

LAURENS OTTER

Anarchist Revolutionary

Organisation and press.

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT.

Anarchist revolutionary organization & press

a case against an ORA paper.

Comrades

This is very much a minority document - probably a minority of one, & not even a factional one. There have always been ORA members unconvinced that a paper is either necessary or advisable, but only a very few have ever been convinced that it was positively counter-productive.

Of those who have held this position, Mike Malet has abandoned it, - indeed did before the first ORA conference, - & of the four of us whose position was expressed there, Andrew ffell Gordon, Iain Neary, Pete Roberts & I, I have not heard from the first two since, & while I know that Pete still opposes a paper & that some of our reasons are the same, I would doubt if all of them are & possibly not even most.

The documents that Mike, Andrew & I produced at the beginning almost all dealt with practicalities; I still think these are valid though I no longer consider them of major importance except in so far as they reflect a deeper theoretical argument about the sort of organization we want.

Laurens Otter
13 Albert road
Wellington (Salop.)

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In brief the practical reasons were:-

1. A premature battle with Freedom is undesirable,
2. There is more than one form of propaganda,
3. expense,
4. centralisation,

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1 In worrying about a premature battle with Freedom we were far from failing to appreciate that such a battle would one day be necessary; Freedom has never accepted that other anarchist groups might as sincerely desire anarchism as it, has always regarded anyone who believes in organization as threatening its power, so that while it insists on its right to be independent of the movement, it does not accept the movement's right to be independent of it.

However it should be borne in mind that VR besides owning the press, large stocks of back publications, books etc., (& besides the fact that bourgeois liberal papers mentioning anarchism naturally mention the old established firm first,) has large sources of potential further funds so that he can greatly enlarge the paper at any time he wishes.

In 1963 - when the bulk of the new influx of anarchists had turned to the SWF - by enlarging the editorial board, by paying lip service to the establishment of an AFB & by some advertising he was able to ensure that further recruits turned to the

old firm, was able to foist the sectarian label on the SWP & cut it off from any hope of further growth.

Experience shows that he will always move decisively to prevent the growth of a viable anarchist movement in this country & that he will always find adequate funds to aid him in this.

But Freedom is not only its owner. Of its editors Pete Turner & John Lawrence at least differ from us in no vital respect except that they have now adopted the Freedom dogma that all organizational control of a paper is bad. We might find points at which we would criticise their theoretical grasp, we might think them insufficiently critical of some careerists, we might say that when they do see people as crooks they are apt to lapse into abstentionism and avoid entering the same arena for the sake of making the anarchist argument stick; but by & large those two at least share our vision of a future society, & have more or less the same perspective of mass self-liberation, the same perspective of revolution.

So vis a vis them (& to a lesser extent others associated with them) we differ in stressing the need for organisation now, but otherwise only in trivialities. We can therefore operate in those circles much as entrists in the Labour Party with the difference that the L.P. has an organization & no ideology & its entrists try to supply the latter; while P.T. & J.L. have ideology but no organization & we.....

2. However badly Freedom - & others - attempt to provide one form of propaganda - a paper - they do attempt to provide it. A paper is however only one form. Quite apart from propaganda by deed - direct action - there are leaflets, pamphlets, broadsheets,... as well that by and large no one does much to provide.

There are various levels to be done: agitation - saying a little to the many - that is getting people without attempting to convert them to anarchism to behave in a more militant manner so that they adopt some forms of struggle taken from the anarchist armoury; propagation proper trying to talk to people already in struggle or already at least questioning present society and instill into them the germs of an anarchist case; communication - getting people who have already come to consider the anarchist case, & maintaining with them a dialogue which will show them how that case unfolds in practice, how it copes with new issues & how successfully it can be applied in a variety of circumstances; education - getting people who are already anarchists, who have been anarchists or in contact with anarchists, or who are in rival revolutionary movements and discussing theory with them sufficiently to convince them of the necessity of a more fully rounded argument for anarchism & a fuller involvement.

A paper is certainly unbeatable for the third; it is not very good for the first two; & its use for the fourth is only good as a means of involving group activists in greater work.

But here face to face democracy, practically as well as theoretically, must be the key in an anarchist group & local magazines are preferable.

3. More important than the cost in cash is the cost in manpower. An healthy revolutionary propagandist group is one whose members each - individually - are noted in one or other field of the mass movement as a good militant, sincerely working to advance the cause of the larger movement, who is then saying that that cause can only be fully implemented by revolution, & that the way to revolution most consistent with it is.....

In other words a paper is an useful additional vehicle of argument for militants to use to supplement their individual work, but it is not a good substitute for that work.

But all over the place one sees groups that have subordinated their activity to the interests of their paper. The first civil disobedience action in this country, after the war, (non-violent resistance commission of the PPU, later the Operation Gandhi, then the NVRSp, finally the DAC,) was ruined when the squatters suddenly realised that without them Peace News would not come out the next week. Similarly I remember the SLL in 58 refraining from an action which would have brought it some considerable influence at one & the same time in CND militant, tenant & industrial circles because the paper came first.

In both cases perhaps inefficiency was partly to blame. But in both cases the paper was elevated to greater importance than propaganda by deed; & this is the normal pattern.

The effect of this is seen now in the SLL (& in the Workers' Fight pamphlet on the SLL the parallel is fairly drawn with the C.P. in the thirties); good organisers were withdrawn from posts of influence in industry & among tenants in order to supervise the distribution of the paper; the League became a body that is always to be found outside the factory selling, but never the journal distributed by militants inside.

Having said this I think the costing of the paper has been optimistic. Agreed Direct Action stuck like a besotted limpet to letter press, but owning the press, printing everything ourselves - handfeed - we produced an ill-looking thing for about £50 an issue; the London group devoting all its time to it, more or less giving up producing pamphlets as well as intervening in wider struggles.

Certainly an offset litho plate (or matt) can be typed on an ordinary typewriter (as long as it has a sufficiently carbonised ribbon) & this is little cost. (Ink costs are higher than one might suppose and wastage is fairly high.) But once one starts one would want to be able to produce photographic plates as being more versatile, alright one can ~~use~~ a simple contact process and adapt machinery so that it can make both negs and plates & still produce something, (Socialist Current made its own photographic equipment but the photos were indistinct in the paper,) & finally citing one's machine where it is near enough to those who are going to print & their sources of paper supply not to be too expensive that way, without paying an enormous rent is tricky. (Terry Chendler used to pay \$112 a quarter & that's one main reason why he went broke.)

Let us not delude ourselves that we can bear the cost of a paper & still carry on with other work, & so maintain our creditability, we have already allowed our production of pamphlets to slide; when ORA was first mooted two pamphlets were immediately published and the promise was made that one a month would follow, in the next two months a further three were published, & we were announcing that we had drafts in hand for another half dozen (most of which are still unpublished), since when we have only published another three (and an ORA Newsletter supplement since reproduced as a pamphlet.)

I do not know what effect a paper will have on work in tenants' associations, women's lib., etc.; (& I would include with these as the wider movement, the formation of local anarchist groups on a wider basis than ORA;) but I am certain this is a factor that ought to be reckoned in the cost, & unless it can be shewn that the ORA paper will help more than hinder in such circles this should be added to the costs. (If it would help then of course it would be added to the benefits but activists in these fields must think in terms of whether they - themselves - selling a paper will allow them sufficient time to devote as much work as they now do to the wider causes & so whether it will help their work. One cannot assess the balance in terms of whether someone else might come along and sell the paper to one's contacts, for that someone else ought to be doing other work, it's whether your work in the local tenants' group/whatever will be facilitated by your having to devote X hours to selling Y papers.

4. With the best will in the world, & the most self-effacing, dedicated & self-sacrificing 'leading activists', 'editorial committee/working group', -(& let it be clearly understood that I think the best will in the world & these qualities are to be found in the present case, but then I also thought and think that they were present in the SWF in the mid & late-mid sixties;)

- the editors of a small paper functioning on a shoe string:- cannot consult all the rank & file of their supporters at every stage of the production of a paper;

attempts to do this will merely mean that the paper will lose topicality, to omit something from a paper is as much a comment as to include it, so that to bring out a paper without an article on the most important current issue because there was no time to consult the membership, would - as far as readers are concerned - be to say that it less important than preserving democratic norms.

Very often this would appear doctrinaire or as if we were dodging important issues.

moreover

any editorial group - however libertarian -(especially if it has good anarchist editors, that is editors involved in the day to day wider struggles of those around them) is bound to view the importance of all issues through the light of their own experience.

This will mean that however hard the editors may try to consult the membership, however much they may report their actions at all stages, they will have pre-conceived views as to which issues are important & which are not.

They will tend to give weight to the views of those of the local groups they consult to the extent that the beliefs of the latter accord with their own & they will tend to dismiss as irrelevant the interests of any group that works in a milieu alien to its own.

So one gets a local group sending in reports of what the central group considers irrelevancies, or wanting to comment on particular international events that have caught the imagination of their associates, & the central group dismissing these irrelevancies and complaining that the local group sends it no news, by which it means no news of the sort that the central group considers all important.

finally

since one of the arguments for a paper is that it will train our own people - what the Leninists call cadre-building - it should be noted that it does this unevenly.

It produces a small central group of paper-specialists being drawn more & more out of other struggles; it produces localised committees in which those who can spare time for the paper have a disproportionate say, & those up to their eyebrows in local campaigns too little, & it reduces a rank & file to paper-selling automatons, needing only such political theory as is necessary to justify the line on whatever issue and to attack rival paper-sellers of different groups.

It does not encourage localised groups to work out their own position, & to work out to propagate that position bearing in mind the nature of the people around them.

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Anti-vanguardist theory & the dialectical inter-penetration of
differing anarchist ideas

Throughout the Left there is an excessive - if not obsessive interest in organizational journals. In its British application Leninism has largely acted as a rationalisation of this, & this may well account for its relatively greater attraction to revolutionaries.

Propaganda by the deed is largely left to those newly recruited to the movement, or those who have too recently broken away from a larger faction to have established their own factional paper.

I am not for one moment suggesting that factional ideas are not important, that we as a faction have not something that is vital to offer the anarchist movement as a whole - so vital that without it I believe anarchist revolution is unattainable - but it is something offered to the movement as a whole, not an independent message.

