



THE CUNNINGHAM AMENDMENT

JOURNAL OF THE EAST PENNINE ANARCHISPS.

DEDICATED TO REVOLUTIONARY ACTS OF JOY AND
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DOWN BY STERILE BUREAUCRACIES

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ANARCHIST VOICES MAGAZINE

The opinions expressed in articles featured in Anarchist Voices magazine are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editor. The editor welcomes the submission of articles for publication in Anarchist Voices but cannot guarantee that they will be published. Articles can be submitted typed on paper, on disc, or via email to loegrambyth@tiscali.co.uk.

EDITORIAL

Apologies are due to regular readers and subscribers of Anarchist Voices for the fact that there was no Autumn / Winter edition. Events, including a family illness, prevented me from giving the time needed to put the magazine together. However, the editor is now back at his post and hopes to resume the usual 2 editions a year from this time onwards. Regretfully, I have to make a plea to those select few who write for the magazine to put finger to keyboard or pen to paper in time for the autumn / winter 2012 edition. Several of the articles in this edition have been 'borrowed' from the internet and other journals. It would be much better to have articles written specifically for Anarchist Voices. If Anarchist Voices cannot attract sufficient writers its future may be in doubt.

Perhaps it is the constant flow of bad news that fills TV and mainstream journals that makes some of us feel so depressed about the prospects for the future. There are always positive developments, movements doing imaginative things, starting new projects, individuals struggling to put their anarchist and libertarian ideas into practise in their own lives, communities and workplaces. However, these voices most often seem drowned out by the constant flow of stories about celebrities, entertainment, fashion, crime, murders, man-made disasters, the financial mysticism called economics, and propaganda in

favour of the State and Corporate Capitalism that fills the news.

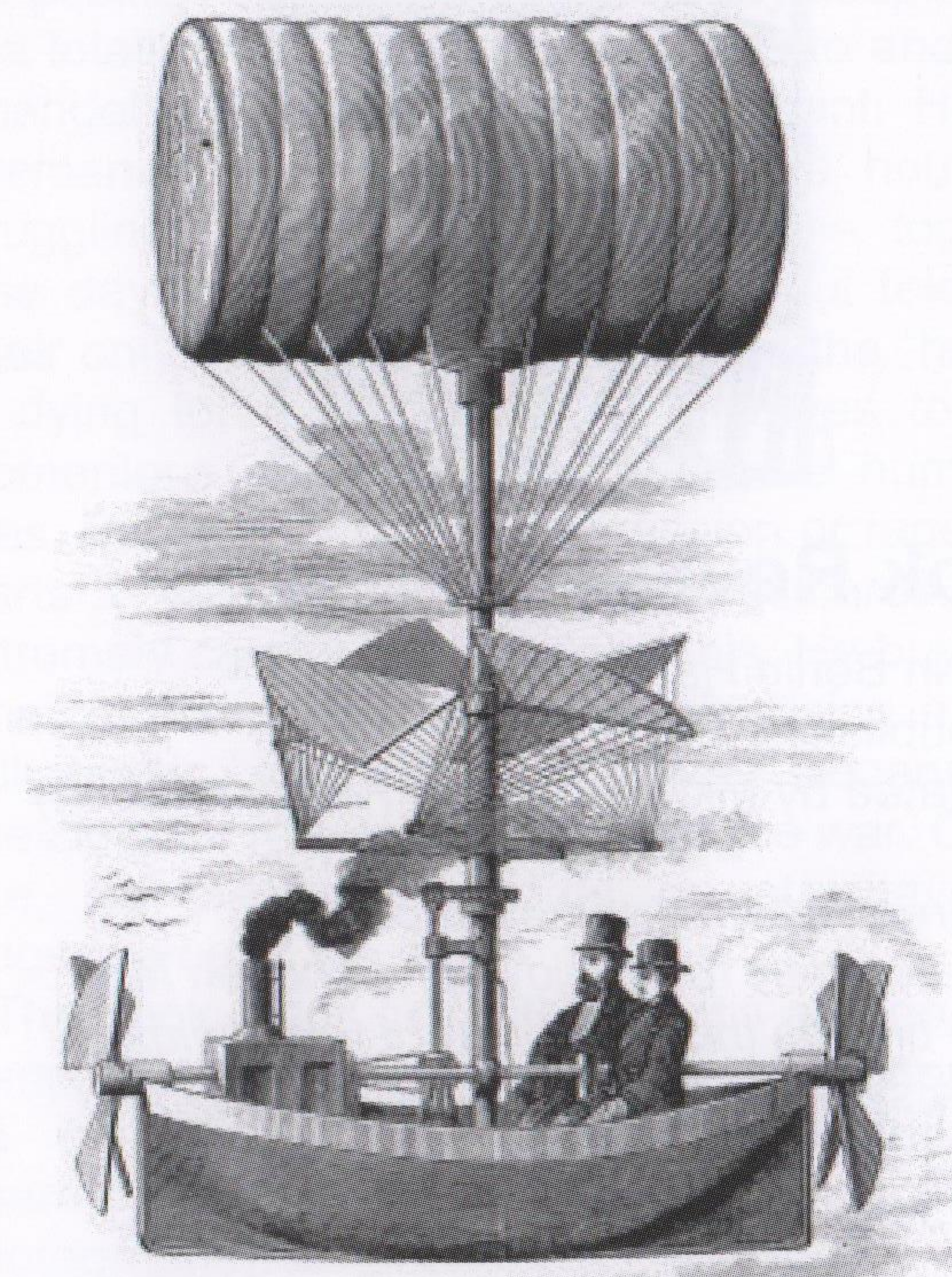
There are efforts by some in the Green Movement to put a different slant on all this through publishing a monthly free newspaper under the title 'Positive News' but while some of the content of this journal is of interest to anarchists, many of the solutions seem to rely on the intervention of governments, albeit more democratic and 'green', and a level of international co-operation unlikely to happen between governments and corporations still bent on persuading their own agendas of profit and power.

Of course there are no easy instant solutions to the problems facing us all as individuals or as Anarchists. Too often our ideas are misrepresented either by the media and politicians, or by so-called anarchists themselves.

The Occupy movement has been an opportunity for anarchists to enter into dialogue with others in society but these protests do not convey how anarchist ideas could transfer into a wider anarchist society. Organisations such as Radical Routes, while not specifically anarchist, do give a living example of anarchist ideas in practice, housing co-ops, small co-operative businesses working within the cracks of corporate capitalist society. Protest movements such as 'the Occupy Movement' can raise consciousness of alternatives but it is those putting the ideas into daily practise who make the bigger contribution, and we need more of the latter if Anarchist and Libertarian ideas are ever to move beyond being a romantic pipedream.

The uncomfortable truth is that at present people either do not know about anarchist ideas, or if they approve of an aspect of anarchist ideology, they still in the major part of their world view, see no way to do without the support of the State and Government in their daily lives. People have come to accept and rely upon state provided schools, health services, social services, employment, state managed transport systems, state supported industries. People resent the long hours of work, the commuting, the low wages, and in thousands of cases, acute poverty, but see no practical way to change the situation. The truth is they do not look to the anarchist movement for a way to change things. Given the downward trend in membership of political parties they do not look to traditional political involvement to change things either. Single issue pressure groups seem to be able to maintain their membership and support. It is likely that people make the mental calculation that they cannot change the wider society but can hope to have an influence on one (limited) issue.

The Welsh have a saying 'dechrau wrth dy draed' which means 'start at your feet', or as I would put it, start from where you are standing. Perhaps that is the best we can hope for in the present situation where the State and Corporate Capitalism seem as powerful, impervious to change and as destructive as ever.



The Road to Freedom

We live in desperate economic times. As I write this, the UK economy has just recorded a fall in output. When you read this, at best, the economy will be limping along with rising unemployment and anaemic growth. At worst we will be back in full-scale recession. Across Europe unemployment stands at a record high at 16.3 million – 5 million of who are in Spain alone! One in five of Spanish workers are without a job.

The consequences of the prolonged economic downturn are as clear as its causes. Jobs are lost; wages and benefits squeezed means that inequality, which has long been growing, increases. If you are born poor in Britain you will die poor and so will your children. In fact the only Western country with lower levels of social mobility than Britain is America. As to the causes of the economic crisis the culprit is clear – capitalism or more accurately finance capitalism.

