom* five years ago I argued that it was the best book of its kind then available. I'm inclined to say something similar about this one. As a literary stylist Harold Barclay may not quite rank with science writer Steven Jay Gould. Few do and certainly not me. Barclay is clear, cogent, and at times compulsive. One comes from this book feeling better equipped to deal with any serious argument about humanity and social life. It is difficult to see how one could ask for more.

Footnotes

1. O.Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Harper, 1965).
2. S.Rose et al, *Not in Our Genes* (Pelican, 1987).

• Comments on Raven 35

Donald Rooum's editorial sounds as if he anticipates some controversy over the psychoanalysis stuff. That would be interesting indeed, but I have nothing to say to contribute to starting it beyond the essay itself. Even Potter doesn't offend me particularly. I gather from his essay that he is a "full-time lecturer in psychology", so I also assume that he does have a particular form of psychology which he does like, probably behaviourist. Either that or he is trying to work himself out of a job. However, if someone else starts a ruckus, I will certainly get involved. I do most heartily thank you for getting the essay into print for me. I intend to expand upon the ideas there (I do a bit in the two essays on Herbert Read which are coming out in David Goodway's book of essays on Read), especially as I suggest in footnote number 7. By the way, three footnote numbers got lost from the text, but the footnotes themselves are still there and readers can figure it out, I think.

John R. Doheny

While Bob Potter's piece may put some people off taking any further interest in psychoanalysis, the pieces by Doheny and Graziana-Stone will have an even stronger aversive effect! They may even put people off subscribing to *The Raven.*

Tony Gibson

The Raven number 35 contains comments by Dionysus about *The Raven* number 33, 'Anarchism and the Arts'. Since Dionysus is the Greek god of wine, also known as Bacchus, I was naturally flattered to find a god quoting from my essay 'Is Art Necessary?' the following: "Creative art – like evolution – leads to ever more variety and complexity". And then adding his criticism: "Indeed in recent times we have had a rise of variety and bewildering complexity in all of the arts he mentions. If *he* thinks this represents freedom *she* is suffering from an all too common form of modernist madness" (my emphasis on *he* and *she*). Medical technology can now change the sex of a person with appropriate surgery, but this must be the first time anyone has changed someone's sex in only one sentence and without any surgery. But perhaps such miracles are to be expected from a god.

Had the god Dionysus taken the trouble to read the essay carefully he might have noticed that, in the section subtitled 'Innovation' (page 5) I had touched upon his problem of "modernist madness" but without using the specific term. My sentence: "To promote the illusion of innovation the art media has developed a jargon of confusing expressions known as 'artspeak' – impressive sounding but essentially meaningless verbalisms – that tries to surround a certain art and selected artists with an atmosphere of originality". A god should be able to see that "certain art and selected artists" refers to what may be the same art he labels "modernist madness".

Which makes even more bewildering his criticism: "we have had a rise of variety and bewildering complexity in all the arts he mentions". Had Dionysus bothered to notice the context from which he lifted my sentence about "variety and complexity" he might have seen that the 'art' this comment referred to was the art of designing and building creative societies – something we have yet to even begin or attempt – and obviously not those fringes of the existing arts that he describes as "modernist madness". How a god such as Dionysus could confuse treating society as a creative medium with some form of "modernist madness" is surprising. And to see the god Dionysus malign a simple discussion of building creative and humane societies as "an all too common form of modernist madness" can only make us wonder if perhaps this god Dionysus may have had too much of the wine for which he is famous.

Footnote: Those readers who may wonder what the god Dionysus looks like may find, among the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum in London, a marble sculpture of him in a semi-reclining position but without hands and feet. A plaster cast of this marble sculpture can be seen in an art museum in Austin, Texas. Another plaster cast of the same can be seen in Nashville, Tennessee, in the world's only full-size replica of the original Parthenon and which also contains a full-size replica of the goddess Athena as it stood in the ancient Parthenon

Lynn Olson

In his editorial to *The Raven* number 35 Donald Rooum writes: "all the contributors to *The Raven* numbers 25 and 27 on religion were atheists. We know of anarchists who are believing Christians, Buddhists and Pagans, and who consider their religion intimately connected with their anarchism, but we failed to persuade any of them

to contribute, with the result that readers were denied the chance to find out how they think."

As Rooum knows quite well, I edited the two issues on religion. I did not ask, let alone attempt to persuade, any such people to contribute, and had they done so I would have refused to publish them. I have to guess at Rooum's motives in writing and publishing this deliberate falsehood.

Charles Crute
(published in *Freedom*, 16th August 1997)

I apologise to Charles Crute for writing in *The Raven* number 35 that "we failed to persuade" religious anarchists to contribute to the *Ravens* on religion.

My objective was to mollify those who would object to articles favouring psychoanalysis, by arguing that if we let the opposition have their say readers could judge for themselves whether their ideas were sensible.

The religious did not contribute anything to the *Ravens* on religion, and I might have just said that, but "we failed to persuade them to contribute" seemed a more persuasive phrase at the time. I realise now that it implies we tried to persuade them, which is indeed a falsehood.

No offence was intended.

Donald Rooum
(published in *Freedom*, 6th September 1997)

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