The difference between a revolutionary faction of anarchists and a Leninist group is not only organizational; far more important than this is the acceptance - lying at the heart of any libertarian theory - that one's own faction is not the supreme embodiment of all revolutionary wisdom, not infallible, not gifted with such magnificent & unerring wisdom as to qualify it to lead the masses & to impose its will on all others.

The root cause of many of the betrayals in Spain was that the FAI did not remember this. That it imposed its will on the CNT masses and thereby lessened the latter's self-reliance, & autonomous revolutionary consciousness.

A revolutionary anarchist faction does not set out to lead, either the anarchist movement or the masses beyond. It does set out to push. It does believe it has something of importance to offer. It offers it as forcefully as it can. But does this as a faction of the movement.

It may well oppose another anarchist tradition basically but it must make a distinction between a tradition which is anarchist but mistaken at some points and therefore must be combatted as comrades & one which is basically elitist.

It must accept that both within & without the anarchist movement there are people offering views which do not have everything we would wish but who are contributing, perhaps in a distorted way, to the raising of the workers' consciousness.

I take it that there is no disagreement that the organizations which anarchist believe the workers - if & when they attain revolutionary consciousness - will throw up will in their internal relations reflect the society they will build.

I take it we agree that not only are such organizations the new society in embryo, but that our own organization is either an earlier foetal stage, or either sperm or ovum before fertilization. I take it therefore that we are agreed that just as an

anarchist society would be pluralist - not just permitting but encouraging wide diversity of social cooperative forms - so must the future mass workers' movement be and so now should the propagandist anarchist movement.

But this is not the only reason for welcoming in our midst those whose revolutionary ardour might be thought to be somewhat less than obvious.

Not only is it true - as I have argued in ORA 2 & 5, as in two other pamphlets published by ORA & Anarchy 68 - that if one examines the early soviets, the early syndicates or other industrial unionist movements, or anywhere else where anarchist ideas - consciously attributed to anarchism or not - were manifested in mass movements, the majority of such movements came from far more reformist tendencies (some of which had been anarchist-influenced, some marxist, some Utopian, some proto-Fabian) and they had coalesced, synthesizing their views and deepening their radicalism, partly under the impact of objective conditions, external events, & partly because a faction of revolutionary anarchists acted as a catalyst. (I will be returning to this point.)

It is also true that there are different elements necessary to all stages of struggle. In so far as before it came to power the Labour Party represented a politicisation of the trade unions and a desire to fight not just for sectional workers' ends, but the working class, employed and unemployed, wage earner and housewife, adult & child it represented something of the advance that traditional left social democrat & Stalinist theory (Straychey) read into it. Now it will be self-evident that by & large the Lib-Labs brought with them a concept of social justice that was in essence working class liberalism; but a liberalism of a social-paternalist variety rather than a cut-throat laissez-faireism.

Something of the effect of this is manifested today in the mass struggles which, fortunately, are emerging. One sees very significant industrial struggles; one sees quite courageous attempts by the most oppressed & exploited sections of the working class, squatters, claimants, PROP to find their own forms of struggle which bring them into conflict with their super-exploited positions; one sees cross-class struggles which dovetail with the working class struggle at this point, & will later release new forces into it, women's lib., Black Power/Freedom/Liberation, gypsies, Celtic freedom/language; and with all these one sees the general body of left social-democracy making sympathetic noises - not only from the sidelines - but opting out of a duty to produce a generalised political picture. Failing to argue the reasons, the special oppression of these sections, failing to argue how their struggles are compatible with the general welfare, failing even to counter right wing attacks, even on trade unionists, & failing to answer the silly but popular belief that the only place that a worker's pay rise can come from is out of the pensioner's pocket.

Political revolutionary theories that are founded solely on terms of the economically determined struggle of the under-dog of course logically do refrain from putting the whole social picture in ethical/altruist terms since this would be petit-bourgeois liberalism. Though in fact few groups are as logical as this, and generally those most anxious to refrain from lapsing

into such liberal heresies are those with the least rounded - & therefore the most characteristically liberal - theories of why they should be engaged in such actions.

Only when a group can - in something like mutual aid terms - talk of the working class as a whole, & make plain that he is as anxious for justice within the class as without it can he posit an united class struggle which nevertheless embraces the sundry sectional struggles listed.

As it is the social democrat left (in which I include Stalinist TU officials) argues as if believing that all social change & social justice will come from legislation, i.e. that all should logically be subordinated to the struggles of the left within the labour party & the electoral fortunes of the party as a whole, & then quite illogically (however laudably) applauds direct action struggles that may well detract from this.

Anarchism has always combined the two distinct elements of an ethical belief in subordination of the individual to the general weal, & a determinist belief that change can only come from self-interest motivated direct intervention by the oppressed.

Godwin combined with utopian christian (or ex-christian, as both humanists & christian socialists look on him as a founder) pre-Utilitarian ultra-radical liberalism, coupling his ethical patterns with an appeal to the plebeian masses. (I say plebeian since the working class consequent on the industrial revolution was in its infancy.)

Anarchist Clouts & other spokesmen for the sans-culottes again represented a plebeian ultra-liberalism tinged with utopian socialist aims; and in a sense Proudhon was the last manifestation of this tradition. It should be noted that by no means the only tradition of Proudhonism to have survived is that that passed by Bakunism and Guillaume or through syndicalism into anarchism. The Spanish Federalists were by no means the only Proudhonists to have become liberal, & there are echoes of Proudhon in such right wing philosophies as Poujadism; while on the other hand the extreme Mutualists kept themselves apart from any immersion in the anarchist movement.

Much of Bakunin's critique of Marx is in terms of an unstated ethical code, that refused for instance to accept that the mere fact that peasant life inculcated individualist & competitive ideas, (& lumpen life subservient ones) & that since solidarity was not instinctive and equal cooperation unusual in peasant circles, meant that Marx was right and that the peasantry could only behave in a revolutionary manner if led from outside their ranks and so should be written off as a revolutionary force. As Bakunin accepted most of Marx's philosophical system, & his economically determinist theories there was an apparent contradiction reminiscent of that in Godwin.

In both cases the contradiction worked, while the logical system could only work because Marxists ignored one or other part of it. The tradition of anarchism so created was basically a determinist variant of socialism, reintegrating some of the elements of Utopian socialism which Marx had thrown out, while continuing to denounce the Utopians, in which the anarchism was an

adjunct (a qualification) of the socialism.

Kropotkin's greatest contribution may have been the fact that Mutual Aid systematises an ethical basis for that part of the anarchist repudiation of Marx. It is in accordance with this that Kropotkin integrated into the general body of anarchist ideas the thinking of anti-governmentalist Utopians like Thoreau, Tucker & Tolstoi; he equally of course tried to integrate Stirner, but though Stirner had been as insistent as Thoreau et alia that he was no anarchist the Stirnerites promptly claimed to be the only true anarchists launching "The Anarchist" in opposition to Freedom.

In a sense this changed anarchism; in a sense that was the result of the emergence first of reformist Marxist & then of Bolshevist governments. Anarchism instead of being a particular tradition of socialism became synonymous with those socialists who still wanted workers' control, a moneyless economy, . . . , & when a period of radical retreat came which left the anarchist communists weaker than the individualists; the communism of the anarchist communists became a mere adjunct of their individualism not vice versa. So that it is now assumed - even by many anarchist communists - that anarchist communism puts the individual before the collective, whereas Bakunin would have endorsed Marx (cf the Grundrisse) in seeing the whole cult of the individual as a recently created myth. The idea of the self-sufficient individual only arises in mass societies, partly because tribal cooperation is lost, partly in reaction to the mass nature, partly because only when one has reached a mass society level of economic 'affluence' do the things that make for the sturdy individualist materialise.

This change made possible the integration of a philosophy of sectional & ethical criticism of class socialism into one coherent class struggle based philosophy - syndicalism.

We are left by historical developments with an anarchist movement which has in large part forgotten its socialist heritage and a number of libertarian socialist, council communist, . . . groupings which having originated from Marxist-Leninism, & having been alienated by the individualist currents of anarchism do not use the term.

There are other currents derived from sections of social democracy who have reacted against state planning to see that that does not bring socialism, and also have been alienated by the term anarchist or the existing anarchist movement, & finally there are those who starting from an ethical approach - not always, but often, a pacifist one - have reached a position more or less equivalent to the Tolstoi-Thoreau tradition of anarchism, & have adopted from us further ideas to bring them into line with syndicalist or Kropotkinist involvement in a wider movement, but who still see no particular reason to call themselves anarchists.

We can only hope to get anywhere if those who are non-communist anarchists, & those who are non-anarchist communists; those who call themselves anarchist & those who do not become ready to accept the need for them to allow their ideas to interpenetrate. This does not mean that they must renounce their own views to submerge them in the synthesis, the worker who has been

awoken to the dangers of authoritarian education or militarism by a revisionist anarchist, is still going to be the more ready to combat the power of the state & see that the state is not an impartial arbiter, but the agency of the boss, & that it induces subservience and nationalism as a weapon primarily against the worker; while the pacifist can bear in mind that anarchist communist propaganda is always anti-militarist, & always against an authoritarian regimentation in the name of 'revolutionary discipline'.

In the mass movements of the past the revolutionary anarchists acted as a synthesis facilitating the synthesis of ethical & determinist traditions of socialism in one new quasi-anarchist whole. We have not now got an anarchist revolutionary movement capable of performing this catalytic task. We have to create that, but here too we have to act as a catalyst bringing together groups that are already libertarian to get them together to create a movement that while retaining its internal diversity nevertheless has a common sense of purpose, & a common desire to change society.

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neglected facet of past anarchist theory, the Bergson/Sorelian
motivating myth

I am not generally an admirer of Georges Sorel. Syndicalism has I think suffered from the fact that most people think of him as its founder & sole theorist. But his adaptation of Bergson's theory of the motivating myth in history - particularly but not exclusively with reference to the Social General Strike is I think too much ignored.

Bergson had shown that in science, art, industry & elsewhere many notable advances were made by people inspired by a preconceived belief in something. They set out to prove it (sometimes disprove it) what they found might well be very different from what they sought. But the wholehearted aim had been a motivation that had kept them going through the necessary work of the search. He applied this naturally as a commentary on much religious thinking and endeavour.

