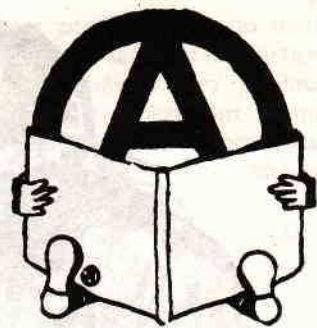


FREEDOM

anarchist monthly



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Organising Anarchy DAM. Clydeside

The new collective has done all it humanly can, short of always suppressing the truth, to create good relations with *Black Flag*. They have been snotty and paranoid in return. Our policy is to ignore their crap, without forgetting what it says about their 'politics'. It's not just *Freedom* who find them impossible, so don't lecture us when you can't possibly know how disgusting and uncomradely they can be. We won't mention them in our pages if you don't.

LETTERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is my subscription for a year in approval of the proposed changes for *Freedom* in the new year.

However, I must take issue with Stu about the reasons for myself leaving, the subscription list was a matter of concern but not the main reason for me leaving. After all some of us appeared with monotonous regularity year after year producing a fortnightly the difficulties of which the present editors now, no doubt, fully appreciate; you either get tired or something happens that you cannot stomach, then you leave.

I myself left for the latter reason, and in doing so helped to start another magazine, the *Green Anarchist* where we have found a whole fertile new ground of people interested in anarchist ideas.

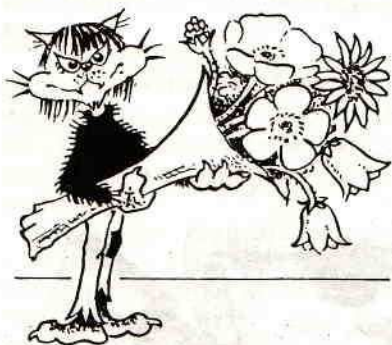
It is interesting to note in regard to David K oven's letter that those of us who have given help in support of miners and families have also been asked for political literature of all sorts.

Finally, I hope that space is not going to be given to vacuous and irrelevant arguments about who holds the holy writ of anarchist thought in this country. Fraternally...

Alan Albon

I was only pulling friendly legs over the subs saga, Alan. I know you had more than honourable reasons for leaving. Good luck with the Green thing.

Stu



Insulting Freedom

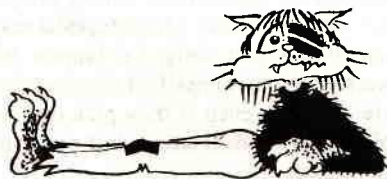
As long as there has been an anarchist press, there have been papers claiming to be anarchist propaganda sheets, which in practice denigrated anarchism by slagging off other anarchist papers. In this country *Freedom* was always the main target of such nonsense, because it was the first established, and tried to present anarchism as intellectually respectable.

Commonweal railed against *Freedom's* founders, 'the Kropotkin-Wilson crowd'. *The Word* frothed against *Freedom's* editor Tom Keell. In 1945 one of *Freedom's* rivals even stooped to physical attack, smashing type on the press with sledge hammers. These days there is no threat of physical attack, but the tradition of written abuse is carried on by yet another envious contemporary.

Freedom's rule has been to ignore abuse from dotty comrades, as a self-respecting adult would ignore abuse from a drunken colleague or a demented relative. There have been lapses from the rule, when the gratuitous insults became too much for a particular editor; regrettable lapses.

As anyone who has been on a demo will testify, yelling back at people shouting Bollocks! from the sidelines does not shut them up. It only encourages them.

Donald Room



October, Yes — December, No

As an irregular reader of your paper over the years there is one thing that annoys me, and this is all the personal slagging off of other anarchists that goes on. When I first read *Freedom* five years ago, I found that I had to buy it regularly to keep up with all your correspondents and editorials, as a letter in one issue inevitably sparked off a series of replies and further replies that could last for months. This often tends to be introspective and petty. And anyway, we all know that the one thing we anarchists agree on is that we disagree.

I thought at one stage that this habit was disappearing, especially when I bought the October issue. This, I thought, was one of the best *Freedom's* I have read. The dearth of so many slagging off letters meant better news coverage, more diverse articles and excellent book reviews. Great.

Unfortunately I missed the November issue. When I picked up the December issue I found the old recrimination syndrome back worse than ever. Most people who read *Freedom* do so because they like the paper; they don't give a toss

if Albert Meltzer doesn't get on with the people who edit it, and don't want to read his personal attacks. And we also do not need paragraphs and paragraphs of self-justification from you; the paper should be good enough to speak for itself.

Black Flag has the same problem; loads of silly personal slaggings off and gossip. We don't need it. If another paper makes allegations against *Freedom*, please try to ignore it. The space your replies take up could be far better spent on more constructive articles.

Here's to more *Freedom's* like the one for October.

Johnny Yen

Actually it was the October issue that caused the row with Albert... glad you liked it.

Hopefully the new collective can make *Freedom* a little more outgoing and less the in-group house journal that it has been for so long. *Freedom* (the 1886 version) started out as anarchist-communist, and various *Freedom's* since then have claimed to be anarchist-communist.

Why then do you devote so much space to the right-wing 'libertarians' and 'anarcho-capitalists'. Most of the readership classifies itself as anarchist-communist, anarcho-syndicalist or libertarian-socialist, and I'm sure they don't want to read such trash.

The December issue had one and a third pages devoted to this controversy. Couldn't it be more usefully used to report on the miners' strike, other industrial militancy, and action in the community and the anti-war movement?

And couldn't we have a bit less of the sectarian bickering in the pages of *Freedom*? I know you have to reply to attacks, but couldn't you limit the space for this?

I agree with Walter Westphal that libertarian publications should be sold more widely, and including demonstrations. But for such papers to be sellable, they should attempt to introduce libertarian ideas and libertarian ways of organising to working class people, and they should drop the obscure language and obscure topics that seem so popular at the moment.

War Commentary was a class struggle paper, they reported on the latest industrial action, they had good cartoons from John Olday, etc. Can't you turn *Freedom* into something like that?

Nick Heath

Dear Friends,

Things are quite exciting over here. Quite a lot of direct action (occupation of Western Mining offices, die ins at recruiting offices, protests at war ships and, of course, the womens peace camp at Cockburn Sound). Most gratifying after previous years of dull meetings and nothing much doing. I just hope it lasts.

