

# anarchist fortnightly **Freedom**

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FIFTY PENCE

*"A good politician  
under democracy is  
quite as unthinkable  
as an honest burglar."*

H.L. Mencken  
(1880-1956)

## **USEFUL WORK VERSUS USELESS TOIL**

**S**urely all the arguments for and against the EU ruling about the 48-hour working week simply highlight the financial interests and concerns of employers on the one hand and those of their wage (and salary) slaves on the other.

It is obvious that if you can get two full-time employees to do what normally would have to be done by three, you have saved on one employee's National Insurance, holiday money and any 'wasted time'. After all, in large enterprises *there are inevitably slack periods* with the 'slaves' hanging about doing nothing.

But the big enterprises have gone a long way to solving this problem too. Firstly by reducing the number of full-time employees and being able to rely on competent part-timers (mainly women, and many single mothers welcome such opportunities even if they get neither NI nor holidays with pay). Secondly, by amalgamations and take-overs.

*Freedom* is always reporting examples which invariably result in a massive loss of full-time jobs, as well as the closure of bank branches, local mini-supermarkets, electricity service stores, which can be a serious problem in rural areas involving people having to go to the 'nearest town'. But then in many cases there is no public transport to get them to that 'nearest town'.

What is ironical is that the loss of jobs resulting from this capitalist tactic (which, incidentally, is designed to increase *profits* and not *prices* to the consumer) involves the boys at the top. But be sure, the top boys freemasonry will make sure that their brothers won't suffer. A current example is provided by *The Guardian* (15th November). Splashed across the front page is the headline *£27 million for power 'fat cats'*. Apparently "a group of power industry executives scooped £26.9 million in pay-offs and compensation payments as a result of last year's take-overs and mergers in the electricity industry". One would like to quote the article in full, but it would be a repetition of the old, old story, which includes the services of those who can never lose: "merchant

banks, lawyers and public relations firms have also prospered on the back of the take-overs ... The cost of defending the six electricity companies came to more than £75 million".

**S**ome workers involved in the take-overs will, if they have slaved long enough, get some redundancy payments, but these are chicken-feed compared with the 'fat cats'. The other millions of workers know that nowadays all jobs are at risk. What do they do about it? Some hope that the National Lottery will scoop them out of wage slavery (it is said that thirty million of us now rely on the lottery, probably the same number that relied on God a hundred years ago). Too many hope that they will be the 'lucky' ones - with any jobs and 'the wife' doing her part-time under-paid job for the second home weekenders.

Too few realise that the 48-hour week maximum legislation would not prevent employers cheating and desperate unemployed workers accepting a job at any price. And a few dozen inspectors for the whole country will not prevent the massive abuse of any law regarding working hours and conditions. *Only organisations of the workers by the workers can make the employers see sense.* And at present, as a result of massive unemployment, workers are fighting each other for jobs, instead of the bosses and the capitalist system that is responsible for the unjust and unequal world we live in (and forget about the official 'good news' figures that unemployment went down another 40,000 last month - this refers to the unemployed actually receiving the dole and not the million or more unemployed for more than a

*(continued on page 2)*

## **POLICE RACISM**

**T**he retired American footballer O.J. Simpson is on trial again. He has already been tried for the murder of his estranged wife and a young man, and found not guilty. Now he is being sued by the relatives of the murder victims for damages, on the ground that he caused their deaths. He cannot be found guilty in law of a crime for which he has already been found not guilty, but if the jury in the civil court find him liable to pay damages for causing the deaths, there will be shrieks of rage and triumph from the many American commentators who have been shrieking 'injustice' ever since he was acquitted.

The implication is that the murder trial jury, mostly members of the American 'black' community as is Mr Simpson, acquitted him for reasons of racial prejudice. This is to disregard the probability that an important piece of prosecution evidence was faked.

One of a pair of bloodstained gloves was found at the site of the murders,

the other on Mr Simpson's premises. On the face of it, it does not seem likely that a murderer trying to cover up the deed would leave one glove at the scene and take the other home.