Sorel - starting from the fact that the effort made to achieve a desirable end, while not achieving it, may well be more likely to achieve - as a side effect - another desirable end than an unmotivated search applied this to the general strike. Many had said - arguing against Allemane - that if the workers had the consciousness necessary for mounting and waging a general strike they would be capable of achieving socialism by other easier means. Sorel conceded this, but said the SGS has a stark simplicity that makes it a suitable slogan to attract people to revolutionary socialism. Once attracted they have to explore the means & in so

doing attained that consciousness; realizing also that building the revolutionary industrial union capable of taking & holding the means of production while subverting the loyalties of the armed forces would itself be the revolutionary act.

A social myth therefore is defined as a social demand, easily grasped as an idea, capable of inspiring activity, which is of itself intrinsically desirable, the pursuance of which may not satisfy the demand itself but brings one closer to the reason that one advances that demand.

It would be fair to say - though they probably would not like the terms - that when Priestly & others advanced the slogan of Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament and suggested launching CND as a movement embodying it (though not committed to it) hoping thereby to "harness the radicalism of youth" to the Labour Party Left, they were trying to use unilateral disarmament as a Sorelian myth; in a sense; but in that ND could not have been achieved within the context of a bourgeois state, and in that dedicated struggles to attain it advanced the anarchist reawakening, in that Priestley certainly did not want a basic questioning of the bourgeois state it was the more 'doctrinaire' unilateralists who were in the Sorelian tradition.

In a sense the whole concept of industrial unionism has in this country always been treated by syndicalists as a myth. English syndicalists - faced with the closed shops normal to reformist unions - have for the most part (Aldred in the 1920s was a notable exception) rejected dual unionism and believed that rank and file organization within the framework of traditional unionism was the only hope. The Shop Stewards' movement in large measure was a joint syndicalist-De Leonist achievement, & the effect of industrial unionist agitation is reflected by the fact that many unions pay lip service to industrial unionism & have written into their constitutions the rule that the aim of the union is to win for the workers - by hand & by brain - the full control of their society. Consequently British syndicalism has posed the industrial unionist organizational, theoretical & other forms as an aim, knowing that work to achieve it will attain lesser improvements within the framework of the main current of the unions. It will be more effective in doing this than any statist efforts to make the unions revolutionary.

In much the same way the concept of a viable AFB can be a motivating myth. It is very possible that one would not achieve it, it is very possible there are other more easily attainable means to a viable propagandist group which will itself work for a mass united libertarian communist movement. But work towards a real AFB is I hold the most likely way to achieve this propagandist movement even if what we achieve differs in some notable respects from what we set out to achieve.

I say a propagandist anarchist movement, though this is to oversimplify the role that such a federation should fill. It would be the militant minority attempting to lay the foundations of the wider movement, not just a body engaged in nothing more than

paper-selling - propaganda from outside the movement. But equally it would never forget the need to propagate its ideas as the reason for its actions. It would refrain from the Leninist caricature of syndicalism, (in fact more often found among Leninist industrial militants), discussing only industrial matters at the shop floor & opposing the introduction of other radical ideas for fear that they split the unity of the workers.

Keith Pater - in an excellent article in Anarchy - & I - in ORA 2 & 'Anarchism & Organization' - sketched out a theory of anarchist organization relating this to the free society; & I will not repeat that here. Though I would refer readers to those articles for fuller appreciation of what I envisage as a decentralised & interlocking anarchist organization. In each case we pictured a full blown propagandist grouping which may not be immediately on the cards, but it is essential that the early organization embodies the same values as are desired in the full blown & complete one.

I shall be going into details later as to my immediate proposals, but at this stage while considering the matter as myth, I think it is necessary to portray three propagandist stages: - what we can achieve now, what we can reasonably work for as soon as we have achieved it, plans towards a daily paper. I want to show that each stage follows practically as well as theoretically from the earlier if one avoids an ORA paper.

I argue that both from a propagandist point of view and in terms of training people coming to our own movement and developing their self-confidence locally based magazines are best. I do not mean merely geographically based ones; the locality may be the industry, a particular campaign or one of half a dozen similar interest groups.

One should foster these. But quite rightly we want to put over a specifically ORA viewpoint. We can combine the two by publishing a national news-insert of news from all over the country, with our position made plain, for inclusion in local magazines. If we litho these at a convenient size the local group can staple these into its own paper.

This will mean that the local group will still have control of their mag., still have the interest & enthusiasm which goes with putting out their local case, will still be able to make sure that the mag. is sold on the basis of news which will appeal to their immediate surroundings. Groups however which have difficulty producing copy, or feel they know too little of what is going on elsewhere, will find it easier to produce their paper.

Lithoing sufficient copies to go in say half a dozen local mags, we can do it fairly cheaply, so that the local groups will not find it difficult to pay part of the cost, while it will still act to subsidize them.

If other groups started producing insets too there would be nothing to prevent a local group having two insets, arguing different anarchist cases, & thereby contributing to the inter-

action of anarchist arguments. (I think our launching an inset would in fact compel BF & ASA, Minus One & one or two others of our neighbours to consider a similar change.)

Before any one leaps up in horror. Yes, I did get the idea from church magazines, where insets - now invariably ghastly ones, there was one good one (comparatively) but Tim Beaumont bought it up & I believe it died - are quite common, but normally found only in the magazines of whiches where the priest is too lazy or too stupid to produce anything himself, rather than as an unifying factor & an aid cashwise, let alone attempts to introduce something more fundamental into the trivial discussions that characterise most parish magazines.

When one has got a number of local mags., & a few insets, (a minimum of six mags. & one inset,) then it would be possible to combine them into one good weekly paper; where the front page & one other varied according to the locality being produced by the former local mag, with the inside being the inset expanded to bring in the news from the other local groups; or if more than one inset the inside would have some different parts for each.

Let's immediately draw the distinction between the united front that this would create & Freedom. The editors of Freedom try to create a balance between the differing anarchist traditions, try to smooth over the differences and behave as if they don't really exist. We would be structuring the debate, bringing out into the open that so & so is saying this & you can join him, so & so disagrees & you can join him; but both appreciate that they are part & parcel of a wider movement.

The paper at this stage would obviously be lithoed. It is much easier to transport a plate (easier still a neg) than printed papers; so it would not be difficult for each local group - & I am not suggesting limiting them necessarily to the front page, that would depend on numbers and size of paper available, - to produce its own plate or neg (photographically, thereby allowing pictures) & send these in to the central group to be run.

As finances grew, as other local groups wanted to produce their editions, and as other libertarian groups wanted to come in as if insets we could think seriously about a daily. A main point that it is easier to transport a plate or neg than bundles of paper should be central. The Morning Star & Workers' Press have great difficulty delivering large bundles of printed papers round the country, because they print all the papers centrally. We should aim to have a dozen small offsets (R 30/90 - Miehle Grosse Dexter - or what have you) dotted round the country, with perhaps far more than that number of neg or plate-making centres. As these would be transported before printing, they would be going earlier when it would be easier to put them on a train; & the number of papers to be printed in any one place would be sufficiently small to make things possible.

One final point before we leave the subject of the Sorelian myth.

The significance of the term anarchist, & the necessity to retain it is put in question by the apparent bankrupt state of the anarchist movement & the readiness of other healthy currents to call themselves libertarian but distrust of the word anarchist.

In the past the only real argument here was that we had no desire to disown our heritage. We were first given the name (starting from Bakunin not Godwin) as a term of abuse, & so assuredly there is no real reason why we shouldn't have found ourselves a better term; (Though this would have been made a term of abuse by our enemies anyway.) But to explain where we differed from 'socialism' we would have to refer back to the history of the Marxist/Anarchist split (even when as in my case one tends to favour Marx rather than Bakunin on many points) & so the word anarchist would be introduced. Once introduced it would appear cowardice that one did not adopt it.

But now there are other reasons. One has Septimus Swine (Lord Hail Sham) denouncing anarchists here, whenever trade unionists strike, or Welshmen wish to be addressed in their own language. One has trade union bureaucrats denouncing dissidents in their own unions (Jones & the dockers) as anarchists. One has Leninists denouncing overemphasis on the industrial struggle as mere petit bourgeois anarchism; & one has the papers ranting against sit-in strikes as opening the doors to anarchism.

Enough workers are being denounced - for the right reasons - by capitalists as anarchists; enough militants told that if they are not totally subservient to some self-elected set of potential dictators they are anarchists; that our propaganda is being done for us. All over the place there must be people, no doubt at the moment furiously denying they are anarchist, they just want freedom, but wanting to know "what the hell is an anarchist anyway."

They may well be misinformed when they ask. May well at first believe the misinformation. But as they are told that it is petit bourgeois anarchism for workers to come together at the shop floor and insist on controlling their organization; that it is petit bourgeois anarchism for workers to talk of running their factories themselves, rather than have an enlightened managed appointed by an all wise party; p.b.a. to talk of...; they are going to wonder just why such a petit bourgeois group as anarchists should advocate so much power for workers and in such a sensible way.

Sooner or later they'll get round to asking anarchists! We want to be there when it happens. They'll ask the largest body of anarchists & the largest publishing group. They may well when they've looked at it be alienated, & begin to believe some of the criticisms formerly made. Unless there are revolutionary anarchists around that publishing group & that body, ready to add to the answers.

Incidental factors & background features

1.

Where we are. I

I briefly described the bulk of the social democratic left as combining with their parliamentarian perspective an illogical - for them - support for a large number of direct action struggles, which we would see as the basis, - in a small way, - of a mass libertarian struggle.

By social democrat I do not confine myself to the Labour Party, still less to the right wing of it which is now using the term as a synonym for the pro-Common Market, state-planned, mixed-economy, managerialist-capitalist policies it proposes. I am using the term in its 19th Century sense as one who believes that socialism can come by the capture of the political machinery of the state, by a party backed by the basic organs of the working class & enforcing the power of its parliamentary representatives against any attempt by right wing elements to ignore the decisions of parliament.

This includes the Communist Party in its official statements, a lot of the old New Left & many others.