Politically speaking though, there is something rather odd about this economic crisis. Normally job losses, pay cuts, attacks on benefits and a slash and burn approach to public spending would result in a rise in the popularity of the left [1]. But in America and Britain this just is not happening. The left from revolutionary Marxists to social democrats, unlike in the 1930s, seem unable to capitalise on the dire economic situation. Why is this?

A clue comes from an article written by Alan

Greenspan in The Financial Times in January 2012 entitled 'Meddle with the market at your peril'. Despite the abject failure of the market Greenspan warns of a bigger danger, as his title suggests. Rather oddly using the contrasting examples of East and West Germany he states that any attempt to interfere with the workings of the free market are essentially equivalent to old style state communism and we all know how terrible that is. Now, of course, it would have been a lot fairer if Greenspan had compared now with the 1950s and 1960s when Keynesian demand management led to unprecedented economic growth albeit at the cost of some rather ugly buildings and roundabouts (think Bull Ring or Elephant and Castle)! But somehow the debate (if it can be called that) has become polarised between a call for freedom and free markets (despite the mess they have landed us in) and totalitarianism.

Witness the Tea Party in America with their pictures of Obama as Hitler. Absurd as it sounds to compare the current US President to Hitler, in the 1930s no less a figure than Hayek equated socialism with National Socialism.

The point I am trying to make is that, not for the first time in history, the Right have pulled off a neat trick. They have made the problems of capitalism - the problems of the left. The same thing happened in the 1920s. Then it was all about the Gold Standard, now it is all about Debt. What is juxtaposition is on one side freedom built upon the rock of free markets and on the other the tyranny of the state and socialism.

Of course this world view is reductio ad absurdum on so many levels. The idea, for example, that Obama is in any serious way socialist is absurd. This is also the continuation of a debate that started in the 1920s (see Nicholas Wapshott's *Keynes Hayek – the clash that defined modern economic*). In the 1920s the debate was shaped by the effects of out of control inflation, the monolith of Soviet communism and the rise of the fascists. This, as the Greenspan article shows, continues and the thing is - it works! It is quite possible that Cameron will win the next election in Britain, or that Obama will lose or that Le Pen will do well in the French Presidential elections. Why isn't the left resurgent?

Some of the reason for this strange situation, (strange given the current turbulent economic climate), is that the so-called mainstream parties of the left (and trade unions), just like the 1920s and early 1930s, sign up to the market hegemony. More generally though, what is lacking at this time of fracture and collapse is a left response that clearly articulates an alternative ideology – one that truly and credibly addresses

people's needs.

Anarchism, it seems to me, should be in a strong position being both anti-capitalist but also anti-state. Indeed libertarianism is making some headway but from the right, not the left. In America the Republican candidate Ron Paul's libertarian anti-establishment message is, according to Reuters (12 January 2012), chiming with many American voters. Paul won't be the GOP candidate but he is for many the recognisable face of libertarianism. Their form of libertarianism, however, is just nineteenth century *laissez faire* dressed up for the twenty-first century. It offers no hope.

There are some signs of stirring on the left. While there is a strong anarchist presence in the Occupy movement – the extra parliamentary left's answer to the Tea Party, it is one thread amongst many. Also, too often the anarchist message is wrapped up in the language of the Industrial Revolution rather than the Digital Age. While I believe that the fundamental issue in modern societies is the distribution of resources (aka class), class-consciousness is at an all time low. What then is the point of talking about 'workers' and 'bosses' – putting aside the fact that so many people don't actually work. The size of the anarchist milieu works against us. When there are so few of us it is hard to physically get our message over, but then when we do communicate we often talk just to ourselves.

Anarchism has come out of the shadow of Marxism. In these difficult times we need to work to get our message of mutual aid and cooperation over to people in a way that makes sense to them. This is no mean task but the lessons of the 1920s and 1930s, which we are currently living through again, show what can happen if we don't act. Good ideas can have power way beyond the number of people behind them. Anarchism is a good idea.

Richard Griffin

[1] And of course the far right during the 1930s, and we are seeing dangerous signs of a rise in popularity for neo-Nazi parties. In France Marine Le Pen of the Front-National may succeed in reaching the second round of the presidential elections.



Book Review

Alone in Berlin Hans Fallada
First published 1947
Translated by Michel Hofman Penguin (2009)

*The lamp that only shines in palaces,
And cares only for the joys of a chosen few,
Which breeds the protection of their gains.
Such a system, like a dawn bereft of light,
I refuse to accept, I refuse to know.*
Habib Jalib

All decent and thoughtful Anarchists agree that the idea of the state, or any other kind of political rule, is not only unnecessary but a positive evil that must be cast aside. We consider ourselves to be against disciplined parties and vanguards possessed of the "truth". We have long predicted that "scientific" formulas for post-revolutionary societies are little more than tyrannies - not much better than the ones they replace.

The desire for certainty, for an all-embracing system of rules, has long rampaged through history: with disastrous results. This search for a ruthless panacea of life's problems can reassert itself in the most unexpected quarters and particularly in times of stress and crisis. Calls for a new state, new systems of streamlined bureaucracies, or returns to medieval religious orders, inevitably lead us into the totalitarian state.

All totalitarian states share the same common elements: the definite notions of right and wrong; the supremacy of the state; the elitism of vanguards; the intolerance of intellectuals, infidels, and specific racial groups.

Accounts of life under tyranny are plentiful. Many serve as a blackboard for our own projections. How would I manage under interrogation and imprisonment? How would I cope with a world riddled with informers and departments of secret police? Of course, outside of context, none of us know how we will react. The sad fact remains that the vast majority would aim to lead as quiet a life as possible. To stay out of trouble and not to draw attention to oneself.

Alone in Berlin is a book that addresses directly

the position of an ordinary, everyday couple living in a totalitarian state: 1942 Berlin. Otto and Anna Quangel live in a run-down apartment. He is a foreman at a local factory. She's a housefrau struggling to keep house and home together. One day the couple receive a fateful telegram. Their only son, a conscript, has had the "honour" of dying for the Fatherland. It proves to be a momentous event in their otherwise hum-drum lives. Perhaps to deflect depression or rage, Otto starts to compose hand-written postcards. He is extremely careful how he does this. He buys only small quantities of cards and ink. Using a crude calligraphic style he composes slogans that question the role of the state and the war. One by one, he places the cards on stairways and ledges, around the city.

The book reads like a thriller. It's a page-turner complete with sub-plots and emotional input. Yet it's a novel based upon documented facts (there's a lengthy appendix detailing papers and photographs).

Practically all of the postcards are handed into the Gestapo. An immediate investigation is set up and led by a senior detective. But we learn that even loyal servants of the state are not immune from fear. Because the inquiry is not progressing to the satisfaction of his superiors the detective himself finds himself in the Gestapo dungeons for a period of "re-education".

Eventually Otto and his wife are captured. Both begin a lengthy period of interrogation. Within this heart-breaking process, both are to discover, in very separate ways, a deep inner strength. Right up to the point of execution they become proof that the human spirit cannot ultimately be defeated. In the filth of the Gestapo prison it is an inner freedom that is the supreme value. Without it human beings cannot flourish.

For Anarchists, the book is a salutary lesson, in that the concept of Freedom must be central to all our actions. It applies equally to hard-nosed regimes as much as it does to liberal bureaucracies. Our own cosmetic freedom is so deceptive precisely because the illusion is so convincing, as long as we do what is required. The illusion only begins to dissolve when we step out of line. Many of course, never step out of line. Better to keep your nose clean and don't draw attention to yourself.

Maybe one day, we will all recognise that the idolatry of the totalitarian state, or indeed any political action that promises to reshape society into a different system of order, will be regarded as being as absurd as was the ancient worship of sticks and stones.

Peter Good

To Each Their Own

I have been an anarchist for an awful long time. I believe that, to paraphrase Proudhon, whoever lays a hand on me to govern me is a usurper and tyrant, and I declare them my enemy. I favour the abolition of the state, completely and at the earliest possible opportunity. This seems to me the basic essential libertarian idea, founded on the belief that people are capable of living their lives and interacting with others un-coerced, unsupervised, unmanaged, un-policed, un-chaperoned - in other words, ungoverned.