It emerged at the trial that one of the team of detectives first called to the murder site, Detective Fuhrman, went from there to Mr Simpson's house where he found the other glove.

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### **IN THIS ISSUE**

*Liverpool dockers' dispute*

*Negotiating the dole queue*

*Colin Ward on 'Plots of Freedom'*

*Democratic Convention 96:  
the Iron Fist*

*and much more...*

**USEFUL WORK VERSUS USELESS TOIL**

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a year who are no longer entitled to the dole). Labour's former deputy leader Roy Hattersley, who has proved to be a better writer than Labour MP, sums up in one of his interesting *Guardian* 'Endpieces' that:

"The curse of the British working class is their willingness to settle for so little. They are disciples not of the politics of envy but the politics of complacency. That is why they are so regularly ignored when the demands of the middle classes (who suffer from no such inhibition) increasingly dominate the policy agenda of both major parties."

But noticeably Mr Hattersley, who now enjoys more than £100,000 a year from his journalism, does not question the capitalist system which creates the great inequalities of which he is one of the main beneficiaries. For the real problem is not that the British working class is prepared to "settle for so little" but that it does not realise that the enemy is the capitalist system and that the only way to defeat it is for the workers to organise and not compete among themselves, which only gives more power to the bosses.

Rest assured that the government, which has just issued its phoney figures showing that unemployment has once again fallen by 40,000, and the CBI do not for one moment dream of full employment. *The capitalist system would collapse.*

Those of us who can remember the labour situation in the 1939-45 war years and the early '50s - that is when there was for once full employment producing the weapons and/or using them to kill the 'enemy' and later clearing up the 'enemy's' damage to property here - remember that the workers were militant and the unions trying to hold them down. Indeed, during that decade there were more 'unofficial' strikes than ever since.

*Freedom* is 100% with our anarcho-sindicalist comrades (whatever their spokesmen may write unfavourably about us) in wanting the workers to organise in unions which are attacking the whole capitalist system - but it's not going to happen overnight, and meanwhile workers are fighting each other by allowing the bosses to know that for every sacking there are ten black-legs waiting to take their jobs.

So far we haven't explained the main title of this article. In an anarchist society nobody should be expected to do a useless job in order to survive, and which only benefits his/her boss.

We don't think that a civilised society (which boasts of philosophers, scientists, musicians, poets and other writers) can still accept that a small minority can own and exploit the natural wealth and hold to ransom the dispossessed majority.

Anarchism is far from being the socio-economic utopia of a few nutcases. Pause and ask yourself what your daily life is all about and the hours you spend purely for survival (we are addressing ourselves to wage slaves and not millionaires). Apparently most people hate their jobs but cannot escape. Is it surprising that their domestic relations suffer? But then so many jobs are soul-destroying.

After all, there are the hundreds of thousands of City workers who spend a couple of hours a day on the trains commuting in order to produce ... what? Paper and more paper.