Slightly out of character in this set up one finds groups like the Institute for Workers' Control, the Bertie Russell Peace Foundation, the C.P. front Liason Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions & so forth. These argue for a socialist perspective & struggle that goes beyond social democracy, but do it so rigidly within the framework of that social democracy, & are so careful to avoid introducing too many topics of political interest for fear of splitting the workers that outwardly they appear to be merely more militant social democrats.

It is notable that of late there has been a trend among those social democrats still in the Labour Party to attempt to work out a definite perspective of political change; while there has also been a trend from amongst former revolutionaries to "eschew sectarianism" & "while still believing that the socialist has a right to lead the masses" & therefore not "attacking vanguardism", to try and manifest this modified vanguardism within the framework of Tribune.

I think this will go further; whether or not they are able to produce a theory that combines the support for struggle with a parliament-oriented philosophy. The fact that many of them are ex-bolshevists & have spent so much time denouncing Austro-Marxism & Kautskyan-Centrism makes it hard for them to develop the old centrist perspective (given a renewed revolutionary flavour in Rosa Luxemburg's writings) of parliamentarians acting as rubber stamps on gains the workers make for themselves by direct action.

In such circumstances, & especially since the Nixon-Mao talks took the heart out of much of the Left-Stalinist movement, the majority of those propagating a socialist perspective which makes sense out of supporting all the various workers' actions are in one or other Trotskyist faction. (I use the term widely, I don't think that for all his faults Trotsky would have acknowledged any of his heirs.)

The very fact that Trotskyists do not reject hierarchy makes them better adapted at this stage to talk to people who while beginning to reject the norms of conformism have not yet become used to running their own show, & have not shed the attitudes of subservience & reliance on the experts. It is also ideally suited to a stage wherein the militant working class is still a minority, where militancy is sporadic & isolated.

However the fact that the working class is showing far more militancy & socialist consciousness now than it did six years back makes hopes of a mass movement real, & so favours the Trot rejection of appeals by people like the Maoists solely to a small section of super-exploited workers. (In which rejection incidentally they are able to point at Bakunin & couple him with the Maoist elitism; Eldridge Cleaver's position reinforcing the argument.)

The fact that the Trots have now greater hope of a real mass revolution has meant that they no longer need tail-end Guevarraists & so forth; & to this extent the trendy-Trots are moving leftwards.

This will mean that for a time groups of leftist Trots, or Trots working their way to council communism, (Socialist Current, IS-Workers' Opposition faction,) will tend to halt their progress leftwards, in order to call for an united revolutionary party oriented to the rank & file worker & to the struggle for soviets.

For anarchist currents to be heard in this milieu they would need to compromise with the trade union-partial support for Labour theories that pervade the bulk of existing mass struggle. Just as Anarchy attained an influence in an equivalent milieu because it was broadly "Revisionist Anarchist" (cf incidentally N.W.'s comments on it in the current Freedom 8. Sept.) that is it did not insist on the need for an anarchist revolution & was therefore able to coexist with the support for the Labour Party, & general Lib-Lab philosophy, that characterised most of the do-it-yourself reformers of those days.

We should not therefore be over-concerned that at the moment we do not see great rewards for our labours.

Anarchists can only make ourselves heard - unless they find some compromise form, some new revisionism - as a rejection of the dominantly propounded perspective for revolution. We are insisting that workers must not only reject the Harold Wilsons, but also the Tariq Alis & Gerry Healys of this world. But we are in a stronger position to do this than we were when the dominant trend was CND-New Left.

It's possible that the present upsurge of militancy will be short-lived, will not grow to embrace the bulk of the working class. That the social-democrats will be so terrified by having to produce a political theory even mildly specifically non-parliamentarian that they will abandon the attempt to win over the bulk of trade unionist support and ground themselves not just on a few shop stewards, & militants with their immediate circles of support but on a genuine mass movement.

If that happens things will stagnate. No doubt this will allow the Trots to achieve their united Leninist Party - for a time; but they will no longer be talking to workers who are doing what they say already and want arguments to justify them. There would then be an upsurge of despair, & lots more drop-outs passing no doubt temporarily through some variant of anarchism, so our ranks would apparently grow as we died.

But it is also possible that the movement would grow as its growing. This would mean that the social-democrats would at first embrace a centrist theory to unite their ranks, would then be able to appeal to a wider section of the trade union movement & the class generally, which would tend to make them less critical of the Labour Party, which in turn would make some of their ranks - perhaps the present IWC people - deepen their arguments, reassert their belief in workers' control coupling this with a critique of the trade unions in political terms and they would move towards the Trots. The bulk of whom would reciprocate; making a further minority turn to a revolutionary position.

I do not think we can build a perspective on the possibility of defeat, however great this is, we have to assume that the working class is going to deepen its struggles, & that therefore elitist revolutionary theories will become less relevant and there will be a more or less spontaneous growth of something approaching syndicalism, something which will provide anarchism with an audience; & the crossroads are almost already here.

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Where we are. II

Ken Coates - now standing for the L.P. Executive - had an article in the current Tribune. Two points are of interest & support the thesis that IWC & left social democracy are finding a *Meloa* via for Coates was rightly saying it is easier to influence Labour Party policy while it is in opposition; (he didn't draw the obvious conclusion that the working class is better off with Labour in opposition for then it has one parliamentary party seeking its support;) & so unions should draw up plans now to enforce in the general pattern of overall Labour policy. In other words he has moved from seeing workers control as the campaign to get workers' participation in management (or rather TU participation) to seeing it as workers' (TU) participation in choosing the policies that management is expected to implement.

I neglected in the initial sketch to touch on the counter-culture. I confess to being square/straight or whatever is the current term but this was not the reason. I have said enough - primarily in Anarchy 68, but here also - to demonstrate that I believe the Left depends on an interaction between a materialist-determined case & a personal commitment to an altruist ethic. It is however far harder to define a personalist stance in verbal & theoretical terms.

With this point curiously goes a need to discuss what is in reality - rather than Birch - the main current of Maoists. For most of those who applauded the Cultural Revolution & waived their silly little red books never belonged to a Maoist party & -

mirabile dictu - really were convinced that the cultural revolution was the assertion of mass rank & file democracy against the power of the bureaucracy. Had they known the terms, & had they known more of the history of Russia (without knowing more of what was in fact going on in China) they might well have compared their position to the Workers' Opposition, or one of the peasant/socialist revolutionary revolts in Russia a little before the time of Kronstadt. The parallel would of course have been inaccurate, though it is possible that the Red Guards may have sincerely believed they were fulfilling such a role.

Now what of these non-party (or anti-party) Maoists now? They might believe I suppose that Lin Piao was the true revolutionary, that he resisted the line on Bangla Desh, opposed the rapprochement with Nixon, (Peking Review talked of "Comrade President Nixon!"), & so on. They may believe that Mao is only going through a manoeuvre and all will turn out for the best (just as Stalinists convinced themselves that Ribbentrop & Molotov could meet without politically dangerous significance). But some will believe that either they were wrong in their assessment of the Cultural Revolution & Liu, or the Bureaucrats have been able to reassert themselves despite Mao. Either way they have to question the absolute wisdom and assurance of victory of their all-wise leader. Either way if they want to advocate a policy that is at once communist & opposed to the total power of the Leninist party they will have to find a new vehicle.

Their case of course depended in large part on their belief that the Western white working class was bourgeoisified & of no further revolutionary account. A belief which as I said can be farthered on Bakunin, or more justly on Nachaev, as well as Revisionist Anarchists. The reawakening of working class militancy in recent months (& even if it is only to be short-lived, we can fairly safely expect it to continue for at least a couple of years) has killed or is killing that argument. A lot turn back to a more orthodox bolshevism and the concept of a revolutionary party setting out to penetrate & lead the workers' organizations, but this means adopting party discipline, and those who were sincere in their initial case for supporting the cultural revolution that it was a corrective to the excessive power of the state-party, are going to have doubts about this.

Curiously there appears to be some turning from Mao to advocacy of communes, a book of communes published last year, seriously argues that communal living will be enhanced and facilitated by joint study of the little red nonsensebook

But it means that in some considerable measure that Maoism contributes to the present Trot-dominated propagandist left, not only in that personnel-wise the Trots have recruited from the millieux, but also that former Maoists, whose commitment was from the first, somewhat personalised & independent of party-diktat, are now sharpening their personal stand, without having explained this as theory.

Meanwhile the fact that "alternative culture" events are now becoming increasingly commercialised and obviously so, must be causing heart-searching amongst those who yesterday were

telling us that opting out was the only way to fight the state. We can hope that papers such as Inside Story which represent a re-politicised alternative culture (though Wynford was never personally de-politicised) herald an attempt to live a counter-culture life style that really is a personal revolt against the state and not a coping out of struggle in order to become parasitic on those who do fight the state.

As I've said anarchism as long as it remains true to its belief that you cannot change society by hierarchical means is unable to appeal to people who are only beginning to shed their habits of subservience. But that if they are to achieve anything - even in Trotskyist terms - the newly militant workers will have to shed this trust in leaders more fully.

So our current isolation is both inevitable & less significant or depressing than one might think.

By & large the differing currents of the Libertarian or Anarchist Left are all currents who for different reasons cannot yet make headway. Though there may well be groups which we still reckon as part of the Libertarian Left, or who were so reckoned not long ago, which have decided to shed some part of our case in order to accommodate to the semi-bolshevist climate; (& they would not need to have made that decision consciously as an opportunist decision, any more than the founders of Anarchy consciously set out to emasculate anarchism to win friends amongst the New Left-CND militants; the mere fact that one moves amongst who are ready to go half-way to agree with one's case inclines one in courtesy to try and soften the disagreement on the remainder. Nor should one underestimate the contribution the Revisionists made to the revival of anarchism. Anarchy made its impact by being prepared to be agnostic about the possibility of revolution, while providing new non-revolutionary reasons for engaging in the sort of do-it-yourself-reformism in which revolutionary anarchists must inevitably engaged while trying to build a mass libertarian movement. It would not be beyond the bounds of possibility for a modern equivalent to remain agnostic as to whether one could compromise with a workers' state; - while finding, with good exegesis in Kropotkin & elsewhere, reasons for direct action independent of the control of vanguardist parties; & this might well have an appeal to former Maoists.)