Inter-anarchist disputes are incredibly boring if you don't know the personalities involved (which few here do). It may be that politically I would be closer to the Black Flag mob — if I were in London. Certainly socially I think I'd feel more at home with you lot — if I was in London. But I'm not and find the whole thing looks a bit silly. If I was you I'd be totally ruthless in suppressing the issue from the pages of *Freedom* and put all energies into getting out a really good anarchist paper — which *Freedom* these days shows some signs of becoming again.

Mike
Libertarian Resource Centre
Fremantle, W Australia



Pacifism and Violence

It was ironic that half of the issue in which Colin Ward stated 'the anarchists bitterest disputes are internal' should be devoted to the fruitless feuding the anarchist movement seems to have slipped into. If anarchists spent about half as much time undermining the State (by refusing to subsidise it for a start — I wonder how many anarchists meekly pay their taxes?) as they spend accusing one another of being 'anti-anarchist' or 'dupes of the fascists', maybe we wouldn't end up with Colin Ward having to admit 'the failure of anarchism, as a political movement, to win the support of more than almost invisible minorities in most of the populations of the world'. All this mud-slinging and witch hunting between *Freedom*, the Anarchist Black Cross and DAM, just reminds me of Stalinist purges and the heresy trials of the Inquisition. Quit the bickering; the State's the enemy, remember?

Two points about the new *Freedom*. Firstly, the new format sounds good (but if the 'news' is more squabbling, I'd rather have just 'views'). Secondly, the most positive thing about the new *Freedom* is A K Brown's excellent article, 'Bang 1' in the November issue. However, the graphics, as David Kovan mentioned, and the perjorative label 'quietists' on *Freedom's* booklist dampen my enthusiasm for what looked like a rare example of willingness

to consider anarcho-pacifism as a valid alternative to the 'Bomb and Burn' school of thought (though?)

It would be good to devote an entire issue to the question of violence; after all, there are plenty of arguments for rejecting violence as being incompatible with anarchism. Anarchists have always criticised Marxism for its belief that the end justifies the means (eg, the dictatorship of the proletariat will lead to the abolition of the State). How can the organ of violence that is the State be abolished by armed revolutionaries, who will themselves become an organ of violence — a new State? All anarchists recognise that authority rests on violence; why is it they cannot (or do not want to) see that the reverse is also true? Authority is violence; violence is authority. [Eds: Rubbish!]

The criticism levelled at anarcho-pacifism — implicit in the label 'quietist' — that its plan for action (total non-participation in the State and non-violent resistance to it, as well as the creation of alternative structures) gets nowhere is just as true of 'revolutionary' violence. Violence only gives the State an excuse for even greater repression and awakens not revolution, but reaction in your average Johnny. Violence cannot be compatible with a belief in the dignity and inviolability of human life, with a belief in the right of every individual to rule over their own life. Oh, I see, you meant every individual you didn't gun down in your revolution, who isn't a pig or a capitalist or a soldier or a civil servant. Strikes me that that means freedom for those who agree with you and no-one else. The reason for the insignificance of the present anarchist movement isn't a lack of 'heroes' prepared to shoot the pigs and bomb no 10; it's far more the failure of anarchists to live up to their ideals (preaching revolution whilst subsidising and participating in reaction) together with the public belief, encouraged by those who advocated 'revolutionary' violence, that anarchism's answer to everything is the bullet and the bomb.

For non-violent revolution. . .

Anark
PS If *Freedom* prints this letter in full, it shows you're less sectarian than the Anarchist Black Cross: I'd be interested to hear the refutations of all these 'tired old pacifist arguments'.

[Eds: We are not interested in providing a great deal of space to a pacifist v bombist 'war of words'. Neither side ever listens to anybody else, and both have retreated into a fantasy-world where the real consequences of their actions are not allowed to 'intrude' upon the 'truth' of their ideologies. Andy Brown is not a pacifist, or anything like, by the way.]

New London Group

We are a group of anarchists, anti-militarists and non-party socialists who are committed to direct action. Our activities so far have ranged from participation in mass events such as 'Stop the City', Reclaim Chilwell and the blockade of Lancaster House, to smaller actions like the recent incursions in Upper Heyford USAF base. We were instrumental in initiating the occupation of the CEGB in support of the miners this July, and have been making regular collections for the miners since the strike began. We believe in the mass transformation of society by the active participation of all people.

Please add our name to your list of contacts:

Streatham Action Group,
c/o 121 Books,
121, Railton Road,
London, SE24.

Volya is an independent democratic journal. Our aim is to provide a regular source of news and analysis concerning the struggles of workers, dissidents and oppressed minorities in the so-called socialist countries of the world. It is our contention that these countries are not, in fact, socialist or at least do not exemplify the kind of socialism we are interested in promoting, namely free, democratic, grass-roots socialism. Instead these countries exhibit a new form of class society as exploitative and oppressive as western monopoly capitalism. Yet in spite of all the evidence to support this view there are still those on the left who regard the Soviet model of 'actually existing socialism' as worthy of emulation. We believe that there is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost if the labour movement adopts this approach. It enables the champions of reaction to smear socialists with the charge of wanting to destroy democracy and set up East-European style dictatorships. If humanity is to survive into the next century let alone build a society worthy of human beings as self-active, self-emerging individuals then the demystification of both the theory and practice of Stalinist totalitarianism is an urgent necessity, an item to be placed at the top of the political agenda. *Volya* is intended as a modest contribution to this process. We invite our readers to contribute as well by sending us letters, articles, reviews and criticism. Above all we welcome financial help whether in the form of donations or subscriptions. Our subscription rates are as follows:

Ordinary sub	£2
Overseas sub	£3
Supporting sub	£5

Make cheques and postal orders payable to T Liddle and send to: VOLYA, 83 Gregory Crescent, London SE9 5RZ.

DAMNESTY

AN EVERYDAY STORY OF SYNDICALIST FOLK

S London DAM: A case study in Anarcho-Stalinism

I wasn't going to say anything about my possible expulsion from DAM while it is still in the balance, but the letter from Peter Yeril (presumably endorsed by SLDAM) demands my response. I don't know what his excuse is for stooping to slander, but his letter is nevertheless worth analysing as a classic case of Anarcho-Stalinism.

I really was flabbergasted to read of the '*comradely warnings*' that had supposedly come my way before they tried to expel me. The facts are that I reported my perspective on Spain to a DAM conference in Hull on December 3rd 1983, and no one seemed upset. A motion was even passed affirming the right to publish information about any groups we saw fit. A full report went in the *Internal Bulletin* and nobody complained.