This libertarian opposition to all authority and hierarchy, including those forms so common in social change movements, was what attracted me to the anarchist movement from the very beginning. Coming out of a left riddled with authoritarians, the idea of a leaderless network of like-minded folks pursuing a libertarian form of socialism/communism, as advocated by anarchists like Goldman and Berkman was refreshing. But the more I read, thought, and experienced life, the individualist core of the anarchist critique - the idea that each person should be free to choose and act for themselves, always and everywhere - led me to reconsider my earlier sympathy for collectivist approaches to creating a free society. I became an individualist, in addition to being an anarchist.

I believe that in order to safeguard individual freedom and autonomy, the unique person must be the centre of any critique, organisation, or social / economic arrangement. Focusing on groups, however defined - whether classes, unions, people of shared ethnicity or sex, whatever - leads to an outlook that puts the needs and desires of the larger "community" or organisation above those of individuals of which it is comprised. This creates a situation where domination, hierarchy and submission inevitably emerge, even when that is not the intention of those involved. Where there is authority, whether that of a minority over a majority, or a majority over a minority, there cannot be individual freedom. In the absence of a formal government there can still be hierarchies and even frank coercion. A focus on the individual is a safeguard against any movement in that direction.

Despite criticism to the contrary, individualists are not anti-social or illiberal. We favour voluntary co-operation while also believing in private property. We oppose racism and sexism without

embracing a group-orientated identity politics. We oppose laws, police, taxation, mandatory schooling, warfare and welfare, while supporting any voluntary, non-coercive efforts and arrangements that people come up with to satisfy their needs and wants and assist others unable to fend adequately for themselves. We envisage a society where people come together for work, discussion, trade, sex, recreation or other projects when they choose and do their own thing otherwise. Any necessary organisations will be formed as needed and dissolved as soon as possible—individualists do not envisage any permanent structure of groups, councils, assemblies, or syndicates to coordinate people's affairs. The social change individualists seek would create a world of free people with free minds, free trade and free choices to make about how they want to live, limited only by respect for the equal freedom of others to live unmolested.

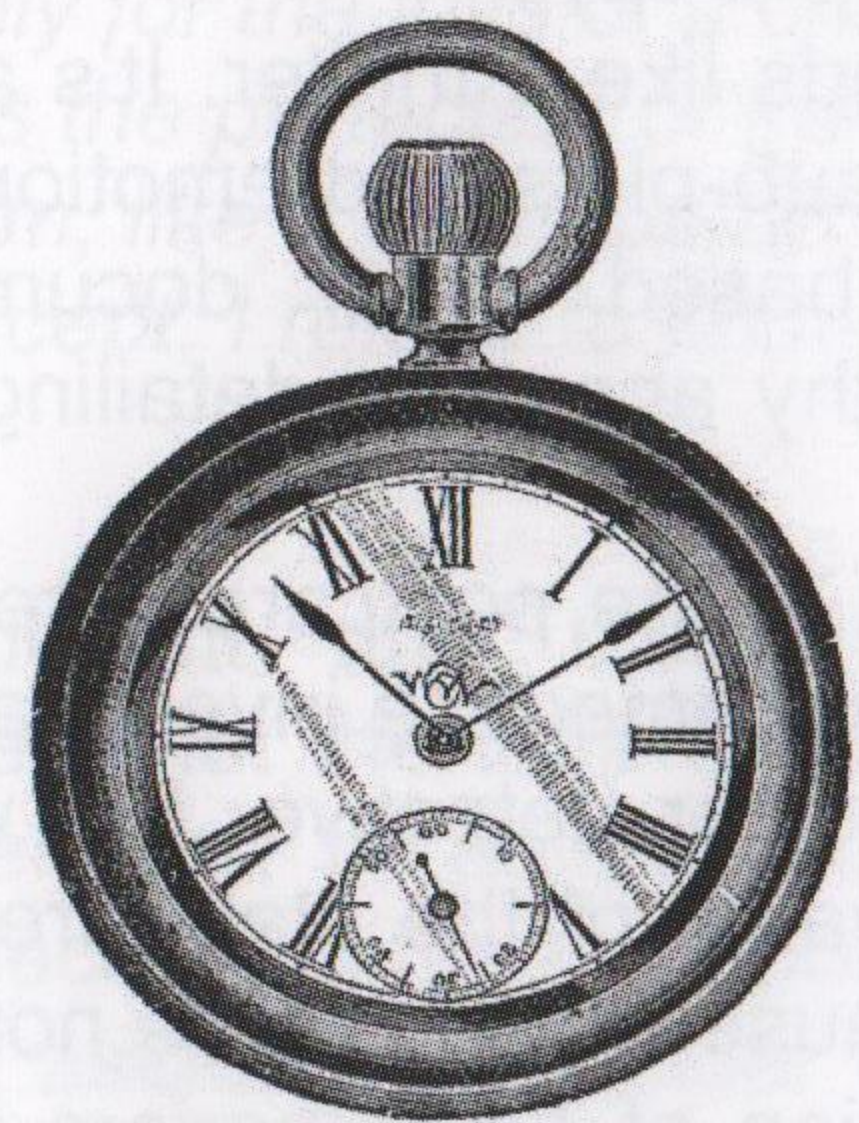
Although individualists have long been part of the anarchist movement in many places around the world, we remain in the minority. Given that our outlook has so often been misconstrued or ignored in anarchist discussion and debate, it is unfortunate that at present we are less visible or understood than ever. In part this stems from the usual neglect of, or even hostility towards, individualist ideas from the social anarchists of various sorts who dominate the movement. But there is a more recent development that also contributes to the marginalisation of individualist thought. That is the reluctance of people who are open to and even identify with the individualist tradition to identify themselves explicitly as individualists, instead preferring to call themselves Mutualists or market anarchists. I, for one, think it important to be an out individualist, inspired by a tradition that goes back over 150 years. And I will venture in this article to once again bring an individualist perspective to contemporary anarchist discussion.

Occupy that.

Since the major topic of discussion in and about the anarchist movement right now is the Occupy movement, I will start there. There has been a lot of coverage, both positive and negative, of this movement in the mainstream press and media, much of which has at least mentioned the anarchist presence in Occupy. The anarchists themselves have also spent much time and energy promoting and discussing this movement. But despite all the hype, there is little in this movement that gives hope or encouragement to this anarchist.

The original occupation in New York was lively, largely spontaneous, and exciting. But it is still

unclear what the point of it all was and is. While portrayed by supporters as an attempt to build an alternative way of living and a model for a new social change movement, it really has constituted little more than a sustained protest against the abuses of state-supported capitalism. This is not a criticism - I support protest and have even gone to Occupy activities in Anchorage and London (UK). And I oppose state-supported capitalism and its inherent injustice and inequity. The issues raised: primarily that the rich own most of the country's wealth and that the government subsidises their fortunes, deserves to be brought to the attention of people in this country and elsewhere once again (although it is difficult to understand why this is news to anyone).



But whether simple protest or alternative community, the ideas and practices coming out of the Occupy movement do not herald a new approach to social change. Setting up kitchens and first aid stations at campsites is hardly creative and it is something any number of organisations, from Boy Scouts to Women's Music festivals to the rainbow family have been doing for years. Whether a campsite is organised well or badly is certainly important to the participants. But how learning or perfecting these skills enables the participants to experiment with and model new social and economic relationships escapes me.

One aspect of the occupations that is not new in anarchist-associated movements, but appears to have taken on an exceptional importance in Occupy, is the constant meetings and general assemblies. Such incessant politicking is in line with Bookchin's vision of the libertarian polis where running meetings dominates the life of the community. There is an underlying assumption that most of life's activities and interactions need to be the business of the larger group, where everyone's interests are always intertwined. This is in contrast to the approach of individualists, who view such a structured approach to relationships between people as an impediment to their ability to mind their own business except

where it is in their interest to share and interact with others.

Another feature of the Occupy movement that conflicts with an individualist approach to social interaction is the institutionalisation of consensus as the preferred method of decision-making. My issue with consensus is, and always has been, that it really is appropriate only to small groups where people know and work (or play) together and already share a common understanding and outlook on most of the business which has brought them together. A small bakery cooperative, for instance, where they came together to set up and run a project, have a shared vision of where the project is going, and need to make decisions about certain aspects of how to get there, would be a logical setting in which to use a consensus model of decision making. But scores of folks camped outside St Paul's Cathedral being asked to come to a consensus about whether to endorse the declaration of the people's assembly of someplace? In such a setting disagreement gets put aside or overwhelmed and people end up going along, so as not to block consensus.