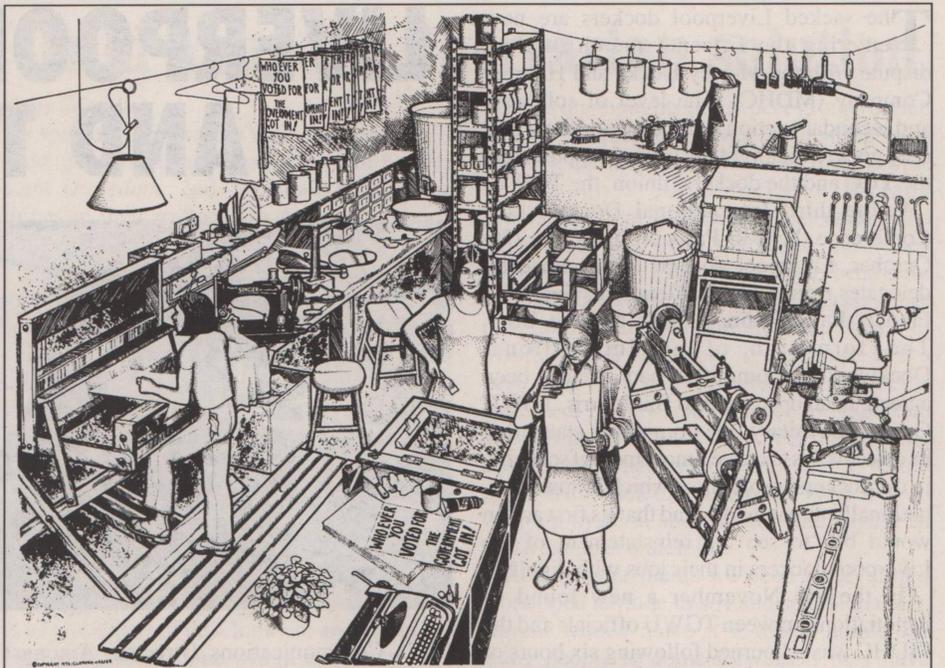
Anarchism is not just a philosophy but a practical approach to making something of one's limited life - *Ni Dieu ni Maitre* (Without God or Master). Of course anarchists want to make their full contribution to all our material daily needs. Incidentally, the capitalist society is functioning very profitably in the City but the government cannot afford to provide the necessary extra means for a health service where we don't have to wait months because the hospitals have had to close down wards for lack of funds.

**C**onclusion: Our human needs are at Cloggerheads with those of the City, the banks and the armaments manufacturers. Anarchists go on saying to the majority of our fellows: either fight the capitalist system by organising or go on living as slaves. The choice is yours, but it requires not leaders but your own effort. Prove to the Hattersleys and other politicians that they are wrong.

**WHY WORK? ARGUMENTS FOR THE LEISURE SOCIETY**

This very popular Freedom Press title includes William Morris's 'Useful Work versus Useless Toil' and other classics such as Kropotkin's 'The Wage System', Bertrand Russell's 'In Praise of Idleness', George Woodcock's 'Tyranny and the Clock', Tony Gibson's 'Who Will Do the Dirty Work?' and a lot more in the 210 pages which also includes some fifteen editorials from the weekly *Freedom* (1958-1964) dealing with topics such as 'Reflections on Full Employment', 'Capitalism or the Survival of the Richest', 'Workers Wake Up', 'Wasted Manpower', 'Redundancy and Revolution' and 'Time is Life'. The editor's preface with the title 'Why Work', written thirteen years ago, has more to say about the under-privileged of the third world and the solutions than all the top politicians enjoying Roman cuisine as they talk of the hunger in the third world and whether there are solutions. The volume includes six double-page 'Vision' drawings by Clifford Harper with commentary by Colin Ward.

210 pages ISBN 0 900384 25 5 £4.50 (post free inland, add 15% overseas)



**3: HOUSEHOLD BASEMENT WORKSHOP**

A group has pooled its tools and skills, thus enhancing the potential capacities for everyone. The weaver's loom, the potter's wheel and kiln are here, as well as the equipment for shoemaking and the ordinary range of carpentry and household repair gear. The community has not forgotten the outside world: posters are being printed by silk-screen. The message is that the possibilities of do-it-yourself are greatly extended if you do it yourselves together.

Drawing by Clifford Harper taken from *Why Work? Arguments for the Leisure Society*

**POLICE RACISM**

(continued from page 1)

The defence was able to show conclusively that Mr Fuhrman was an enthusiastic white racist, which would provide him with a motive for enhancing the case against Mr Simpson. If the jury took the view that this important piece of evidence was phoney, then they were bound by the rules of evidence to find the case disproved, even if they privately thought Simpson guilty.

**M**eanwhile in London, at the time of going to press, an inquest is proceeding into the death in police custody of Wayne Douglas, a Brixton burglar. Two independent witnesses testify that they heard cries of "black bastard" before Mr Douglas, "screaming for his life", was set upon by a mob of policemen using long truncheons "as when dogs get hold of a cat". It appears Mr Douglas had been carrying something, possibly a knife, but the attack did not happen until after he had obeyed police orders to drop it.