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Our name & Our neighbours

In a sense it was something of an accident that the founders of ORA took the name we did. Keith was aligned on an international plane with the French ORA in debates within CRIFA, but was not over-enamoured with the name & other suggestions were made. In my case, I disliked it because of the associations that the term Organization with a capital O suggest Maoist or Liuist policies & Leninist organization. But as Steve Kible said at the Toynbee Hall anarchism is about organization, & the name is pleasanter on closer acquaintance.

It is worth pointing out that the order of precedence of words, in relation to their importance differs in French & English; - for instance our UNO is their ONU. Just because organization is at the heart of what anarchists are talking about, & because this has been the point ORA has been plugging since before its official inception, it seems fair to interpret our name in a theoretical sense. We are those anarchists, who believe anarchism involves revolution, and that anarchist revolution involves anarchist organization.

I tend to think of us as the revolutionary-organization tendency of the anarchist movement (though I appreciate that looking at it, one might not think there was need for the rot to set in.)

I think it is a pity that our statement, which as I understand it Trevor originally produced as a draft to offer the AFB, and which would have been ideal for that purpose, does not base itself on the three words of the name, so as to bring out the distinctive characteristics of the organization we wish to build, showing in where it differs from others why its separate existence is necessary.

As I am prolix by nature, & as a statement ought to be short enough to include in all printed literature in a way that will catch the eye & get people interested; (even if there is a longer "explanation of the statement" available once one has got them interested;) I am the last person who could try & produce an useful statement. I do however append (Appendix I) a suggested discussion draft, hoping that someone will marry it with Trev's; extract from the result a short form for publication, & a long explanation; as I've based it on the name I have to some extent unduly limited it, leaving out points that ought to be in,

... ..

When ORA was launched it came out of an attempt to restructure (or as Keith rightly said structure, since the AFB had never been structured) the anarchist movement; & to bring into it other Libertarian currents. Perhaps a word or two on these is necessary, though it is difficult to avoid polemic on the one hand & saying too little so as to give a glamourised picture on the other.

A minority of the AFB is opposed to all forms of organization. Basically one can see three arguments for this. That produced by Jeff Cloves reporting Toynbee Hall:

"those who want to organise us"
by Terry Phillips at the time:
"organization should grow spontaneously"
& Freedom's fear - however rationalised - that an organised movement would demand control of the paper.

A variant of this is the 'freak' position, which while demanding in the name of liberty the absolute right of anyone to say anything he likes and call it anarchism, really objects to the possible loss of platform for their weirdisms. Some such are in their off (or is it on) moments good militants: one has the case of Paul who is a bloody good industrial agitator, & a generally nice bod, very brave, stands up to police, courts, fascists & Stalinists in fine style, but puts out leaflets suggesting killing off seven women in eight, fighting the yellow peril, & limiting

immigration.

There is nothing much one can say more about Freedom; it is not its contents that are bad - (though it tends to have a cosy tone that does not attract outsiders, I could hardly criticise it for this since my style is worse) - it is that it fails to engage itself. Its editors appear to be agreed on the need for non-violent revolution, in which I would agree with them, but do not relate their comments on everyday struggles to that perspective, & do not go as far as even Peace News in advocating organization for this end. But over all is the dead hand of private ownership.

However it is worth saying here & now that whatever the merits of 1944 it has been a very long time since anyone demanded the return of the paper & press to the anarchist movement. (I checked on this in 1960 before joining the SWF, since though by & large I thought the old AFB had been morally in the right, I would not have been party to deliberately reopening old sores, though VR's guilt complex did not allow the issue to lie.)

To Terry Phillips ORA can stress that our proposals do not preempt what the workers will do when they make a revolution, we are talking of a propagandist movement; & that the very form of our suggested structuring of the movement is designed to take account of the spontaneously produced organizations therein, & to lessen the impact of those divisions which were not produced spontaneously but stem from personalities and privately owned presses/etc.

To Jeff Cloves: "No we don't wish to organise anyone, we wish them to organise themselves, the fact that they don't - in the anarchist movement, as in ordinary life outside - means that they are inevitably subjected to the whims of power interests, & are manipulated by their organization.

... ..

There are four other organizations which avow themselves anarchist; one the SWF probably has no existence other than that Dave has the remaining literature of the old SWF; the others: - the B.F., ASA, & Minus One all function, publish their views & claim a monopoly of anarchist truth; (ASA is better in this than the others. All therefore oppose our ideas for a structured anarchist movement since this would mean the pollution of association with people they consider non-anarchist.

I don't think that any useful purpose would be served by my trying to discuss B.F., as any comment from me, favourable or otherwise, would be labelled by it as abuse. At one stage the editor appointed himself secretary of the AFB (having successfully pushed a motion through a conference that the federation have no secretary) so he is not by any means against organization as such; it would be interesting to know, on what grounds other than personal distaste for me he opposes ORA's proposals for the movement.

ASA contains some very good militants; those of its members who supported the N.L.F. & V.S.C. now accept that by so doing they were supporting embryonic governments & that this was completely incompatible with anarchism; it has shed its first rather weak statement, so is now firmly committed to a syndicalist perspective while retaining room for other currents of anarchism & it publishes a good paper.

Against this it has or one believes it has connections with the journal Anarchy which in a recent issue on guerrillas tended to an elitist quasi-Maoist belief in minorities acting on behalf of the working class (with or without the class's consent) rather than class action; which was taken from Freedom by a 1944-type theft; whose editors engaged in an unpleasant smear campaign against ORA & Keith in particular.

Probably not all of the editors of Anarchy are implicated in the above, certainly only a minority of ASA are.

Therefore there is no reason to think it impossible that ORA & ASA might not work happily within a wider federation, while each maintained its separate identity therein. If there are those in ASA who would not cooperate at any price (& this applies to BF too) a well worded invitation to them, followed if this brings no answer by an open letter in pamphlet form (long leaflet short pamphlet) which reached their members & contacts would not come amiss; but there is no reason to suppose in advance that the open letter would be necessary.

minus One (& while considering Minus One, one cannot avoid mention of other Stirnerites, not connected, the Rocums are still about, Ken Morse only in underground circles, Gibson & Neville surface occasionally to profess an intellectualism not necessarily merited, & there are others; & in view of some of J.P.S.'s stuff one must also consider "Freedom Review", the youth paper of the Society for Individual Freedom, an ultra-rightist organization.)

Regrettably - since Syd was once a very good anarchist militant - one has to say that most of Minus One is not only non-anarchist but positively reactionary. However occasionally there are sections that still give a stirnerite contribution to anarchism as a whole.

It is interesting & indicative that Bernard Miles who was Stirnerite long before Syd moved over from Tolstoian thought now calls himself an individualitarian, making a deliberate copy of libertarian, as an advocate of a society based on individuality as distinct from those who for either Permanent Protest or conscious egotist beliefs consider such a change is either impossible or undesirable and no concern of the individualist.

Even for the most extreme conscious egotist there is no absolute bar against organization, they have an individualist group & Stirner advocated an union of egotists. Bernard would interpret Stirner's concepts of "Own Property" & other property in very much the same way as Marx talked of "personal" property as distinct from private property. So despite the main current of Minus One Stirnerism is not inextricably linked to the preservation of a form of capitalism or the acceptance of our existing form, but can be a different way of arguing for the abolition of the private ownership of what is really social property.

As I see it therefore there are two strains within Stirnerite-individualism which may contribute to an anarchist revolution:- Those who believe that Stirnerist individuality is a thing to strive for, & change society for rather than something which they have now & which they probably have more securely now than they would in an overall socialist society. Those Permanent Protestors who consider an anarchist revolution is a mirage, regrettably impossible, but who are nevertheless ready to work hard here & now (as Colin Ward's Revisionists worked) to widen the sphere of freedom & combat the conditioning powers of the state.

Naturally we still have basic differences with each of these, we need to state these openly, but it does not mean that there are not spheres in which we can work together, & that we need fail to acknowledge the contribution they are making. Within the broad framework of an overall federation they have something to contribute.

(There will be those who say why bother, they are not worth anything anyway, so a few words on Bernard. Despite his ill health I have known Bernard as an activist since 1958, I have spent several hours in police cells with him, where deprived of his medicines he was near death's door; at the Barbican strike he was one of the few anarchists to be seen at the pickets, & to the best of my knowledge he spent more time there than any other anarchist & was the only anarchist to duplicate his own leaflets for distribution there. As a propagandist he is useful when addressing a meeting of people who have not heard of anarchism before; he gives an individualist case & is prepared to do this after a communist case accepting the two as halves of the same apple; the diversity in unity that this shows, contrasting with the Bolshevik unanimity while showing that we are working for the same thing, often has a very good effect on convincing people that we are offering something valuable. Finally he is far more knowledgeable on the writings of anarchists - individualist & communist - than most.)

How one should persuade these two currents of Stirnerism to assert themselves against the general move rightwards of the rest of the individualist establishment I do not know for sure; but again I think that the cause would be advanced by first private letter then an open one, asking them to play their full role in a structured AFB.

... ..

Besides groups who avow anarchism there are some that do not so do as groups while their members will individually: - mostly pacifist action ones; some underground; some tenant-struggle, squatter & women's lib. groups & Alfred Reynolds's Bridge Circle.

The Bridge sometimes described as 'anarchism for public school boys' is probably the most intellectual anarchist discussion group one can find. In theory it has an horror of activism and organization, in fact it has influenced many people who were notable activists in one field or another, it meets with regularity, publishes a most readable (however reformist) mag., & reaches differing spheres of people drawing them to think about society so that they leave

to act elsewhere. It sees the revolution as taking far longer than we would; it has imbibed so much of the Michaelis/Ostragorsky (please forgive spelling I haven't them to hand) thesis of the iron law of oligarchy that it is certain that to form an organization is to betray the libertarian socialist aim (Arlo Tatum described the group as an organization whose chief activity is denying that they are an organization) & certainly it would be hard for them to affiliate to the AFB; though when in 1961 a federation of anarchist groups in London was first suggested I talked with Alfred & the barrier did not seem insurmountable until I got back to the discussions with the LAG who said in effect "we'd sooner be connected with them than you (the SWF) or Solidarity, but Alfred would not consider it & we don't believe you that he would." My impression was that Alfred would have been only too glad to find some way to cooperate with the anarchist federation that so would the bulk of the permanent Bridge Circle membership. Things may have changed since.