Of course, it really matters not at all in the real world whether some group signs on to some document promulgated by some pretentiously named 'People's' assembly in some other city. But the consensus approach is being used to make decisions about most everything in the occupations, and the problem is with the method, not with the matter up for discussion. The occupiers are striving for unity because they believe that is what will make their movement strong. I value diversity, robust debate, disagreement, people going off to do their own projects if they don't agree with the majority. That makes for strong independent individuals, who will contribute to even stronger social movements.

Déjà vu all over again

The pursuit of consensus is just one manifestation of the tendency of the Occupiers, and most anarchists, to take a "follow the leader" approach to social movements. This has led the Occupy movement in other cities to mimic the activities of those in New York, as if their tactics were the Blueprint for a successful movement. So one sees the tents, the Guy Fawkes masks, the "interesting" hand gestures used in meetings, the chanting repetitions of others' statements as a substitute for amplification, and so on. It strikes me as contradictory for a movement, many of whose supporters and members lay claim to the libertarian tradition of questioning authority, to sheepishly adopt the rituals other groups have

used. Where is the independence of thought and action one would hope for from anarchists?

This is not the first time in recent memory that a social movement has adopted the tactic of trying to formulaically replicate events that were largely spontaneous one-offs resulting from very specific circumstances that created a perfect storm of people, ideas, timing, and opportunity, and resulted in a spectacular outpouring. For a number of years the opponents of "neo-liberalism" tried to recreate the Seattle uprising at international trade meetings all over the world. They got people on the streets and created a ruckus, but there was never another Seattle. Activists seem never to get the point that it is impossible to plan a successful uprising in advance. This past experience has not prevented the Occupiers from trying to replay the very impressive November port shutdown in Oakland, not just there but in other cities. While Occupy Oakland considered their December action a success, only a fraction of the thousands who participated in the first action showed up for the second, and other actions in other cities were primarily symbolic protests. All well and good but it certainly did not indicate that the movement is growing in strength or influence but rather the opposite.

All Co-oped Up

In addition to my concerns about the organisational choices made by the Occupiers which tend to stifle individuality and promote a sort of groupthink with a standardised approach to creating a movement, I am also not inspired by the ideas and models for economic change coming out of this movement. Although the Occupy movement avoids "official" demands or policy statements, it is pretty clear that the Occupiers believe in abolishing corporate personhood, taxing the wealthy more heavily, and supporting cooperative economic ventures including credit unions and employee-owned businesses. None of these proposals is anti-government in the least. Of course the Occupy movement is not an anarchist movement, despite the large numbers of libertarians involved in it, so I don't expect the group (s) as a whole to be advocating anti-statist ideas and actions. What is disappointing, however, is the apparent lack of anarchist critique of the methods of social and economic reform being proposed.

In fact, anarchists seem to be glomming onto the idea of co-ops and credit unions as if these were new and revolutionary concepts. In fact they are neither. Worker cooperatives of various sorts, whether based on producers, consumers or both, have been part of the statist capitalist, and even

fascist, economic landscape for a long time. While there may be advantages to these models over traditional capitalist enterprises, they are not libertarian or liberatory by their nature. A long-standing and very large co-op venture that many anarchists look to sympathetically is the complex of co-operatives centred in and around Mondragon in Spain. While the worker / consumer members officially run this operation in fact elected managers supervise the businesses on a day-to-day basis. Mondragon is hierarchical, wages are unequal, and there have been labour disputes there, at least one strike, member expulsions and fines for work actions, and in recent years outsourcing of work to other countries where the workers are simple employees, not members. Smaller co-operatives may be more likely to be egalitarian and collegial, but simply being a co-op does not assure fair conditions or true worker control.

Other employee-owned enterprises such as ESOPs or credit unions are virtually indistinguishable from other sorts of Capitalist businesses in practice. While the employees/members may own shares and stock, have the ability to vote now and then, and share in profits, the managers in these companies really run the businesses and make far higher salaries than those of the regular workers. It may make the participants feel better, and these companies may have kinder and gentler HR policies, but for all intents and purposes these companies maintain the traditional boss-worker relationship. And in addition, these kind of businesses, like other capitalist enterprises, are hemmed in by government laws, rules, and regulations. Credit unions have survived and thrived next to banks for years. Taking your money out of a capitalist bank and placing it in a capitalist credit union may ease your conscience, but it doesn't really change anything.

Structure and Function

The point of this article is not to beat up on the Occupy movement. Like many social change movements it has good and bad characteristics. Calling out the economic and political powers-that-be for their hypocrisy and exploitation is always a good thing. What bothers me is the anarchist response to Occupy. Once again, the movement du jour is promoted and championed by anarchists, without a real, critical, libertarian look at how the movement functions and what it seeks to achieve. It appears that either a lot of the anarchists are naïve enough to actually believe that tent cities, zombie parades, and government-issued credit unions are the road to freedom, or they feel it would be offensive to their friends in the movement to bring up a libertarian

perspective and spoil the party.

I am an advocate of worker control and voluntary exchange. I oppose profit, rent and interest. I favour neither capitalism nor socialism. Individuals need to choose for themselves how and when to interact with others socially and economically. These exchanges will take many forms - from co-operatives, to mutual banks, to barter networks, to time stores to who knows what. But when the limits and structures of such interactions are dictated by the state, as they are and will be in a governmental society, they will never be libertarian enterprises.

I don't propose we wait for the elimination of the state to reform fucked-up social and economic relationships. I want to see workers get higher wages, owners get less profits, workers to be treated fairly and humanely at work today. But simply having a co-operative structure under capitalism is no guarantee of this. In fact, workers who are organised may well have better pay and conditions at a traditional capitalist company than at a worker-owned enterprise that is not controlled directly by the people who do the real work. Worker-owners/shareholders tend to play the same part in a business as other owners and stockholders. For me the underlying hierarchy and system of command and obedience is as important as who owns an operation.

Changing structures is important. An anarchist operation, one without hierarchy and profit, would likely resemble in certain ways some present-day co-operatives, but would differ in important aspects: there would be no managers, no "representative" structures; instead there would be direct control and sharing of the work and decision-making by the participants. What most needs to change to get to a truly libertarian society and anarchist economic arrangement is peoples' outlook and ideas. People need to leave behind their reliance on government as a method to accomplish change and to order interactions between people.

What's an Anarchist To Do?

Making the argument for abolishing the state and its economic arrangements, whether capitalist or socialist, can be done only by anarchists. But they have largely failed to do so. Anarchists are often called extremists, but that is usually because they are the ones most likely to fuck shit up and get chased or arrested at protests. We need to be seen as extremists because we advocate, whenever we get the chance, an extreme version of independence from the state and all mechanisms of control. We are extremists because of what we believe, but we need to come out of the closet. Anarchists

may not want to piss off their friends or sound like they only see the negative aspects of contemporary social struggles, but it is not libertarian to fawn over reformist social change movements instead of challenging them to go further in their attempts at altering the way society operates.