Two cases of police racism, one in Los Angeles and one in London. We are told by apologists that the police are after all drawn from the population as a whole, and must therefore be expected to have the spectrum of opinions of the population as a whole, which means including 'a minority' who suffer from racial prejudice. Up to a point, Lord Copper.

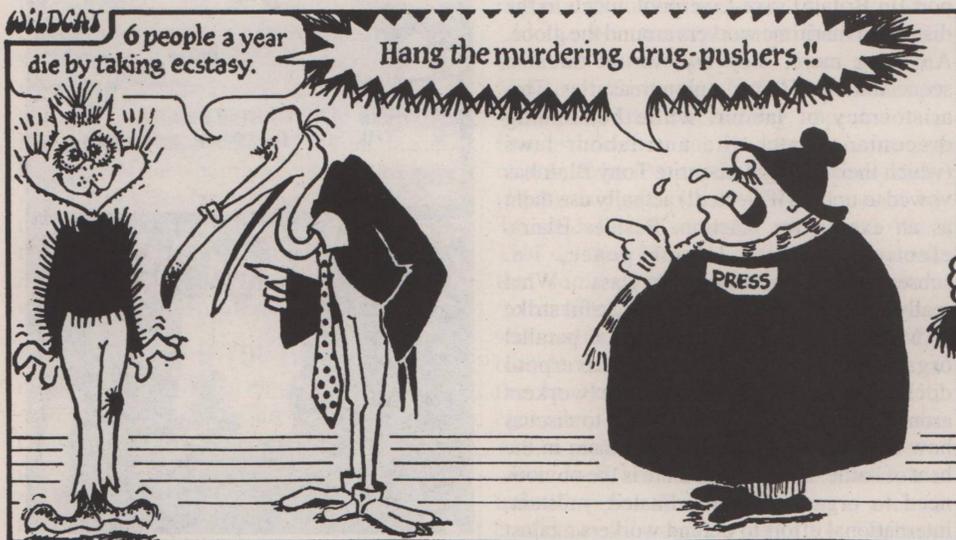
The police are paid for socially useful work like tracing lost children and helping the disabled through the traffic, but they may also be ordered to get into riot gear and assist in bashing demonstrators. That section of the population whose opinions tend to the liberal end of the spectrum are put off by the prospect

of attacking people to order, so the police force is generally weighted towards the illiberal end.

The demonstrators' chant 'I'll sing you a song and it won't take long: all coppers are bastards', is not exactly libellous. It may not be true, either in substance or in detail, but it is fair comment in the public interest.

**CHILD LABOUR: WILL THE WEST FACE UP TO IT?**

**S**o the world knows *officially* that 250 million under-age children are working full-time (the suggested 48-hour week maximum for Europeans hasn't yet made its way) in the third world, and needless to say they are producing all kinds of items that are exported to the prosperous western world. That world has been meeting in Rome apparently to see how it can relieve the poverty and even famine in those countries. The answer doesn't require a summit meeting of the prosperous world. The first step is to remove the money-lenders from the necks of the poor countries (the prosperous countries don't just import fresh produce from the third world countries - looked after by child labour and the women). What must be got rid of is the stranglehold of the banks who are now reaping not only the interest on the loans but the *interest on the interest* on the loans. All the economists and the politicians living it up in Rome could make a major first step, without ever going to Rome and their good cuisine, by simply taking over those debts and getting rid of the money-lenders. Of course they won't. It would be too simple, and that's the last of their intentions.



# LIVERPOOL DOCKERS AND THE ITF

The sacked Liverpool dockers are now entering the fifteenth month of their dispute with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC). The level of solidarity and secondary action at ports around the world only goes to highlight the lack of support from the TUC and the dockers' union, the TGWU.