The various class activist groups dominated by people who have given up the anarchists in despair will never come back to the anarchist movement other than as groups; but if a federation were seriously proposed with provision for anarchist groups involved in particular enterprises and so generally not calling themselves anarchist they might well see a point in affiliating as bodies, all the while maintaining their independence.

The same would go for Underground, ecological action groups and so forth; they are doing their bit in a non-class-oriented way, they may well accept that it ought to be class-oriented, & be only too glad of away to affiliate to a broader class-oriented movement while retaining their right to act in their own sphere.

Even more strongly this goes for many pacifist anarchists. Some of course, notably Will Warren in Londonderry, Bob Overy in Belfast Dave Grahame in Manchester have always insisted on putting their Tolstoian actions into the context of an overall class revolutionary perspective though bringing to this a distinctive approach; some like Dr Ronald Sampson both in his own pamphlets and in his reprinting of Tolstoi have stressed the anarchist origins of pacifism. Their moralist & absolutist position would make them suspicious of our calls for workers' power, seeing this as being dangerously near power over rather than power to; ((incidentally Solidarity never did appreciate the distinction between puissance & pouvoir;)) but this can be at times an useful corrective to our thinking.

The Non-Violent Action groups, Peace Action groups & so forth that have tended to proliferate since the decline of the Committee of 100 vary in theory from anarcho-pacifist to sympathizing with Gene Sharp & Adam Roberts's "Civilian Defence" - an attempt to marry non-violent action with the present state forms and convert the army to non-violence ("by the left - Love your enemies - present cheeks") - and obviously only the anarchist minority, and particularly that section of the anarchist minority which either sees its struggle in class terms or is ready to subordinate it to

the general interests of a movement that did, would wish to take part in creating a real anarchist federation. But I suspect that they would number quite highly and that many anarcho-pacifists are active as pacifists rather than as anarchists because of the bankruptcy of the general anarchist movement. (Not that the pacifist one is much better.)

.....

anti-managerialists, etc.
& our neighbours' neighbours

On paper at least almost certainly the nearest group to us anywhere is Solidarity. For my part the only thing that I know I disagree with them is that they integrate into every pamphlet a snide attack on anarchists. Generally inaccurate, sometimes really unfair, as when in a pamphlet largely plagiarised from Tom Brown they ended by saying that anarchists had written nothing useful of late; or when after years of attacking anarchists for interest in non-class issues like Reichian psychology the line was changed & we were attacked for having paid no attention to it.

Solidarity has theories on the analysis of society which perhaps over-emphasize the differences between the class system today & that of the past but which show a welcome readiness to look at the trends in society and try to make sense of them and not insist on the most unMarxian view that society has not changed since the days of Marx.

Solidarity in its criticisms of individual anarchists often hits fairly and squarely; & one can understand its desire to distinguish itself from the various groups of the anarchist movement. But its insistence that it is not part of the anarchist tradition, its refusal to apply that admirable critical sense which it applies to marxist groups to the anarchist ones; (a refusal which I believe stems from the fact that the more it analysed the flaws in particular anarchist theories the more it would see it itself lies within the general sphere of the anarchist tradition;) is irritating and with this its refusal to acknowledge debts not only within that tradition. For Gerdan was not the first person to analyse the division between dirigeant and executant; was not the first to see the Soviet Union as having merely a variant of a new class system; not the first to return to libertarian socialism and council communism as the answer, not the first to talk of spontaneity, - which is not to say that his contribution is not of the first importance. It is.

The various splits in Solidarity - even where the dissidents were avowed anarchists like Hugh Price and Terry Chandler; from the time of Bob Pennington, through Tom Hillier and John Sullivan to the authors of the current document "Solidarity"; with the exception of Mark Hendy & Ernie Stanton; all seem to have taken the dissidents to the right - & even though it looks as if they have all been rooted in purely personal battles not-unreminiscent of some of the anarchist movement's internal troubles one must credit Solidarity with having kept rigidly to the more revolutionary position.

position.

But with Solidarity as with other groups there is a need to push them to clarify their differences with us; & the best way we could do this would be to propose to them that they enter the AFB as a group and work with us to build a structured anarchist movement; & in so doing challenge them to say why they would not want the latter.

... ..

At the end of the war when the bulk of the ILP, the RCP & Common Wealth broke away in a series of splits to join (rejoin) the Labour party 'to work for socialism within it' there developed within Common Wealth & the ILP near anarchist currents of thought; - for indeed these were the only logical basis for refusing to join Labour at that stage.

Common Wealth started with an analysis of trends in modern society East & West that was broadly similar to that Solidarity poses now; (I would say that the documents that Buck Taylor produced as internal Common Wealth documents at the time of the various splits were rather more perceptive than Cardan's later work Chaullieu - who is Cardan was at the time producing work much like Buck's) though far less detailed in its analysis.

Unlike Solidarity Common Wealth anti-managerialists did not deny the heritage from Simone Weill & Rizzi, though they did tend to act as if it didn't matter.

Whereas Solidarity was founded in 1960/1 (Socialism Reaffirmed & Agitator in 60, fusion with North Kent Socialist League and change of name in 61) at a time of reviving militancy on the left, when new currents of youth were moving into the movement; Common Wealth developed its anti-managerialist case in the late forties at a time when left militancy was declining. So though Buck's earlier work predicted new upsurges stemming in the first instance from anti-colonialism, then anti-militarism & opposition to economic colonialism, through opposition to bureaucracy and racism to a new assertion of class struggle; the rump of Common Wealth that exists now stemming from that anti-managerialist current of the forties is pessimistic and holds that the time is not yet ripe for libertarian revolutionary action and that all that can now be done is to build a libertarian base and then wait until such time as the contradictions in the new managerialist economic system mature.

They would hold that at this stage there are sufficient remaining contradictions from classical capitalism, that spontaneous class protest is bound to turn in a bolshevist or other etatist direction; that therefore to pose the revolution at this stage is to play the game of the potential managerialists & aid the new ruling class.

The best answer to this seems to me to lie in Chartistism which had a philosophy of protest fitted to pre-capitalist conditions & yet was the most notable anti-capitalist movement of its day.

Common Wealth's undue pessimism coupled with the fact that most of its activists of the 40s are now elderly, (when I joined it twenty years ago, one of CW's boasts was that it has only two members of its executive committee over forty, now most of them are over 50;) means that it is inactive even for its size, many a local anarchist group with a membership considerably smaller than CW's produces more material. Nevertheless CW has a store of useful & fairly original thinking, which is being wasted by its isolation & could be useful as a contribution to an anarchist movement. Its knowledge of many wartime struggles, particularly the Cairo Mutinee is unparalleled.

...

In a similar period the ILP looked back to its origins, and to smaller currents of revolutionary socialist thought, borrowed from Pannekoek & De Leon extensively, leaned on its POUM history of cooperation with syndicalists, its connections with the classical pacifist movement; (a considerable number of small Tolstoian communities during the inter-war era maintained links with the ILP rather than with the then anarchist movement & so Tolstoianism became an element in ILP thinking;) & without making any clear agreed analysis of the class nature of Stalinism worked its way in conjunction with Common Wealth to a Third Camp position.

In those years it retained a sizeable membership which remained social democrat. Derby branch for instance with monotonous regularity moved at conference that the ILP reaffiliate to the Labour Party. (The fact that it did not leave the ILP to do so, suggests that it was half-hearted about any desire to work in the L.P., & possibly thought the task hopeless even if desirable.)

There was also - in the fifties - a more or less stalinist faction round Ridley (until 48 he had wanted an English nuclear weapon to control stalinism, but in 49 he decided that the C.P. was going to take power anyway, & warned George Stone that safety lay in ingratiating oneself with the party.)

Finally there were various Trot or near Trot activists, who belonged to the ILP possibly for want of anything better.

Until recently these rightist factions were prepared to allow the "ultra lefts" to do the work of maintaining the organisation in existence, belonging to it only nominally, and if active at all being so in other fields. The group that ran the party therefore was somewhere between council communist and industrial unionist, believing in workers' councils but unsure whether they wanted to build syndicates or rely on spontaneity, & working happily with anarchists in the League for Workers' Control, Third Camp, supporting the DAC(ND), in the Rank & File Movement & the C of 100 industrial sub-committee.

Now, as anarchists predicted before, the centre has reasserted itself in the ILP, so that the party advocates more or less Trot policies without having a Leninist organization. This has led to revolt but most of the rebels are elderly.

There are three linked centre of revolt from within the framework of the ILP each with connections outside.

Wilfred Wigham, former party secretary, former editor of the party paper during the years of cooperation with anarchists.

A group formerly round Bill Turner, embracing several ex-anarchists, holding a managerialist analysis of Stalinism and Western capitalism, but in the past ready to go along with Trendy (Stalin-Trot) left campaigns (VSC etc.) & prepared to support the Provisional IRA (not just in the sense that every socialist would have the duty to protect one on the run from the police, but in the sense of advocating their cause,) with links in the Underground.

The Hyde Park Socialist - whose editor agrees that it is a matter of accident that he calls himself socialist rather than anarchist - a group which is less theoretical than Solidarity but would probably agree with them on most points, except that it has an healthy distrust of any group claiming to have all truth & is the sole vehicle of revolution.

Linked mediately with these is Workers' Voice (formerly Class Voice) a group that was founded after one of its members was expelled from the SLL, the others came directly or indirectly from Solidarity, & which passed through Bordigism & then linked with Joe Thomas in London. Joe is a former Oehlerite, was until recently a very hard Leninist, whose belief in a party led him to disrupt various anarchist supported campaigns (notably the League for Workers' Control) & who still retains a residual belief in the necessity for a party, though sometime in the mid-sixties appears to have rethought and now no longer believes that the party has the right to lead the workers (he was still advocating a leadership role in letters & articles as late as 66, after his former organization, the Workers' League had dissolved.) He commented - apropos of an ORA pamphlet - that what we are trying to do was to recreate the sort of coalition that existed between anarchists & Marxists in the First International before the split, only with the balance of forces reversed (the only way the coalition could have been maintained) & that he for one would happily work in such a framework.

...

Linked with these - as much by ties of personal friendship as anything else, but through an history of joint work over two decades - there are various left currents within Leninism.