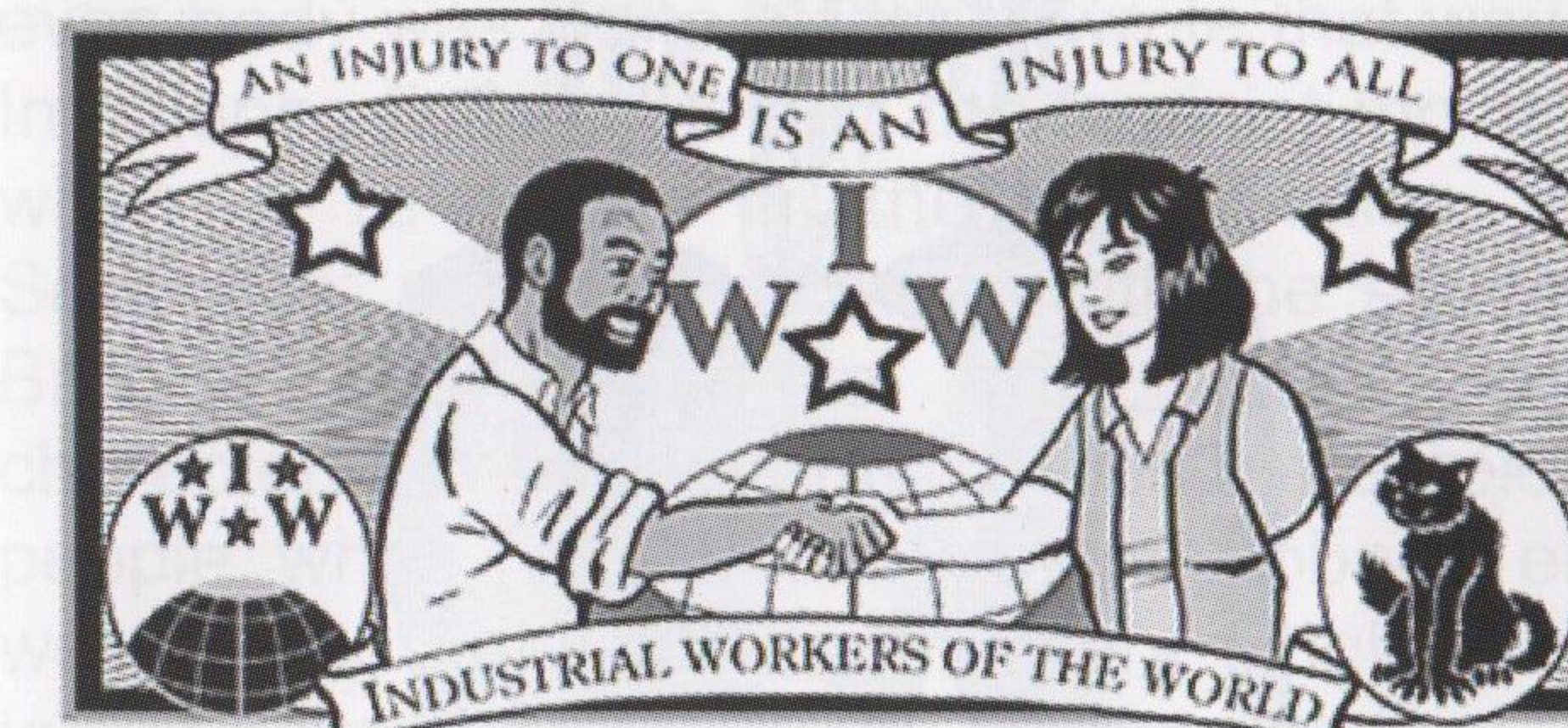
Anarchy is about freeing the individual, not about socialism, capitalism, mutualism or markets. Even though it is exceedingly likely that versions of all of these economic models - and combinations of some or all - will be employed by some group of free people somewhere at some time, there will only be free people if we can eliminate government and authority. It is the state which has the police and the military at its beck and call. It is the authorities who really own the "public" spaces from which Occupiers have been forcibly removed. It is government laws and regulations which protect the ill-gotten gains of capitalists, landlords, corporations, bankers and stockholders and allow them to profit at the expense of the rest of us.

Leftists of assorted flavours can make the case against capitalism. Since only anarchists seek a stateless society, however, only they can advocate for it. We need to make the case for anarchy: we need to be the constant irritants on the edge of the movement pushing or coaxing it in a more radical direction, away from statist solutions and towards libertarian ones. While I favour reforming state capitalism to better the lives of its victims, I believe a libertarian critique encourages the reformers to go further. The anarchist vision broadens the parameters of debate and discussion, and makes space for more innovative approaches - ones that might be given serious consideration only because the fundamental changes anarchists propose would make all sorts of less extreme reforms seem reasonable.

So if anarchists want to see credit unions that really do function better than capitalist banks because this would be an improvement on current conditions, let's advocate mutual banks and the elimination of the fed and legal tender laws. This provides a reference point on the extreme libertarian end of the debate, which puts the whole discussion in a new different context. Discussing the pros and cons of conventional credit unions and banks among ourselves won't do it. Someone needs to bring a libertarian perspective to the Occupiers and other social change movements. Anarchists should step up to the plate and act like anarchists, since no one else is going to do it for us.

Joe Peacott

Building the New Society



Building the new society within the shell of the old. In Britain there is a long tradition of radical dissent starting with the Peasants Revolt (just to choose a starting point!) in the late 1300s, through the time of the Diggers and Ranters in the 1640s, through the days of the Chartists in the 19th century to the Syndicalists in the early part of the 20th century.

I am going to suggest that the syndicalists and particularly the IWW (Industrial Workers of World) provide a guide to how anarchist left libertarian groups should organise. The term prefigurative politics is used to describe this. I prefer the old fashioned expression "building the new society within the shell of the old". This is linked up with the issue of ends and means. What this says is the type of society you get is linked with the way you go about creating the new society.

Libertarian organisations should be based on prefigurative organisations such as workplace and community groups. Creating these forms of organisations now is essential rather than expecting some mythical revolution to sweep all evil away. Indeed belief in such a revolution has totalitarian implications which anarchists and libertarian socialists need to be wary of.

From this, in Britain at this moment (autumn 2011) I would conclude there are plenty of issues both in the workplace and community in which anarchists and libertarian socialists could invest their activities.

Dave Dane

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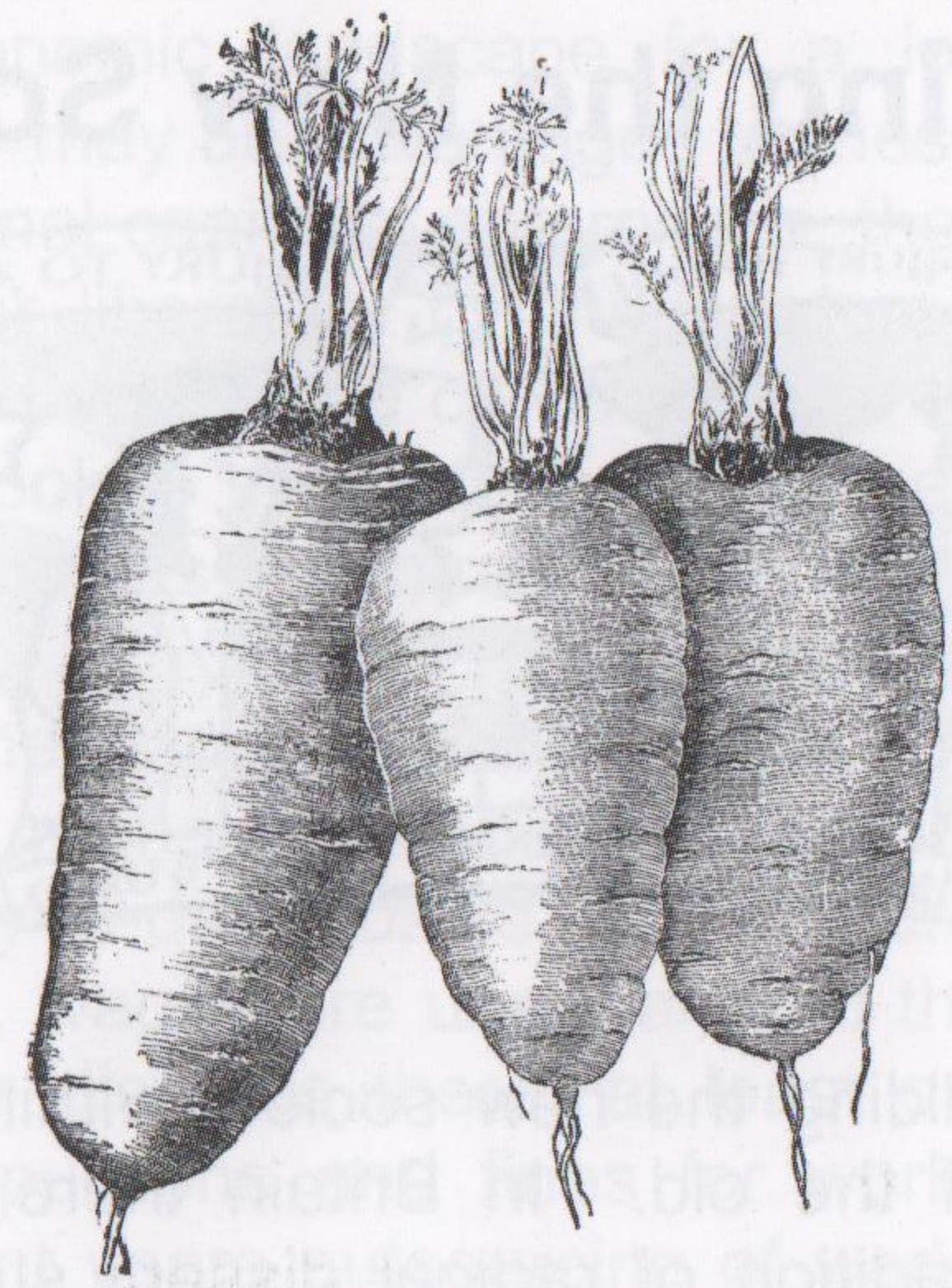
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Natural Anarchy

Darwin wrote: "If it could be proved that any part of the structure of any one species had been formed for the exclusive good of another species, it would annihilate my theory, for such could not have been produced through natural selection."