In August, without a word to me, and giving me no opportunity to answer the charges, SLDAM tried to have me expelled at a meeting called to discuss publications. Instead the Secretary was asked to write to me, which he did, but I got the impression it was at the request of a handful of individuals. PY characterises my response as '*Can't be bothered to reply*' which is an interpretation you could draw if you only read the first sentence of the letter. Anyone who reads further (and it's printed in the September *Internal Bulletin*) will see it actually just says that I'd prefer to reply through the *IB* than answer individuals one at a time. If you sling enough mud, PY, some of it might stick, but try and choose situations where the real facts aren't so easy to ascertain.

What happened in Sheffield would be more suitable in this respect. I think one bloke left to join the Labour Party, but I certainly didn't encourage him! Not that I deny writing '*Why not vote Labour?*', which basically just suggested that 'They're all the same', might be a simplistic basis for analysing party politics and that electing a Labour Government could be the best way to demonstrate what a shower they are, a la Mitterand. Maybe the whole article was rubbish, it wasn't, but even if it was, is it a crime to be confused? After all, it was only in the *IB*.

SLDAM would obviously like to label me as 'The man who wanted to vote Labour' and no mention of the reasons why, but do they expect your readers to go along with this and damn me just because I am associated with one of the 'Symbols of Satan'. I shared a house with a black cat at the time, if he'd only known he could have thrown that in too.

PY points out the safeguards surrounding DAM's procedure for expulsions, but fails to mention that they are there as the result of a motion I put forward at Glasgow. They have already amply demonstrated their contempt for natural justice as detailed above.

Finally, the reactions of SLDAM to my reports of 'Mafia style intimidations' in the CNT illustrates perfectly the doctrine of divine infallibility. Obviously I didn't make these claims lightly, they came after I'd received evidence from Spanish comrades I know well and I studied the case from both sides using the fundamental concepts of investigative journalism, eg plausibility of ascribed motives, etc. SLDAM etc apparently prefer systems of 'logic' normally associated with the Spanish Inquisition, eg 'You *can't* say that about a section of the IWA', as if there was some law of physics which made my claims inherently impossible. So they leave it at that, confident that all righteous people will see me for the heretic I am.

I'm always willing to accept that there are two sides to each case, but SLDAM and the *Vatican Times/Black Flag*, despite their claim to be 'defenders of the faith', have given us precious few hard facts about the CNT-AIT's view of the split. That they are content to just serve up little more than ritual denunciations is either a comment on their own intelligence or what they assume their readers to be. In fact, if you want to get the CNT-AIT's perspective, such as specific reasons why they oppose the works committees or the details of Spain's new anti-trade union law, there's one English language paper that can give you them, it's called *Sinews*. Nuff Sed, comrades?

Mick Larkin

Sinews costs 25p from SIN, 49a South Terrace, Esh Winning, County Durham, England DH7 9PS.

DAM Amuse Sheffield

I am not accustomed to writing letters to *Freedom*, and I have been happy to follow the Larkin/DAM debate with detached amusement so far. However, when I read Peter Yeril's reference to Sheffield in his letter in the last issue, I thought *Freedom* readers might be interested in the truth (just for history's sake).

If I may refresh readers' memories with what Peter Yeril said, '*He (Larkin) also advocated that DAM members should vote Labour when in Sheffield, which is like voting for the CP in Russia! The Sheffield group dissolved itself, another member resigned in protest at the continued membership of Mr Larkin*'.

When in existence Sheffield DAM consisted of three people — Mick Larkin, Heather and Heather's boyfriend (whose name I don't know). They were as active as most DAM groups, which meant that very few people actually knew of their existence.

In the run-up to the 1983 General Election, Mick Larkin not only advocated that DAM members should vote Labour, but that everybody should. Heather's boyfriend also advocated that people vote Labour. And Heather (who conveniently remembers this only 18 months after, at the first North-East DAM conference as fuel for the DAM purge), far from resigning, said nothing, although she was the only member of Sheffield DAM *not* to vote Labour.

I cannot remember when Sheffield DAM ceased trading exactly (they were not greatly missed), but it was definitely some months after the election. It was caused more by the disappearance of Heather's boyfriend, and Mick Larkin moving further north, than for any political reason.

What a joke these people are. Maybe DAM could carry out a census to find out how many DAM members voted Labour, and those that answered truthfully could be expelled as well.

I think the rest of your readers know exactly what is going on with the Larkin/DAM affair, and it is therefore not worth commenting on further. DAM fool nobody but themselves. Love and anarchy . . .

Barn
Sheffield

DAM Bossism

I must take issue with Stu Stuart and Peter Yeril on their comments about the proposed sacking of Mick Larkin from DAM and the DAM constitution.

My only concern is to defend the DAM and its constitution from abuse. In this case it is not only the DAM constitution which is at fault, as Mr Stuart suggests, but those who seek to flout it in their efforts to get rid of people with whom they disagree, like Mick Larkin. Rules are only signposts appealing for recognition.

Now Mr Yeril and the Londoners have ably argued the case for ignoring the rules and firing Mr Larkin on account of his wicked 'ideas and practice'. Larkin has circulated criticisms of the CNT-AIT and apparently 'advocated DAM members should vote Labour in Sheffield'. These, though they are solemn sins in the eyes of some, are not contrary to DAM's rules.

It matters not at all if, as Mr Yeril claims, "... many members of DAM as well as our own confederates in the International Workers Association were pissed off with his ideas and practice". Simply because some people don't take a shine to Larkin or anyone else is not good grounds for dismissal. The rules of DAM are not purgatives.

What is at issue here is not whether Mick Larkin is straying from some imaginary party line, but rather if London DAM can make up the rules as they go along, try to dragoon the national membership, and disassociate themselves from fellow members in advance of National Conference decisions. Mr Yeril's letter merely catalogues those blatant breaches by the Londoners. Neither the Manchester meeting of the publications commission nor a Summer School in Burnley are

constitutionally proper places to discuss the sacking of a member — especially when the member is not present. I understand that the Londoners living so near to the seat of government may feel they have special rights over the rest of the movement, but even they cannot constitutionally 'jump the gun' and disassociate themselves from any paid up member of DAM.