Socialist Current, edited by an ex-Syndicalists still holds the Trot theory that Russia is a degenerated workers' state, though is often more rigidly opposed to stalinists than people who do not hold this - it opposed VSC as a surrender to Stalinism - does not believe that the party's vanguard role give it rights over the workers once they start to act for themselves and is prepared to condemn Lenin & Trotsky for this. Though it was the only Trot group to publicly reply to Solidarity's publication of Kollontai, this was in part the product of the fact that it was troubled by the issues raised while other Trots thought them unimportant. It does good propagandist work, keeps its promises & would contribute

a lot to a federation

Marxist Humanists, elderly, Harry McShane's past work for the Glasgow Trades' Council is still legendary on Clydeside, no doubt he should have seen through Stalinism earlier than he did, but for twenty years he has been a noted critic of the stalinists, & for fifteen of these he has rejected the vanguard party. (The Marxist Humanists have a curious belief that Lenin's renunciation of Vanguardism at the height of 1917 activity, not his earlier vanguardism or his later return to it, constitutes Leninist orthodoxy so they advocate much the same as Solidarity while defending Lenin. They have an individualistic philosophy based on Marx & Hegel which in many ways would put them nearer Tolstoi than us, & which would perform an useful service as a bridging philosophy for individualistic anarchists concerned that we are too near Marxism.

I.P. Hughes in Liverpool, who is like McShane a former founder member of the C.P., also has a grouplet within IS which takes state capitalist theory rather more seriously than IS would like. I don't know any details.

There are various ex-Solidarity and Solidarity influenced left currents within IS; and the authors of "Solidarity" pamphlet probably hope to undercut Solidarity and mould these into a new faction between IS & Solidarity. A faction neither fully committed to a managerialist analysis or a state capitalist one.

Laurie Flynn (son of the head of SOGAT) was said to have a faction thinking of leaving IS for its centrism in a libertarian direction but his recent letters to the press appear to be very orthodox IS party-line. (In the split in SOGAT, IS - as also BF - played a centrist role, saying that one must not risk attacking Brigenshaw's Stalinist-Catholic Action-National Front coalition but should preserve one's forces so as to be able to fight later; as to some extent John Lawrence's rebellion was seen as helping the other bureaucrats who were sheltering behind Vincent Flynn, Laurie Flynn would have disliked IS's line there, for not totally revolutionary reasons.

There was said to be considerable resistance to a dictat of Cliff's saying that industrial branches of IS should not discuss anything but industrial matters. Whether this stemmed from, was the origin of or was unconnected with the Workers' Opposition" faction I don't know.

Bob Pennington seems to have left IMG; when he left Solidarity he drifted out of politics, and in 67 I remember when seeing him on a demo, him telling me that he was a sucker for marches but he didn't want to get reinvolved in organization. His time in IMG suggests that that phase is over. Though his split with Pallis was discreditable he was an organizer of genius & his future will probably be interesting.

The pressure as I have suggested earlier amongst Leninists must now be for work for an united Leninist party, drawing the right wing Trots away from the Stalinists & Labour leftists, & satisfying some of the criticisms made by left factions. For a time we cannot hope for too much from Leninist factions therefore, but the effort put into arguing with them, though it will not pay immediate dividends will pay them later. Again an approach inviting them into an AFB could be the road to useful debate with them.

... ..

The SLP is small and has recently split from the American SLP. De Leon produced a marxist theory of industrial unionism, arguing that when Marx called for the creation of the socialist society within the womb of capitalism, but did not explain this, he meant building the base of the "worker" republic inside capitalism and then not so much overthrowing but displacing capitalism.

Having a Marx-derived horror of revolutionary minorities coming to power prematurely he reacted against the (mainly Bukunian) anarchists he met, & therefore against French syndicalism. But he produced a curious deviant form of syndicalism which it should be remembered inspired James Connolly in Ireland and John Maclean in Scotland. He insisted that in order to test whether the workers were yet convinced of the need to fight for socialism the industrial union should not act until the socialist party had first won an election at the polls, the party should merely enter the chamber to adjourn them sine die and the strike would then commence.

Obviously this would tell the capitalists when the struggle is to be launched, forewarned is forearmed; obviously it fails to understand the undemocratic nature of "Democratic" elections, obviously it is psychologically nonsense to envisage millions of workers convinced of socialism, refraining from struggle for fear of premature revolution until they had won an election; but nevertheless De Leon contributed some notable pamphlet to the store of libertarian socialist thinking, & is well worth reading.

The American SLP (which dominated the others) grew authoritarian & as during the thirties soft on Stalinism. There were therefore several short lived breakaway factions; (the earliest in England was in 1908, a group which later founded the Revolutionary Socialist League, the largest pre-war Trot group; and the second breakaway, the Advocates of Industrial Unionism played a major role in the creation of the shop stewards movement; the origins of the Clyde workers' Committee's branches in many factories have been traced to former SLP branch members in Singers' & Bell's telephones.) A 1968 split led to the formation of several new groups in the USA, including Philadelphia Solidarity; in Britain Jim Plant took a position much like Phila Solid's but has since dropped out of activity, & the SLP retains its De Leonist legalism but is trying to become more democratic. If it is to transcend democracy & become libertarian an approach from the challenging them to consider joining the AFB might well aid the process.

...

Formed just after the SLP, the SPGB is probably better known to most anarchists - and is now far larger (most of the SLP joined the CP) it in fact embraces two currents, & their distinction is most clearly demonstrated in their critique of De Leon. Some in terms much like Pannekoek-Malatesta-Cardan criticisms of syndicalism fear that De Leonist insistence on industrial unionism would lessen spontaneity & would create a blueprint lessening the workers' freedom of action. Others still want to use the machinery of the state to institute socialism, & they are supported in this by a literal reading of article 6 of their party policy, though many if not most party members would repudiate the aim of creating a

socialist state as being a contradiction in terms.

Bob Barltrop is publishing a book on the SPGB which he intends will bring out this distinction, he is not worried if some members take exception, or if he is re-expelled for it; but it would mean that those whose criticism of De Leon is in terms of spontaneity would have to repudiate rule 6 as it now stands, for many if not most of the party do not intend the workers' action & the actions of the Socialist Party MPs to be an attempt to utilise the forces of the state for socialism.

In which case there will be a distinct anti-governmental (anarchist) faction within the SPGB or expelled therefore. It will be anarchist in the sense that it does not intend to take power but remain a party with respect to fighting elections. SPGB arguments tend to be moralist in some ways, however much the party insists it is marxist it gives the impression of a similarity to Tolstoi, & perhaps its admiration for William Morris is the connecting link.

Again an approach requesting and challenging them to come into a structured AFB or help us create one would concentrate their minds, & help them to sort out just where they oppose anarchism, & where they agree.

... ..

Beyond the lines so far given, & excluding the Trot-Maoist circles elsewhere discussed potential converts and allies are obviously to be found in industrial struggles, in tenant actions, squatting, women's lib., Irish action,; as also (and to some extent overlapping) on the left of the Young Liberals (now being pushed out as Hain makes his peace with Thorpe) & amongst the wider pacifist circles beyond the NVRGps.

None of these are easy to analyse; the mere fact that they come directly from the mass movement depending on the spontaneous currents of protest therein & so the state of the class struggle generally makes it impossible to theorise at more than a distant plane about recruiting the non-political; the Underground has grown stale to some extent, not long ago it was primarily a leak by which people left the left, then it had a near Maoist phase so that people came from it to things like Black Dwarf, & since then it has recruited other apolitical currents, but its present move to commercialism may drive some people towards some part of the left; the really anarchist young liberals around Dave Mumford have been cooperating with us for some time and the hippy ones of Commitment are splitting, some are also in Solidarity, Colin is founding a new ecological action group with only a mediate link to the YLs & others seem to be evolving an ultra-Hain Hainism; YAPPU boasts 3,000 members & produces leaflets that are more or less anarcho-pacifist with open attempts to invite deserters to come to them for aid while on the run; but it is possible to say that while anarchist groups do not appear to have any link none of these sources are going to be attracted easily, for each is too small. They may well be attracted more by some anarchists & alienated more by others, but the fact of a linkage which makes an overall larger anarchist picture will make us far more attractive to groups originating in any of these.

Two other factions - Contemporary Issues & Confrontation - derive from wartime Trotskyism & function in a broadly Underground milieu. Both rejecting our conception of class struggle, both also stemming from an anti-managerialist critique of traditional Trotskyism, both are somewhat pessimistic & believe that the important thing is to find the present growth of bureaucracy and tyranny & that the chances of reversing the process are slight. (I think Confrontation, since breaking away from Contemporary Issues has rather modified this point, as I gather they were the faction in CI who were the most insistent on the "retrogressionist" theories of CI's founders. So it may be true that both factions have had a reappraisal in recent years.

Again they have in the past produced useful new arguments against vanguardism and against the state road to socialism and could play an useful role with a general anarchist framework. Again they tend to be led by people who want to be big fish in small ponds and the challenge to come into the AFB would have a good effect as the rank & file would want to know why not.

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Concrete proposals & context.

I would refer readers back to the fact that I am proposing a structured AFB as something approaching a Sorelian myth; that is as something, desirable in itself, for which to work, even though its attainment is unlikely, because the struggle for it would advance the overall struggle of which creating an AFB is only a part & bring us nearer to mass libertarian communist action. I would also stress that I believe the Utopian-moralistic tradition & the class-action determinist tradition of anarchism to be both incomplete when divorced from the other, that it is the inter-action of the two that makes for anarchism; and this though I would regard myself as coming from (& for A.M. remaining in) the determinist tradition.

I believe that by working for the AFB ORA would create round itself a skeletal federation, perhaps considerably smaller than an AFB should be. I believe that the challenge it would offer to each of the groups invited in, & those already in who want to be left alone in their inactivity, would open up debate and allow us to raise issues with these groups which would cause them either to move in an anarchist revolutionary direction or split.

I propose therefore: -

1. We make our intentions quite open, that we wish to challenge other groups to decide where they stand vis a vis building a viable libertarian movement & where they stand with regard both anarchism & revolution.
2. We should take advantage of the fact that (a) we were the majority in the AFB when we proposed structuring and a minority exercised its right not to be bound by the majority, & (b) the

AFB has never accepted a need for a definitive statement & organised structure deciding who can or can not join; to invite anyone we feel should be in, the invitation coming from ORA as a group of AFB members.