Darwin's theory is based on a universal truth: growth in population, if unchecked, will outrun any increase in the food supply. From this it follows that, in any species, a struggle for existence must therefore arise, leading by natural selection to survival of the fittest (to cite all three conventional Darwinian aphorisms in a single sentence).

This is from Stephen Jay Gould's "Eight little Piggies". It sums up Darwin's theory and few evolutionists will question any of it. However, there is serious bias in those over-used metaphors.

If I pick an apple to eat, am I struggling? If a rabbit dines off young wheat, is that struggling? What about a bear catching salmon in a turbulent river? For the bear, easy pickings; while the salmon is merely swimming upstream through rough water. Ah, but the salmon is struggling to survive in a difficult environment. And there is the issue: is that struggle or is it simply behaviour; something salmons do every year, otherwise known as living?

In many eco-systems, such as the tangled bank Darwin described at Down House, the annual output of many species is dramatically greater than need – need being the requirement to procreate and raise young. Blackberry can grow from suckers and also produce a million – or a billion – seeds in its fruits. To what point and for whose benefit? Can over-production be justified as part of the individual's struggle for existence?

A lot of energy surges through the one blackberry bush, appearing as food for scores of song birds, some of which will themselves be food for the passing hawk, and laying down leaf mould in which bugs and grubs, fungi and worms, flourish. So perhaps we should recognise that the blackberry's fecundity benefits the eco-system in which it lives; that it is a valued altruist, like so many of the prolific species inter-acting on the tangled bank.

At sea, the same story is told: prey species like herring and plankton flourish by the billion. Is this level of productivity necessary for the survival of the species? Maybe half the normal output would do as well. And how far is their fate determined by struggle? Chance largely determines which individuals survive; they do not struggle; they just live and, often very quickly, die and that is the point: not their survival but that of the scores of other species which depend on them.

The wildly over-productive species cannot be said to produce for the benefit of their prey or diners, but those many benefits are vital to life. It is a curious use of language to describe all that living as "struggle"; more ideological than scientific. "Struggle" is a prerequisite for the theory of evolution and the word skews the evidence to produce the required answer – which is wrapped up in the phrase "the survival of the fittest". Everything has to "struggle" to get to produce the "fittest"; and if the struggle is not universal and constant, then some individuals which are not "the fittest" might survive!

If instead of focussing on the individual and its struggle, we could consider eco-systems as the basic unit of life, then we would see clearer how each of them acts to ensure both the interests of the whole and that of its component species and the individuals alive at any particular time. It may also explain why massive over-production is selected in: it is good for the system, not for the individual. And when a mutation arises, its survival does not depend only on the struggle of the individual, but on the mutation's value to the system. The outcome of a multitude of regulated interactions is a dynamic web of life in long-term balance, which means that species do a little of what Darwin denies: act to benefit others.

It is, of course, a blind process but the way we think about it matters. The point behind my concern with "struggle" is this: if Darwin and his *epigoni* talked about things living, and their various strategies, and dispensed with the word "struggle", we could look at the strategies and see which involved struggle, which regulation, which ritual and which were just routine, like picking an apple.

Metaphors frequently muddle messages. I may be saying nothing un-Darwinian, but rather just be stressing the "struggle for survival" from the point of the environment or eco-system: control resulting from collective interaction rather than individualistic competition. I have, too, ended up showing again Darwinism's close affinities to Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*: by the operation of the invisible hand of nature, the eco-system ensures the optimal well-being of its competing members. The metaphor can be stretched (!) so that we could see the proletarian plankton and hard-working herring as the exploited bases of pyramids of life, producing huge surpluses for the benefit of the whale (monarch of the seas) or the lion (lord of the jungle). However, eco-systems are not oppressive hierarchies but functioning, egalitarian anarchies, and that's what matters.

Dick Frost

An interview with Ursula K LeGuin on Anarchism & writing

As part of my investigation of the intersection of anarchism and fiction, I conducted an interview with Ursula K LeGuin, the author of *The Dispossessed* and *The Left Hand of Darkness* among many other sci-fi anarchist/feminist classics. This interview will be included in an upcoming book/zine from *Strangers In A Tangled Wilderness*.

SiTW: One of the things that I'm quite curious to explore is the role of the radical as an author of fiction. What do you feel like you've accomplished, on a social/political level, with your writing? Do you have any specific examples of change that you've helped initiate?

Ursula: I may agree with Shelley that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, but he didn't mean they really get many laws enacted, and I guess I didn't ever really look for definable, practical results of anything I wrote. My utopias are not blueprints. In fact, I distrust utopias that pretend to be blueprints. Fiction is not a good medium for preaching or for planning. It is really good, though, for what we used to call conscious-raising.

Within my field of work—imaginative fiction—I think I have had an appreciable effect on the representation of gender and of "race,"

specifically skin colour. When I came into the field, the POV was totally male-centric and everybody was white. At first I wrote that way too. In science fiction, I joined the feminist movement when it re-awoke in the late Sixties, early Seventies, and we did away with the squeaking Barbies and began to write actual women characters. In fantasy, my heroes were coloured people when, as far as I know, nobody else's were. (And yet I still fight, every single fantasy jacket-cover, to get them represented as non-white).

SiTW: From the other direction, do you ever feel pressured from the "radical" crowd to be writing "more politically" or along certain lines?

Ursula: I don't put myself in a position to get much pressure from anybody. I am not a joiner, and I lay low in public (except for stuff like protest marches, which I have been doing for the last millennium.) Of course I have been scolded by Marxists for not being Marxist, but they scold everybody for not being Marxist. And activist anarchists always hope I might be an activist, but I think they realise that I would be a lousy one, and let me go back to writing what I write. Jefferson thought we already had liberty as an inalienable right, and only had to pursue happiness. I think the pursuit of liberty is what the Left is mostly about. But also, I think if you really want to pursue liberty, as an artist, you cannot join a movement that has rules and is organised. Regarded in that light, feminism was fine—we mostly realised we could all be feminist in our own way. The peace movements, very loose and ad hoc, have been fine. And I can work for things like Planned Parenthood or Nature Conservancy, or a political campaign, but only as an envelope stuffer: I can't put my work directly in their service, expressing their goals. It has to follow its own course towards freedom.

SiTW: Have you encountered any problems, publishing in the mainstream fiction world, on account of your political nature?

Ursula: Not that I know of. It is possible that Charles Scribner, who had published my previous book and had an option on *The Dispossessed*, didn't like it because he didn't like the anarchist theme; but I think he really just thought it was a huge boring meaningless clunker and didn't understand it at all. He asked me to cut it by half. I said no thanks, and we broke contract amicably, and Harper and Row snapped it up—a better publisher for me than anyhow. So I can't say I have suffered for my politics. SF and fantasy slip under the wire a lot, you know? People just aren't looking for radical thought in a

field the respectable critics define as escapist drivel. Some of it is escapist all right, but what it's escaping is the drivel of popular fiction and most TV and movies.

SiTW: I feel like you do an excellent job of presenting quite radical concepts in stories that don't feel like propaganda. For example, in the story "The Forest" in *Orsinian Tales*, I believe you undermine the reader's faith in such ideas as codified law.

Ursula: Hah! That pleases me! It is such a romantic story, I never thought of it as having a subversive sense, but of course you're quite right, it does.

SiTW: I might be mistaken, but I'm under the impression that the modern fantasy / sci-fi culture intentionally shies away from politics more than it used to. A lot of magazines, for example, specifically list that they are not interested in works that deal with political issues.

Ursula: They do? Wow. That is depressing beyond words. They're setting up their own wire.

SiTW: Have you seen a change in this direction?

Ursula: I am just not looking at the market any more. I haven't written short stories now for quite a while, and if I did, it would be my agent who figured where best to send them.

But maybe this is one of the reasons why I'm not reading much SF any more. I pick it up, then I put it down. Maybe I just OD.'d on it but it seems sort of academic, almost, lately. Doing the same stuff over fancier, more hardware, more noir. I may be totally wrong about this.