Bossism is a dreadful disease — we are all susceptible to it at times — and the Londoners, who have done many good things, must not now lose their sense of judgement in their efforts to please the IWA-AIT Secretariat. If the dignity of DAM is to be retained, we must be more than a rubber stamp for some imaginary bosses in Madrid or West Germany.

Brian Bamford

What are they frightened of?

After a brief period of absence from the British Anarchist movement I find reading the pages of *Freedom* and *Black Flag Bulletin* brings me much distress. Once again our movement is being disrupted by squabbles and infighting. Naturally, debate is only healthy — and we are in need of a great deal more of it — but the recent letters pages of these two excellent papers revealed something less than comradely debate.

I refer in particular to the vilification of our comrade Mick Larkin by the members of the S London DAM branch. I begin to wonder if they have not in fact been infiltrated by some fascist or trotskyist group. What on earth are the SLDAM so frightened of? Are they so authoritarian that they are incapable of tolerating opinions which do not correspond to their own rigid and dogmatic approach? Such

attitudes must have no place in the anarchist movement. We are, after all, a movement of freedom.

Again, my comrade Bob Mander here in Swansea has also had a difficult time with the SLDAM. He wrote a while ago to a section of the CNT-AIT to ask for money for his Miners' Support Group. He duly received a donation from them. The International Secretary of the DAM (part of the SLDAM) wrote angrily back demanding that in future all foreign correspondence be handled through the IS alone! Such authoritarian centralism leaves no room for local initiative — which is a fundamentally anarchist way of organising. Perhaps the IS would like the money returned? The SLDAM clearly reveal themselves to be highly authoritarian. Let's expose them once and for all.

And why are the SLDAM so frightened of open debate with Mick in the general anarchist press and not solely in the DAM's *Internal Bulletin*? (Incidentally, comrades, I'm still waiting for mine!). Many (perhaps most) British anarchists look to the DAM as a source of encouragement and inspiration whilst not being prepared to join it themselves. Many of them see the DAM as the most important anarchist group in the country — and it is certainly doing more for anarchism than any other group. Because of this it is only right that such a debate should be carried out where all of us can follow it — it has consequences for us all.

The diatribe between Albert Meltzer and *Freedom* is also very saddening. I do not wish to take sides; will you please both have the humility to become reconciled? Please!

Yours for an end to mud-slinging, let there be more light!

John Andrew

PS The quality of *Freedom* has improved greatly. Keep up the good work.



Anarchists in Clydeside: Activities Past

Despite the supposed 'downturn' in revolutionary politics associated with the economic management of the 'capitalist crisis', activities collectively organised by Clydeside anarchists have increased in recent years. The 'ebb and flow' of such collective activity owes much to the encouragement of the riots of 1981, the anti-militarist agitation of 1982, the initiative to launch public meetings including street-speaking in 1983, and support for the miners' strike in 1984.

The legacy of anarchism, in its variants of anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian, communism and Stirnerism dates back to

1890 when the first anarchist group was formed out of the disintegration of the Socialist League. There is a tendency for breaks in continuity between successive generations of anarchist militant — for example, the 1890s group that continued, despite the general decline nationwide through the Boer War and sporadically in Glasgow and Paisley in the early 1900s, until succeeded by the George Barret sponsored *The Anarchist* national weekly pro-trade union paper of 1912, was in turn superceded by local involvement in Guy Aldred's anti-parliamentarian papers *The Herald of Revolt*, *The Spur* and *The*

Commune, and with the continuity of agitators such as Willie McDougall and James Murray into the early 1930s. They survived the 'Cat and Mouse' arrests of the First World War, the demoralisation of the experience of the failure of the revolutionary wave to spread successively beyond Russia, mass unemployment, the experience of the Labour Party in power, the debacle of the 1926 General Strike and the 'National Bolshevik' domination of the revolutionary Left. Another generation of anarchists came to prominence during World War Two, when Glasgow Anarchists provided the principal street and industrial opposition amongst the working class, an influence that was partly reflected in the pages of *War Commentary* and in the AFB Secretaryship. However, with few exceptions, this generation, in the wake of post-war construction and the Cold War, ceased activity within a few years of the end of the War.

In the 1960s a new cycle of anarchist militancy arose. There was less reliance on the propagandist role and more attachment to direct action methods. 'Solidarity' autonomous group, for example, was formed out of the direct action rift with the CND, and the need to stimulate a response in workplaces. The turnover intensified during the '60s with the onset of educated declassé elements replacing the self-educated proletarian of the past, increased, and there was often little continuity between successive groups.

This was evident when the Glasgow Anarchist Group was revived in 1975, and there was little continuity with the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists group of 1971-3, or the magazine *Black Skelf*. Cultural rebellion and the marginalisation of the revolutionary minority in squats and alternative projects had taken place. 'To go to the people' through 'fair fares', claimants' union and community radical papers (*Glasgow People's Press*, 1977-8) became the attitude to counter the sense of separation of the revolutionary group from the working class, while identifying as factions with *Anarchist Worker*, *Solidarity for Social Revolution*, *Black Flag* and situationism became the order of the day. This was also the era when anti-sexism came into being, and increasingly radical women retreated into the feminist movement.

The present group of Clydeside Anarchists gradually emerged in the 1981/2 period as a result of the developing activity around the magazine *Practical Anarchy* which had started life as a fanzine

Practical Anarchy
CLYDESIDE ANARCHIST GROUP



COUNTER INFO

SPRINGBURN FOLLIES

NUMBER 3 OCTOBER 1984

Springburn shopping scandal

RE-FUSE COLLECTION

EK ANARCHISTS NEV

DANGER!
Asbestos

SONGS FOR SWINGING SCROUNGERS

No 1. THE RED FLAG (GLASGOW VERSION)
The People's Flag is Black and Red
Though Michael Kelly says it's dead
He tells the Bosses we're all tame
But we refuse to play the game...



democracy by...
ically destroying their ballot paper. They are
sly challenging respect for the State and the
it seek to maintain it: Political Parties, the
the Law, Business Companies, Trade Unions, the
the Press, Radio and Television, the Armed Forces
vents throughout the World.

ist ideas should not be confused with that of the
ed Nazi organisations. The first, represented by
list Workers Party, Communist Party and Militant
among others, wants to seize power for itself by
"Workerism". The second, such as the National Front
Movement, want to go further than successive
is and end immigration and promote "Racism". We are
red that the pernicious doctrine of ANARCHY be
f because if it took hold then the whole fabric
would be turned upside down.

so wish to draw attention to this group's use of the
shop at 488 Cl. Western Rd. as a mailing address
"Box 3" and warn people that some of the books sold
are of a subversive nature and supporting a wide ra
of alternatives to the established order."

the Candidates

THE SHOPPING CENTRE? Dr
its centre. The only people who
Labour Party. It's all the other

SPORT PASSPORT PASSPORT
free access to a world without
boundaries...