3. We should therefore - as ORA - write to all the libertarian "workers' opposition" communist & quasi-anarchist groups whose views are designed to change society, inviting them to join the AFB & work with us for a structure such as we proposed eighteen months or so back within the AFB; explaining to the groups thus addressed that there is nothing to prevent them joining en bloc & maintaining the integrity of their own groups, that they could let their constituent groups be at one & the same time AFB groups & groups of their organization.

4. We explain that this would make them able by playing a part in anarchist circles to meet new people; the fact that they will be able to maintain their independence, publish their own views march under their own banners will mean that they are not asked to accept outside interference.

5. We should also produce longer letters, open letters, either as pamphlets or leaflets; designed to persuade the rank & files of any groupings which should prove sectarian; designed too to open debate with any group - including some present members of the AFB - whose members are incapable of thinking other than in pure sloganising terms; designed to show why a wider debate should take place within an anarchist context, that others have something to offer and something to gain from anarchism. ('I did - before ORA was openly launched - send in some rough drafts for letters on these lines to some groups.) ** see note at end of proposals **

6. We should of course write to any libertarian influenced rank & file industrial/squatting/tenant/ women's lib./anti-racist grouping in similar terms.

7. No doubt some of those who are now most insistent on no one organizing the anarchist movement would let out an howl of protest demanding to know by what constitutional right we acted; this would open up debate within the AFB, & a pamphlet specifically designed for the AFB would of course be essential. We would tell them we were exercising rights they had told us were precious, that we had not used voting strength to impose the majority's wish for organization, & so feel that the minority has little case to refuse us the right to operate on our own.

8. If they then demanded an AFB vote to disown us they would have sanctioned the principle of democratic majority decision & we would have the majority. If they wanted some other way to disassociate themselves from us they would have to find it.

This will mean that instead of trying to build ORA as a rival federation we would within the context of inviting people into the AFB:-

1. create wider anarchist groups wherever we could, while ensuring that through these or independently our own distinctive case was heard.

2. Wherever possible (that is wherever there is not in existence an AFB group too useless to touch) members of ORA should create an AFB group or work within an existing one; new recruits to anarchism would be merely confused by the differences in seeing rival federations, but when they come into the AFB groups they would if any use gravitate into joint work with ORA members.

3. It should also create anarchist federations in particular fields, industrial etc., (the women's liberation network is a good attempt at this,)

4. Outside London - since most leftist groups are London-centred & London is therefore more than adequately catered for - it should foster the growth & production of anarchist magazines, pamphlets or just plain leaflets.

5. ORA should gear its publishing to servicing these groups, so that when a local group wants to hand out a leaflet and doesn't want to produce it, it turns, at first at the suggestion of an ORA member, later automatically, to ORA for their supply; for a mag. it would similarly turn to ORA for an insert.

6. When there has been a marked growth in the number of mags. published, even if other factions have not come into the AFB, & even if we have not won over the rest of the AFB, there will be a natural polarization between those in the AFB who want to cooperate with us and those who do not. Moreover we would by inviting the other groups into the AFB have laid the basis of ORA-oriented factions in the other libertarian groups. We would then be in a position to start creating a paper on a federalist basis.

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** footnote from pp. 33 section 5 **

Pamphlets should be written in such a way as to show that we have considered the arguments of the group concerned, & have some sympathy with them (if none of our members have then there's no case for making the approach, if only a few have then they should write that pamphlet) but should nevertheless be ready to criticise where necessary, not pulling punches in so doing while maintaining an eirenic approach.

They should show that we are aware of the flaws in our own organization & be frank that we hope to rectify these partly by their entry, & so we are not making a disinterested offer.

The pamphlets should be published as a series, with a minimum distance of time between them, in such a way that it is obvious that we are speaking with one voice and not saying different things to different people.

It should be obvious in all that we are making a sharp difference between disagreements that are essential (aims, ultimate revolutionary organization & strategy) & those that are matters of expedience (semantics, immediate propagandist organization & tactics.) That we believe there should be debate on inessentials, but that they should not be a bar to cooperation.

Not all anarchists would accept ORA's definition of anarchism; those that do not embrace many who would not call themselves revolutionary, & others who believing in revolution do not see the need for any form of organization here & now being prepared to wait until the masses spontaneously act for themselves. What follows therefore is a statement of ORA beliefs, which in parts would be accepted by others, but in toto differentiates us from other anarchist groups.

ANARCHISM is cooperation without coercion, socialism without the state, the running of all enterprises & social organizations by those immediately concerned, under their direct control, in the interests of society as a whole.

ANARCHISTS hold that the 'free' world is not free; the 'communist' world not communist:

We reject both, one is becoming totalitarian, the other is already so;

As a result of their power struggle & disregard of human values - pollution, nuclear & other wars of mass destruction put a question mark over the survival of mankind;

We charge that both systems engender servitude, pseudo-freedom based on economic slavery is no better than pseudo-freedom based on political slavery;

We hold the monopoly of power which is the state must be eliminated, that government - as well as the underlying institutions of economic exploitation - perpetuates war, oppression, corruption, exploitation & misery;

We advocate a worldwide society of communities & councils based on cooperation & free agreement from the bottom (federalism) instead of coercion & domination from the top (centralism);

Regimentation of people must be replaced by the regulation of things;

Freedom without socialism is chaotic, but socialism without freedom is despotic, **ANARCHISM IS FREE SOCIALISM.**

REVOLUTION is the direct and conscious intervention of the vast majority into the political-social-economic fields of decision in order to abolish all injustices.

Revolution can only come when the majority wants it, & wants it sufficiently that they are prepared to struggle for it, not just go & mark a piece of paper.

Revolution that can bring a free society not merely necessitates the majority wanting change and acting for it, but that that majority controls its own actions and does not follow the lead of an all-wise elite party. "No saviour from on high..."

In a revolution the majority takes over the means of production, & disposes the holders of wealth; to do this it must subvert the armed forces of the state, so as to abolish them & their power, & -(almost incidentally thereafter one might have thought, had failure in this direction not wrought disaster in the past) - then

act to abolish the superstructure of the state, for this rests on private (or corporation/state/municipality) ownership of wealth & minority control of social production & exists to preserve the power of the ruling elites.

Study of earlier revolutions shows that the masses do in the course of the struggle & revolutionary upsurge liberate themselves from the mental shackles of the past to a very large extent. But revolution demands a total change in the consciousness of the masses, since these have been subjected for ages to the deliberate indoctrination of the state. They have been fed all sorts of prejudices, made to believe in the natural superiority of those who rule with them, filled with pruderies, with nationalism & a variety of other views which aid the ruling class in keeping them down.

The process of changing consciousness cannot - as the Leninists argue - follow the seizure of power by a minority on behalf of the masses for then the minority has its own power to preserve & will fit its education to indoctrinate the workers anew & preserve its own power. While since the heat of revolutionary struggle is comparatively brief (even those who lived through the Russian 1917 revolution - or the Catalonian struggle of '36 - only experienced a year or so of free workers' activity and the mental liberation this would have brought.)

However, prior to any revolutionary situation; every struggle in which the rank & file workers engage the bosses collectively serves as a revolution in miniature educating the workers;

every struggle where the worker is led by bureaucrats & betrayed, provided that such betrayal does not lead to total disillusion also serves an educational role;

every press slander made on him in struggle serves to undermine his faith in the word of the capitalist propaganda media;

every time he is cheated out of his rights by capitalists talking about the national interest the opportunity arises for him to question the myths of nationalism, racialism & militarism;

a minority that sets out to lead confuses the issue, but a minority that agitates from within and constantly offers socialist explanations for the events that occur around, can do much to use these experiences to increase the workers' consciousness; & by so winning their trust have the opportunity to convince them of the necessity & possibility of men living together in harmony & freedom; & pointing out how the present system militates against these.

Therefore those non-libertarians who now preach to the worker the need to abolish capitalism by strike & other direct action contribute in this to the general revolutionary consciousness; but to the extent that they tell the worker that he needs a revolutionary leadership - can do nothing without it, they play a dual role, undermine his self-confidence & exercise a conservative influence.

Similarly those non-revolutionary libertarians who attack piecemeal evils in society without seeing the pattern as a whole & without seeing the role of the class struggle in revolution also play a

dual role, alerting the worker to the dangers of specific ills & freeing him of some indoctrination-produced prejudices, but by talking as if there is neither necessity nor possibility of abolishing all evils or combining with his fellow workers, turning his mind away from the source of the ills they themselves combat.

In both cases the differing radical & conservative elements in the influence predominate at different periods; - So that ideas which today militate towards greater class consciousness and more mass action, to greater assertion of individual freedom & mental self-liberation, may tomorrow be a brake on the development of these.

But often the teacher learns more than he imparts, & so those whose theories may carry a potential element of conservatism may shed it by the time that it would be expected to mature.

to repeat

REVOLUTION IS THE SELF-LIBERATION OF THE MAJORITY

ORGANIZATION which to the bureaucrat means a tidy chain of command for the benefit of the hierarchs, means something quite different in normal life. Every family, every neighbourhood, every group of friends, every club of people with similar hobbies, adopts (often unconsciously) customs & modes of conduct to run their lives in a common sense & cooperatively non-intrusive way.

Organization in a free society would at all levels be spontaneous in just the manner that within existing society spontaneous organizations arise. Everyone would play a role in several interest groups & the sum of such natural organizations would be far more complex than the tidy dreams of the bureaucrats.

But such organization would be free & non-hierarchical.

Anarchists believe that the revolutionary organization is the embryo of the future society & therefore must be equally free & spontaneous in its internal forms. Anarchists may - learning from the past experience of the working class - suggest this or that mode of self-organization, but we do not presume to dictate a blueprint.

Just as when the masses turn to action the organization they create will be the free society in embryo, anarchists believe their own organization - created here & now in order to propagate ideas of brotherhood and revolution & to work for that mass consciousness - must also fit that pattern of diverse, spontaneous, free grouping.

ANARCHISM IS ABOUT SELF-ORGANIZATION? Advocates it now & in the future.