SiTW: You've perhaps coined one of my favourite one-line descriptions of what an anarchist is: "One who, choosing, accepts the responsibility of choice." Would you describe yourself as an anarchist?

Ursula: I don't, because I entirely lack the activist element, and so it seems phony or too easy. Like white people who say they are "part Cherokee."

SiTW: I hope you don't mind that a lot of us claim you, in approximately the same way that we claim Tolstoy, (who I believe can be quoted as saying "The anarchists are right ... in everything except their belief that anarchism can be reached through revolution" although I've only read this quote, and not his original essay).

Ursula: Of course I don't mind! I am touched and feel unworthy.

SiTW: What were your first interactions with anarchism?

Ursula: When I got the idea for *The Dispossessed*, the story I sketched out was all wrong, and I had to figure out what it really was about and what it needed. What it needed was, first, about a year of reading all the Utopias, and then another year or two of reading all the Anarchist writers. That was my main interaction with anarchism. I was lucky: that stuff was hard to come by in the Seventies—shadows of Sacco and Vanzetti!—but there was a very-far-left bookstore here in Portland, and if you got to know him he let you see his fine collection of all the old Anarchist writings, and some of the newer people like Bookchin too. So I got a good education.

I felt totally at home with (pacifist, not violent) anarchism, just as I always had with Taoism (they are related, at least by affinity.) It is the only mode of political thinking that I do feel at home with. It also links up more and more interestingly, these days, with behavioural biology and animal psychology (as Kropotkin knew it would.)

SiTW: Several books I've read or seen—overviews of anarchist history—attribute the first "anarchist" literature to an early Taoist thinker, and include the essay, although I can't for the life of me remember the title or author. I find the connection quite interesting, however.

Ursula: Well, parts of Lao Tzu's book the *Tao Te Ching*, and parts of Chuang Tzu's book, which is mostly just called by his name, are clearly and radically anarchistic (and Chuang Tzu is funny, too.) The best translation is Burton Watson. I did a version of Lao Tzu which brings out the anarchism pretty clearly, and I also managed to remove the sexist language, which was fun (and not too outrageous, since ancient Chinese generally doesn't specify gender.) I would send you a copy but I've run out of them. Shambhala is the publisher. Those are the two big names in "philosophical" Taoism (i.e. not the Taoist religion, which is quite a different matter.)

SiTW: When did the singular "they" fall out of written English? It's nice to be able to defend the practice.

Ursula: Grammarians in the 17th and 18th century, trying to kind of cut a common path through the wild jungle of Elizabethan English, regularised a lot of usages—including spelling—not a bad idea in itself; but they admired Latin so much they used it as their model, rather than looking at how English actually solved some of these problems. "The reader" or "a person" doesn't agree in number with "they," and in Latin it is genuinely necessary that subject and verb agree in number . . . so they said it was

necessary in English. (Actually it isn't always, because we have other ways of making the meaning clear, like word order, which is almost irrelevant in Latin.) So colloquial usages such as "he don't" (which my father, a professor, sometimes used) were frowned out of the written language, and so was the indefinite "they," even though it turns up in Shakespeare. But the grammarians couldn't get it out of the spoken language. It is perfectly alive and well there. "If anybody wants their ice cream they better hurry up!" So it doesn't take an awfully big jolt to just slip it back into written English.

It is funny how the people who object most furiously to "incorrectness" like that almost always turn out to be far right politically and/or socially insecure.

'Sitw'

Reprinted from Mid Atlantic Infoshop.

An Anarchist Credo

Anarchism is not terrorism or violence and Anarchists do not support, aid or sympathise with terrorists or so-called liberation movements.

Anarchism does not mean irresponsibility, parasitism, criminality, nihilism or immoralism, but entails the highest level of ethics and personal responsibility.

Anarchism does not mean hostility toward organisation. Anarchists only desire that all organisations be voluntary and that a peaceful social order will exist only when this is so.

Anarchists are resolute anti-statists and do not defend either "limited states" or "welfare states".

Anarchists are opposed to all coercion.

Poverty, bigotry, sexism and environmental degradation cannot be successfully overcome through the State. Anarchists are therefore opposed to taxation, censorship, so-called affirmative action and government regulation.

Anarchists do not need scapegoats. Poverty and environmental destruction are not ultimately caused by transnationals, IMF, the USA, the "developed world", imperialism, technology or any other devil figure, but are rooted in the power to coerce. Only the abolition of coercion will overcome these problems.

Anarchism does not posit any particular economic system but only desires that the economy be non-coercive and composed of voluntary organisations.

Anarchists are not utopians or sectarians, but are sympathetic to any effort to decrease statism and coercion and the replacement of authoritarian relations with voluntary ones.

Book Review

Let No Wheels Turn – The wrecking of the Flying Scotsman 1926 by Margaret Hutcherson
£6:95, TUPS Books, 38 Hutton Close, Crowther Industrial Estate, Washington Tyne & Wear, NE38 0AH 1-901237-34-6



On the 10th May 1926, during the General Strike, a large group of miners from Cramlington in Northumberland, angered at the continued movement of coal on the railways, went to the main line between Newcastle and Edinburgh, and removed some rails. A little while later, an express passenger train being driven by amateurs led by a retired driver, came up to the disconnected section of track, and derailed. One person was injured, and the train damaged. A crowd of locals jeered at the passengers. Photographs of *Merry Hampton*, the locomotive on its side and the derailed carriages were one of the distinctive and most memorable images of the General Strike.

Not surprisingly, this was not the end of the story, for in the aftermath, the police were anxious to arrest the perpetrators, and questions were asked about the incident in Parliament. The community closed in silence against outsiders, although about forty people, those responsible, were known. In the end, Lyle Sidney Waugh, a miner who was related to a police inspector, named names, and on June 5th, a number of arrests were made. Eight of them – Billy Baker, Bob Harbottle, Ollie Sanderson, Tommy Roberts, Bill Stephenson, James Ellison, Arthur Wilson, and Bill Muckle were eventually tried for the sabotage, and some other people who were involved gave evidence against them in order to save their own skins. Eventually, the accused miners were jailed for four, six and eight years. Eventually after campaigns by the Communist Party and others, three were released in September 1928, two more in July 1929, and the rest just before Christmas 1929.

The derailling divided the community in Cramlington,

with many people supporting the action of the striking miners, and condemning the people who turned them in to the police or gave evidence. In 1969 a BBC documentary was made about the incident. Bitterness persisted even into the 1960s. "I went to the club one night and one of the witnesses came up to me and said 'Will you have a drink off me Bill?' – I said "I don't want a drink off you. If I had poison in me pocket I would put it in your beer now' and he started to cry." Others celebrated the deaths of the informants with whisky. Those involved had no regrets: "I never did regret what I did and I never will. We were fighting for our daily bread. When you come to think of the wages of the government and the Royal Family and their understrappers, you can go mad."

This is an interesting and informative book which gives a close up picture of the suffering of people in a particular community during the General Strike, and places it in the broader context.

Stephen Booth



The Crisis

It is surprising that Marx has seldom been mentioned during these years of economic turmoil. His analysis is relevant and acute: this is a crisis of capitalist over-production. During a long decade of growth, many countries increased output through efficiencies, investment, sales promotion, cost-cutting and innovation. The crunch came, inevitably, when there were too many products on the market and not enough consumers to buy them. This realisation was delayed by a massive credit boom for, when consumers do not have enough money to buy the goods offered them, they have to be given money – i.e., credit. The form of credit is not important: plastic, mortgages, second mortgages, delayed payment plans, *bank to bank debt*, all will do. So we reached the stage when countries, companies and individuals were trillions of pounds in debt.

For a long time it had seemed that the boom-bust cycle had been transcended. It was difficult to insist that there were bad times just around the corner; economists and consumers galloped on like sheep, lemmings or swine, borrowing and buying; it was easy; everyone was doing it; if you didn't buy today, it might be dearer tomorrow and who could refuse a 125 per cent mortgage! Bankers and mortgage businesses are the easy targets, but were bigger pigs only in that they had more money and fatter bellies. Everyone was doing it; but it could not last. As soon as enough lenders began to worry about the viability of their investments, the bubble burst. The system is now behaving in the classical manner. The excess demand i.e., debt - which was created during the boom has to be repaid with real money; and the only way to get real money is by calling in loans, sacking workers, cutting wages, selling off government goods, increasing taxation, finding efficiencies, cutting government spending and increasing exports. Home demand overall automatically declines as unemployment grows and people's incomes fall, with a knock-on effect on company output and profits. Exports would be the answer but since all the world is trying to export, the policy must fail.