United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland
A passport is valid only if you say
For full use be entirely aware
obedient (see page 3)
For details see page 3 or page 4, for an account
reference to the Ministry of the Foreign Office

21-10-81
21-10-82

INDICATOR OF IDENTIFY MUST BE PROVIDED BY APPLICANT FOR THE PASSPORT
2295 6745 6778 5674 678 45665 807

and Present

in Paisley, became a Clydeside project and was transformed into a monthly broadsheet from April 1982 onwards, with the 'Fuck the Falklands' lead article. Other projects of that year, such as a youth group, did not materialise, but anarchism became outward looking again through workplace, local and 'demo' distribution. There was participation in an alternative bookshop, the publication of a number of pamphlets, all now out of print (*The Bourgeois Role of Bolshevism*, *GPP*, *The End of Music*, *Art and Anarchism* and *Education: The Anarchist Approach*, Autonomy Press), and the occasional imaginative leaflet at the time of the Falklands. The new core group included many militants disillusioned with Trotskyite groups such as the SWP and Militant, although the practice of the broadsheet as 'organiser' was carried over.

At a rough calculation, over 90,000 such broadsheets and leaflets have been distributed in the past couple of years.* It is always difficult to gauge the response, although the style has been deliberately 'popular', well-produced and geared to a tabloid readership in a way few other anarchist leaflets seem to have attempted. The Left have to sit up and take notice, especially in the wake of the Tory landslide of 1983 and the number of public meetings and street presence of the Clydeside Anarchists, through the establishment of a speaking pitch in Argyle Street, a pedestrian shopping precinct, and the proliferation of local news-sheets such as *Springburn Follies*, *West End Crimes*, *Toejam* (Kilmarnock), *Refuse* (East Kilbride) and *Black Bairn* (Falkirk), with the parochial and the vitriol combined. As with successive groups from the '60s onwards there has been an emphasis on direct action and propaganda of the deed as well as the role of the broadsheet in 'destroying illusions' and spreading information on anti-authoritarian actions, whether it was a blockade of a Housing Department in Castlemilk in 1983 or of the Faslane intrusions into the military complex over the past couple of years.

The miners' strike has been a test for the group as a focal point of activity, and in terms of effective ways to demonstrate solidarity with the mining communities.

After a barrage of issues of *Practical Anarchy* in May, the emphasis has been switched to organising weekly collections for the strike, and establishing links with communities. Readers will already be familiar with the tactics of the Communist Party controlled Trades Council to use

the police against collectors and to attempt to prevent direct dispersal of funds collected to local mining communities. They have not succeeded in preventing this, £3,000 having been collected and directly dispersed, and contacts are developing in the Lothians and Ayrshire mining communities. Similarly the Price Waterhouse occupation has attracted widespread media attention and directed opposition against the role of the State's sequestrators and the trial of twelve anarchists and unemployed activists is due in December.

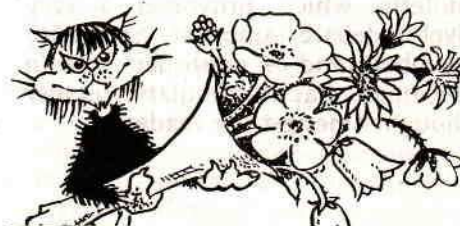
As *Practical Anarchy* has developed, there has been a pronounced shift from discussion to agitation articles. Two issues of an expanded four-page paper version have been produced, accommodating some articles of a wider propagandist nature, while another development has been the creation of a quarterly journal, the first two issues under the banner *Clydeside Anarchist*, and future issues will be autonomously produced under a different headline to provide a forum for reflection on theory, strategy and analysis of modern society. The group's strong point, however, is the level of activity and, in recent months, an increasing number of animal rights activists and punks have identified with this emphasis, and in particular direct action and support activity associated with the miners strike.**

Because the group is not concentrated around squats and is geographically dispersed, individuals are mandated as office-bearers within the group, which is composed mainly of unemployed militants and consequently fundraising for the printing is a constant drawback. The group, while becoming more concentrated on certain activities of late, has always emphasised that it is a federal organisation, with autonomous projects encouraged, rather than a unitary group with the organisation directing activity.

Jim McFarlane

** *Counter Information*, a regular chronicle of the capacity of miners to directly assume the initiative in the struggle against the police, is being produced by libertarian communists and anarchists in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

* 12,000 copies of anti-militarist issue in August 1982 were distributed, but generally 3,000 is an average print-run.



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 £50 Dalrymple Strike Centre
 £50 Ayr Strike Centre
 £50 Fallin Miners Wives Relief Fund
 £50 Dalmellington Strike Centre
 £50 Cumnock Strike Centre
 £50 Logan Strike Centre
 £50 Auchinleck Strike Centre
 £50 Catrine Strike Centre
 £50 Mauchline Strike Centre
 £50 Ochiltree Strike Centre
 £50 Rankinston Strike Centre
 £50 Coylton Strike Centre
 £50 Drongan Strike Centre
 £50 Muirkirk Strike Centre
 £50 Dalmellington Strike Centre
 £50 Glenburn Strike Centre
 £50 Mossblown Strike Centre
 £50 Daily Strike Centre
 £50 Patna Strike Centre
 £50 Tarbolton Strike Centre
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 £50 Gleaspin Strike Centre
 £50 Kirkconnell Strike Centre
 £50 New Cumnock Strike Centre
 £50 Sanquhar Strike Centre
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FURTHER MONEY IS ON ITS WAY TO THE
 24 STRIKE CENTRES IN AYRSHIRE.
 THANK YOU FOR YOUR SOLIDARITY.

Middle Class War

The following article was originally written as a Solidarity discussion bulletin which provoked a very lively debate amongst Solidarity members and is published here in the hope that it stimulates further thought amongst our readers.

The Middle Class. Some Thoughts. (Solidarity Discussion)

Whilst Eastern and Western societies are very different, they are both highly stratified societies with a small group of order givers at the top and a large group of order takers at the bottom. They differ in the dynamics of formation of the order givers and on the basis of legitimisation that the order givers offer to justify their privileged position.

However, they both rely on an intermediate stratum to perform two different though interrelated functions. Firstly, this intermediate group has to act in a purely mechanical way. It is simply a transmission belt for the orders. Once the orders have been relayed down the line to the order takers this function has been discharged.

The second function is much more creative. This is to put flesh, in a practical way, on the concepts that the order givers would like to see embodied in the social fabric. Whilst performing this function the intermediary group, the middle classes, may even have a power of veto over the order givers.

'I'm sorry minister, it's a physical impossibility to turn plutonium into food for Ethiopia. That plan will have to be abandoned.'

This power of veto relies on the acceptance by the order giver of the expertise of the middle class intermediate. In this sense the position of expert knowledge has always been a route to political power. What I would like to do is to open a discussion on the nature of the groups that occupy this so-called middle social position.

First the mere transmitters. These people have traditionally been the upper working class and the lower middle class. That is, in industry the foreman or in offices the lower clerical staff. They were an essential component of the authority transmission belt, because a complex society required a vast bulk of information processing and the execution of the tasks thrown up by the processing of information.

At the present time this group is under

attack, and they have very little power to resist the attack. Office skills are becoming redundant, ledger clerks are already a thing of the past. The skilled worker's job is being done more efficiently by industrial robots. The hardware and the software required to threaten the existence of the transmission belt strata are already in existence. Even Solidarity discussion bulletins are produced and printed by computer.

In my view Thatcherism is the political response of this group. Threatened with extinction, their self-respect disappearing, never having had a traditional class solidarity, they lash out in an angry, but incoherent manner. Appeals to return to Victorian values are music to them. After all, that was the time when they were indispensable.

I believe that there is a real danger that this group could provide a nucleus for an extreme right backlash. Racism, anti-semitism and anti-intellectualism would feed their desire for revenge and give them a system where they could earn their self-respect at the expense of others. They are dangerous in their decline.

In the Czech pamphlet* I put forward the thesis that some of the history of Eastern Europe in the 1960's could be interpreted as a contest between two groups claiming legitimacy as the true inheritors of institutionalised Marxism-Leninism. These two groups were the Party bureaucrats and the emergent scientific-technological strata. The second group could wear radical political clothes and claim that its interests were those of society as a whole. I believe that an analogous process is occurring in Britain today.

The traditional upper-middle class in Britain too, can lay claim to an esoteric knowledge to justify its privileged position. It is the product of an institutionalised ritual that is seen to establish the required characteristics needed to practice executive authority.

Traditionally they are the products of a small elite of schools that instilled a sense of inherent superiority. This sense is then tempered with practical management. First as members of the Army officer cadre or as colonial administrators:

This is then followed by an apprenticeship in management in either the private enterprise sector or as lower administrative grades in the public bureaucracies. Their esoteric knowledge is the special knowledge of man-management.

Politically this group represents traditional conservative values. The one nation hypothesis is attractive because it satisfies all their cultural conditioning. If the

nation is a traditional paternalistic family, then there must be a head.

They are ideally suited to the role because they are the experts in man-management. Compassion and caring conservatism is a reality because all families have their children, who need care and compassion. Only now, the children are their own working-class and colonial subjects.

There is some confusion within this group now. The questions that the administrative bureaucracy have to face are more and more dealing with the management of things rather than people. Now the question becomes 'What sort of information processing system do we require?' rather than 'What sort of chap do we need to do that job?'

This is not the sort of problem that they are trained to face. Also, behind that question lies a whole social transformation. The social scenery is not one that allows their traditional analysis. As large scale industrial capitalism is being automated away, as service sector industries grow, as whole new methods of production, such as biotechnology, are emerging, each with unknown and unknowable potentials, they are having to rely more and more on a new group, *the emergent scientific-technological stratum*.

This group is the product of the education expansion of the last thirty years; the bright children of predominantly upper working class and the old transmission class groups. They have taken over the new bastions of productive growth.

The technological universities and the polytechnics are turning out a new breed of technocrat with different perspectives and hopes. Many were radicalised during the 1960's. They are the information technologists, the biotechnologists and the genetic engineers.

Politically they may see themselves as allies of the working class. I for one know of more Marxists amongst computer scientists than in almost any other group except for sociologists! They are self-confident, they see the answers that the old upper middle classes just can not see. They will be armed with an ideology, *technocratic socialism*.

At the present time I put forward the thesis that it is this group that will attempt a seizure of political power, at the expense of all other social groups, but in the name of the working population, within a very short space of time.

Petr Cerny

* Czechoslovakia 1968. [Solidarity (London) Pamphlet No 55 £1] c/o 123, Latham Road, London E6.

Green AIT?

Anarchy v Ecology? One opinion

Many parts of the planet are dead, and the rest are already dying. We seem to have gone too far up the military industrial path to turn back even if we want to. A dramatic change of direction is required now. In these circumstances it is natural that the word 'Ecology' is on everybody's lips, and I do not believe it is possible to be an anarchist without being 'Green'. However, I believe that many anarchists who are concerned about the planet's survival are active in the wrong circles and are wasting their efforts.

The involvement of many anarchists in the 'Green' movement and in numerous pressure groups instead of working to build a more co-ordinated anarchist movement seems to be a grave error, and one that most of us have committed. Perhaps the pressure groups have served to make us aware of the problems which are always covered up by the State and the multinationals. But their usual task of persuading the Government to change policy, taking up 'ecologically sound' measures, is irrelevant to anarchism and, if successful, may actually be harmful. Using 'ecological necessity' as an excuse a Government can introduce legislation for the complete control of the seas, the land and their usage; of every gram of metal and every litre of fuel; total rationing; compulsory birth control; perhaps euthanasia. At the end of that path you can see a 'Green' world government, governing an 'ecologically stable'

solar powered prison plant with the workers condemned to hard labour recycling everything for the bosses to continue to live in luxury.

In the anarchist press we have often read, over the years, the complaint that the anarchist movement in Britain is small and un-coordinated. Yet the evidence today is that there are several thousand anarchists in Britain, and thousands more of a libertarian attitude who could become anarchists if there was a well co-ordinated and active movement in which to participate. Instead of participating in groups linked only to one issue, where they are often forced to waste energy fighting within the group against authoritarian factions, comrades should help to build the movement. The energy saved from the internal struggles could then be used to produce good educational material about ecology and its distribution.