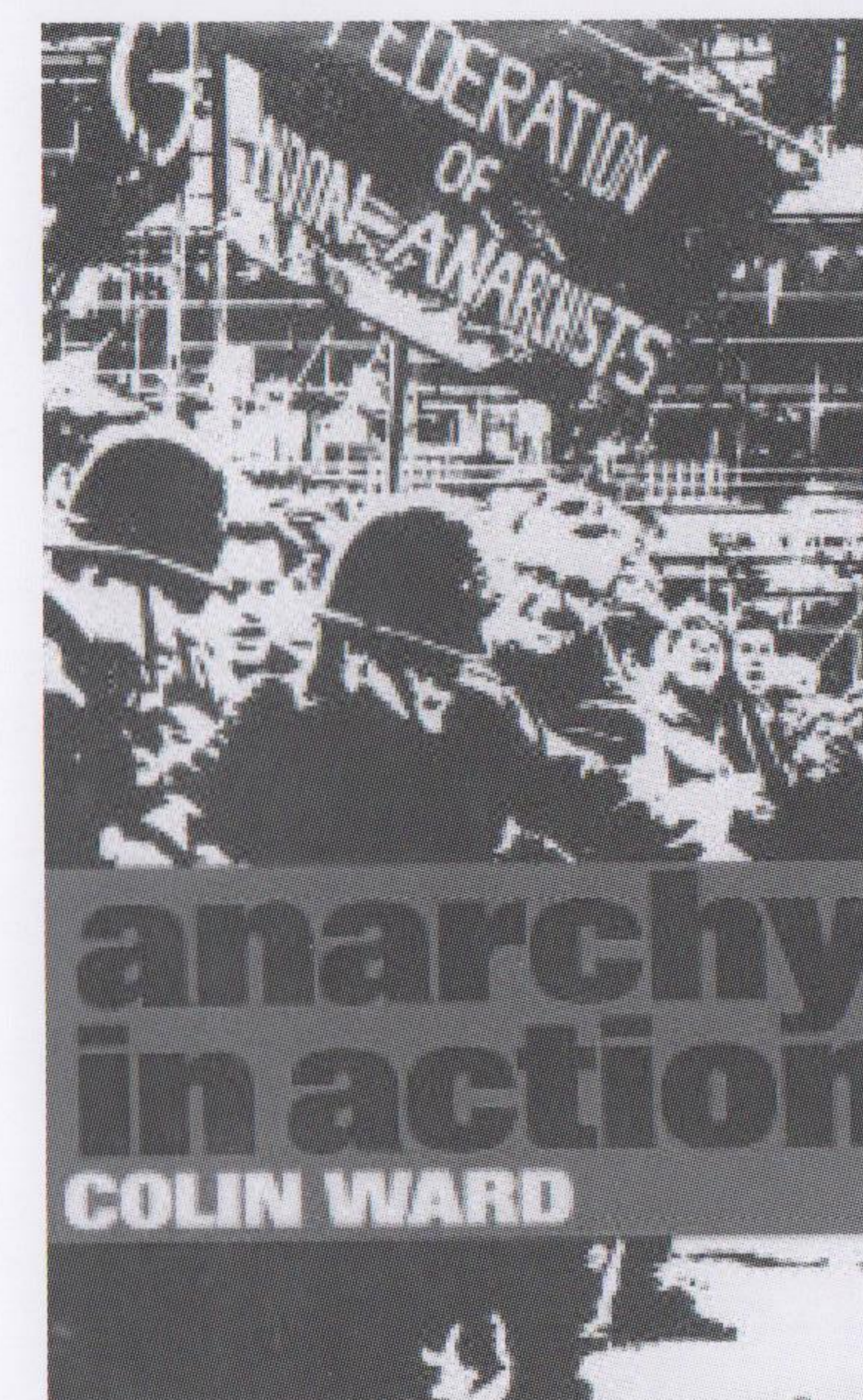
That's where we are now; but Marx had other fish to fry. His analysis of capitalism and particularly of its boom-bust cycle, led him to the revolutionary conclusion: the era of shortage, of insufficient resources, was over. Capitalism had created abundance: there was more than enough to go round. But the system which was supposed to produce the greatest good for the greatest number, was now (and is) producing deprivation for many in the midst of unlimited wealth. This is the contradiction of capitalism and it demands revolutionary change in people's relationships to property, industry and one another and a new way of distributing the social wealth.

Capitalism depends on shortage; that is the whip which drives laggards to school, their parents to work and their men to war; and which justifies or explains the nonsense of religion, the monstrous hierarchies of society, outrageous wealth and poverty; and denies us freedom.

We have ended shortage and stand now on the threshold of the revolutionary opportunity. This will be the first revolution because we can build on the facts of abundance while past attempts have fallen through a belief – often unjustified – in shortage. We know the wealth we have created. There is more than enough to go round but the old order can't handle that opportunity. It is trying to squeeze the people to maintain exploitation and injustice; this is the chance to brush them aside and create our own

system. That is where the people of Greece are today: that country is the weakest link in the capitalist coat of mail. The people have the chance to laugh at the warnings and threats of its Euro-masters, take power; and build a new Greek democracy on the foundations of the first.

Dick Frost



Book Review: Anarchy in Action by Colin Ward

This book introduces the anarchism of Britain's leading anarchist sociologist. Ward is an "evolutionary anarchist" who associates anarchism with the practical, everyday pursuit of alternatives to domination - this is not a book about insurrection, or breaking windows. Ward's basic thesis is that anarchy as a form of organisation (as distinct from hierarchy or the state) emerges wherever social relations occur directly, as forms of cooperation or mutual aid to satisfy needs and desires directly. In this sense, anarchy constantly operates below the surface of supposedly state societies such as Britain, creating the density of everyday life so beloved of sociologists, and providing alternatives to the state's way of dealing with social problems. This short book is practically focused, showing examples of anarchist or horizontal practices in a number of areas, and provides an excellent introduction to the anarchist critique of hierarchy, a way into critical scholarship in a number of fields, and a rich empirical counterpoint to the claim that there is no alternative to hierarchic organisation.

Six of the chapters, about half the total, set out Ward's general argument, and explore general issues

about anarchic versus hierarchic social organisation. Ward argues that social complexity requires the emergence of complex, networked social forms as opposed to the simplistic forms of hierarchy. Spontaneous order and self-organisation are traced across social experiments, decentralised state systems such as those in Switzerland, insurrectionary situations such as Hungary in 1956, and stateless indigenous societies in these chapters as part of a general argument that hierarchy stunts social life and is inferior in many ways to networks and self-organisation. The argument is then specified in terms of a range of sociological or "social policy" issues setting out objections to hierarchy and examples of anarchic/non-hierarchic practice in a number of areas: planning, employment, play, education, housing, welfare institutions, the family and deviance. These short chapters cover a huge amount of material in a very short space and in a very accessible way, linking classical anarchist theories to modern sociological critiques, social experiments and alternative approaches (with an emphasis on alternatives within industrial societies). The chapter on education, for example, criticises compulsory education for its links to nationalism and social conformity and for anti-educational effects, and also discusses Rousseau, Godwin and Bakunin on education, Goodman, Illich, Freire, de-schooling, Free Schools, itinerant pedagogues, alternative schools in historic Spain, Ruskin College, and the student revolts of 1968, all in a mere eight pages. The chapters are short, accessible pieces replete with empirical examples and attempts to capture the imagination of the reader; they read almost like newspaper editorials or commentaries.

For its accessibility, empirical richness, constant relevance and detailed argument, this book cannot be faulted. It is in many respects prophetic, prefiguring more recent turns to horizontalism, post-representation and complexity. It reads like a Mutual Aid for the welfare state society. It serves several distinct functions. It can be read as a detailed case for anarchism today based on its relevance to practical problems of social welfare. It can be read as an application of anarchism to sociology, a kind of supplement to introductions to sociological approaches giving a distinct anarchist perspective on these issues. It can be read as an argument within anarchism for a focus on building everyday alternatives to social hierarchies. Or it can be read as a series of essays on contemporary social problems, bringing specialist critiques to a more general audience. It manages to do an awful lot in a very short space and has the potential to really open minds to the possibility of other ways of living.