Educational work of this type is necessary in two main areas, the community as a whole and specifically, the workplace. It is important to advocate anarcho-communist social structures and ecologically non-destructive lifestyles and production methods as the overall solution. And people need to realise that, despite the gloomy forecasts, there is enough for everyone to have a good standard of living (as long as the sun continues to shine) if we show solidarity with the masses of starving by sharing equally and halting the super exploitation. This implies a good deal of regional self-sufficiency and improved distribution to areas which have

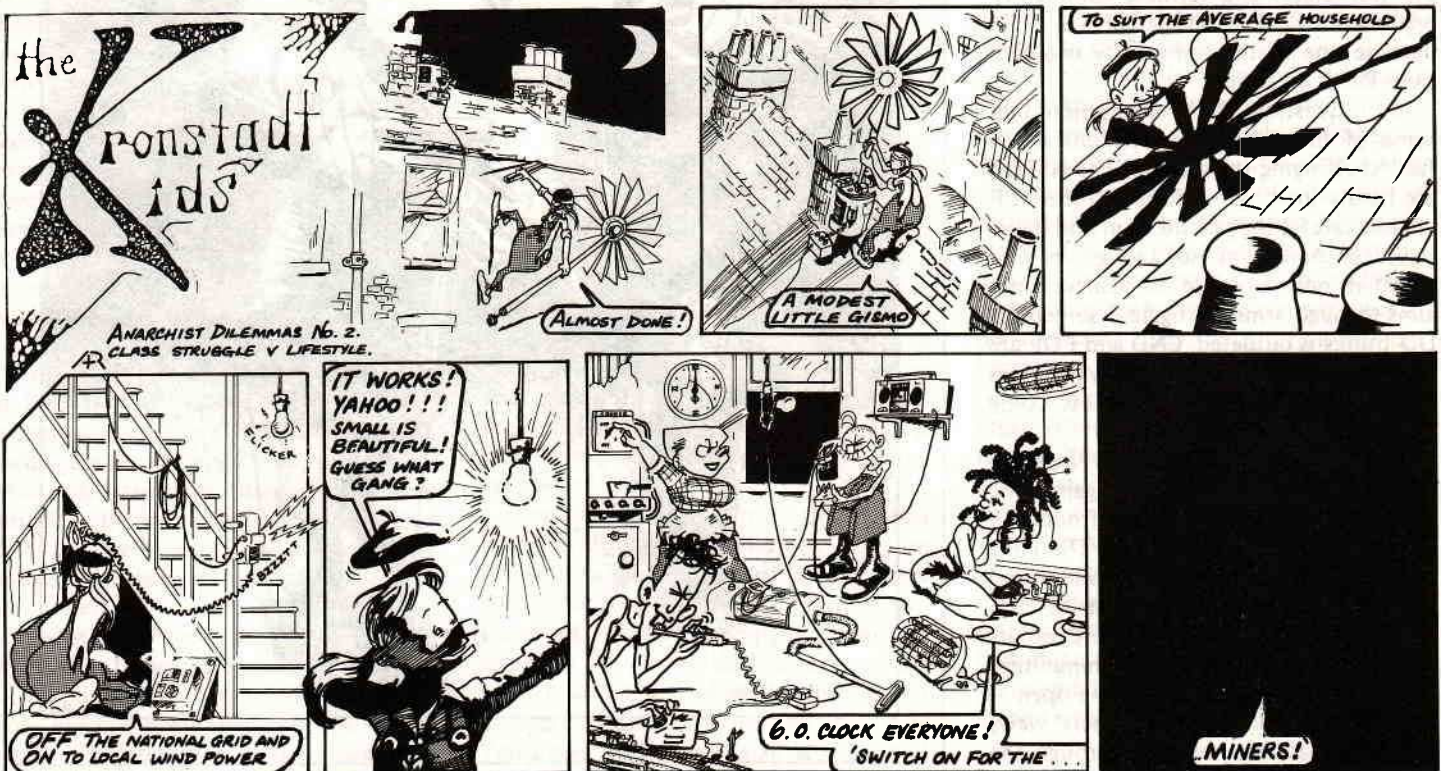
a lack of resources.

Vitally important is educational activity in the workplaces. Industry is, after all, a major producer of pollution and consumer of resources. The people who suffer most are the workers, their families, and the communities where the industries are situated. (Acid rain excepted). The ruling class cannot isolate or quarantine itself completely from disaster, but money and power helps them protect themselves in a way which workers cannot, with air conditioned shelters, food, fuel and medical care. This distinction between the 'saved' and the rest of us should be used to recreate the unity of the working class. For too long we have been divided into sectors, unemployed, part-time, unskilled, skilled, white-collar, professional. Present trade union structures aid the State in promoting these divisions. However, in the event of a major, acute disaster we will see that an injury to one is an injury to all.

By approaching the problems of pollution and misuse of resources from the point of view of workers control of industry, we can offer an immediately realisable solution to the ecological crisis. A community and its workforce aware of the problems could act immediately; instead of waiting for central Government commands or the implementation of insufficient legislation which the multinationals always get round. Indeed, workers control is the only solution to the problem, all others are partial and bound to fail.

Given the comparative sizes of the revolutionary syndicalist movement and the reformist, collaborationist trade unions, I think it is important that

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Organising Anarchy Debate

This is in reply to D Dane's article 'For Anarcho-Communism'. I think the article has many serious shortcomings.

1. DD (works wonders?) argues that everybody needs to feel part of a community — part of a larger whole. Is it not possible that a trade union could provide this feeling of community and in doing so help combat any tendencies towards nationalism.

2. The belief that the proletariat will make the revolution is based, among other things, on usually sound mathematics — the workers, peasant or industrial, make up the majority of the population and therefore, if united action is undertaken, stand a greater chance of success than a revolution based on a minority.

3. DD argues that the workers are guided by motives of self-interest and (inevitably?) fall into the trap of nationalism. Firstly, if the revolution will not be in the interests of the workers (the majority) then what's the point? Is it not possible, DD, that as the revolution is in the participants' interest, they will be acting, possibly, in terms of self-interest. As for nationalism — for it to succeed it needs financial backing, more often provided by the upper and middle classes (see history of German Nazi party), before it's even able to gain mass support. Someone has to pay for the rallies.

4. Workers control is direct democratic control by the participants (workers) who are part of the community. Workers control is *'the working class taking over the workplaces and forming community organisations'*. The libertarian TU could become one of the community organisations DD is on about.

5. I question DD's assumption that some of the groups he mentions are in fact 'challenging the system'. The NSPCA are hardly inciting revolution. If the ALF are not careful they could soon find themselves becoming an isolated group who think it only possible to achieve their aims through armed struggle — something DD thinks is outdated. CND and FOE are hardly revolutionary either — where does revolutionary feeling, initiative, etc, come from then DD?

6. The miners' struggle is not 'an apparent exception' in the fight against the state. Through such mass confrontation several things usually happen. The basis of potential support is much wider and larger usually — the miners' strike continues because of the support of its own community and other communities. The conflict comes out into the open — despite the media bias the miners' views have come across, not only through the

national media but also via the network of support groups. The small activist groups DD admires usually act in isolation and are thus more vulnerable. By making this stand the miners have given everybody the chance to join and thus have helped prevent isolation of themselves (and others perhaps). The miners struggle has educated a few people as to what extent the state will go to prevent serious questioning of its authority (I know this through the experience of a miners support group).

I am not arguing against Anarchist Communism (called Libertarian Communism by the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists) but I am arguing against the view that

society is not class based and that the workers themselves cannot change a society. In fact, it's time the various peace groups, animal rights, ecologists, gay groups, etc, realised that only combining with the workers do they (and the workers) stand any real chance of being triumphant — and of educating each other on the way. If DD disputes the role a Libertarian/Anarchist TU can play in this process, I suggest he read the history of the Spanish Revolution very closely. If we do not learn from history, we do not learn . . .

Eddie May



Organising Anarchy Debate

Recreating The Real Left

Contrary to the popular myth that anarchists are uninterested in the question of organisation, it is in fact precisely our response to the difficult question of how to organise that distinguishes us from other varieties of socialism. The socialists have always placed their faith in centralised leadership and in discipline. This discipline may be more or less strict depending on the nature of the organisation which applies it but the general model under which it operates is fairly clear.

Out of power the Marxist parties have usually adopted a model whereby the elected or appointed Central Committee tries to work out precise details about the attitudes of the party to every issue going. The assumption is that the party is trying to speak for the proletariat, to guide it, and eventually to lead it to revolution. Faction rights may be granted to those who disagree with the party line but the aim is that in public the party will speak with one mind and that individuals will appear to be speaking as representatives of the collective mind.

On paper this may sound like a reasonable arrangement since it reduces confusion and makes the party into an efficient and smoothly running enterprise in which members clearly know what is expected of them and act accordingly. However in practice it doesn't work out so well.

What happens in practice is the Central Committee slowly begins to run the party, firm lines are taken on tactical questions so that members who have minute theoretical difficulties with the committee are forced into a split, and the party becomes an entity which dominates people in much the same way as a religious sect dominates the faithful. Instead of being an organisation which helps people to develop and use their talents the party turns into a recruiting and paper selling machine which feeds on people's need for a sense of belonging and then starts to boss them around.

The result is that people who have always resented the oppressive discipline of their boss or the head of their family accept and embrace that discipline in their spare time without a murmur. Those who argue are branded class traitors or termed petit bourgeois (if they are richer than the members of the Central Committee) and lumpen proletariat (if they are poorer).

Those who agree are rewarded with promotion to branch secretary, or regional organiser. The parallel with organisations like the scientologists or the followers of the Bagwan is a very close one.

Both religious and political groups serve the same needs and exploit the same fears. They feed on and re-inforce the psychological weaknesses which come from a lonely and competitive society.

If such an image of the workings of the Marxist parties outside of power seems unfair it is only necessary to consider their record in office to see that it is an accurate reflection of reality. In power Marxist organisations which have set out with the best of intentions (All Power to the Soviets) have been steadily drawn into acting in the most authoritarian manner by the logic of their organisational structures and political beliefs.



Many modern Marxists, well aware of the horrors of Russian psychiatric prisons, claim that difficult circumstances led to an unfortunate degeneration and argue that it will be different next time. They forget that revolution is by definition a difficult circumstance. They also ignore the sheer number of occasions on which socialist revolutions have failed to create what they promised. Russia; Cambodia; Albania; Ethiopia; Poland — how many times is it necessary to be 'unfortunate' before it is realised that the centralised hierarchical method of organisation is bound to degenerate into the instrument via which a new class exercises its power. *It is in the nature of the beast.*

Consider for instance the Cuban regime which is still held up by many on the left as an example of a reasonably successful socialist regime. Political prisoners of both left and right are in jail, elections are a joke, and freedom of the press is about as real as the freedom of ordinary people to write for the *Daily Telegraph* over here. Small wonder that

many ordinary working class people are alarmed by those who talk about socialist revolution.

The task for those of us on the real left must therefore be to promote a variant of socialism which serves not to put people in their place and to organise them but to give them the confidence to organise themselves.

The model for such a style of organisation can, I believe, be drawn from the actual methods used in the highest point of militant struggle. Organisations like workers' councils and neighbourhood self-help groups have regularly been created in the past. In Russia in 1917, in Spain in 1936, in Hungary in 1956 and in Poland recently, elements of the same style of organisation emerged.

Each area threw up its own organisations which made attempts to link together both directly and centrally but which were independent of central control. Solidarity, for instance, was not guided by the wisdom of Lech Walesa. It was different in every area of the country and was simply the direct expression of the thoughts of ordinary people — messy, confused, Catholic and revolutionary at the same time but *theirs*.

Obviously it is impossible to simply create a workers' council out of thin air and so it might appear that the relevance of such methods of organisation to the British left is relatively limited. However, it is quite possible to apply the principles of non-hierarchical organisation in a non-revolutionary situation. *Indeed, what is interesting about the current state of the miners' dispute is that is precisely what is starting to emerge in a big way.*

Since the official union movement has been virtually useless at the vital task of getting money to the people who need it, miners and the women who fight alongside them, have set about the task of getting it for themselves with admirable speed. The interesting thing is that by making direct contact with ordinary people they have proved far more successful at getting their hands on money and food than the official union movement's 'well organised' levy. Such methods of organisation as Miner's Wives Support Groups have far more to teach us about what a socialist society might be like than any party rally.

I therefore believe that what is needed at the moment is not a revolutionary party to add consciousness to people's actions but a re-education of the left so that it puts its trust in ordinary people. We ought to realise that there is no one revolutionary party with the correct line

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