At the third International Dockworkers Conference, held in Paris on 26th and 27th October, Liverpool dockers were joined by delegates from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Canada and the USA. The formation of an International Dockworkers Committee had already been agreed. In an open letter to Bill Morris, TGWU General Secretary, the committee states that its objective "is to create a movement of solidarity in the dockers' profession, which is now internationally threatened". And that its first action would be "to see the reinstatement of the Liverpool dockers in their jobs with dignity".

On the 7th November a new round of negotiations between TGWU officials and the MDHC was adjourned following six hours of argument. There was no offer of reinstatement. In a letter to international supporters Jimmy Nolan, president of the Port Shop Stewards Committee, called for solidarity actions against shipping companies operating through Liverpool to be stepped up and continued until dockers are offered their jobs back. He added that "there is a feeling that the MDHC are not honourable in their commitment to reach a settlement and are more intent on using the negotiations as a cosmetic exercise to appease the international employers' associations and the big shipping consortiums."



ITF's Communications Director. Amongst much else, he described the rank-and-file delegations to foreign ports as "disorganised and foolish intervention from representatives of the UK dockers", calling them "trade union tourists in every sense of the word". He argued for leaving it up to the experts, saying that "uncoordinated, independent action can all too easily undermine real trade union work .... Solidarity and support are not automatic and ... national, ethnic and linguistic divisions still exist and need to be addressed by people who know what they are doing."

Kevin Brandstatter of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) observed that this sounded smug and patronising and asked "Do officers of the ITF have to have degrees in ethnology prior to election, or is there some other way they develop this supposed expertise?" In another contribution Greg Dropkin quoted a statement made in January by Kees Marges, the ITF Dockers Section Secretary: "ITF affiliates must await the signal of the ITF before organising any solidarity action. Do not intervene against a boat which has loaded or unloaded cargo in the Port of

Liverpool without having previously contacted the ITF Secretariat." Before the first International Dockworkers Conference in February, Marges wrote that the "T&G, our affiliate ... has not requested the ITF to initiate or organise supportive actions by affiliated dock workers and seafarers unions. This has been confirmed again very strongly at the end of last week in a discussion between our General Secretary and a representative of the

international conference at the last minute. A further fax, leaked to Liverpool shop stewards from within the ITF, questioned whether a parallel organisation was being set up, saying that it was "remarkable that this is going to be operated from the TGWU office in Liverpool". A meeting between David Cockcroft and Bill Morris was discussed, together with a plan for a "last offer" by the TGWU to the shop stewards: "If this doesn't lead to a result/solution, there is going to be an end to the relation with the TGWU".

Further revelations came with a mailing on 23rd October from Jack Heyman, giving his reasons for doing the decent thing and resigning from his position as an ITF inspector. He comments that some statements by Richard Flint were "blatantly untrue". Flint had denied a claim that Kees Marges had ordered an unnamed ITF inspector not to attend the first international conference in February. Heyman points out that he was the ITF inspector in question and gives details: "The day before I was to fly to Liverpool, Kees Marges, who'd not been able to reach me by fax, insisted in a telephone conversation that I not attend the International Dockers Conference in Liverpool. He stated that 1) the strike was illegal and unofficial, not having been endorsed by the TGWU; 2) the TGWU, an ITF affiliate, was not requesting support and the ITF was adhering to the request; 3) the dockers couldn't win. After I refused his orders, he stated the ITF couldn't stop me but that I shouldn't mention ITF at the conference or to the media."

In the end Heyman attended the conference as a representative of the ILWU - the US West Coast Longshore Workers Union. He goes on to say:

"What disturbs me is the ITF paradox, arguing on the one hand that they support the strike and on the other why they can't ... A victory for the Liverpool dockers would destroy Cockcroft, Marges and Co.'s self-fulfilling prophecy that the dockers can't win. It would offer an alternative to the defeatist strategy of the ITF/TUC/TGWU that contains struggles against employer attacks within 'legal', 'responsible' and 'official' bounds, a strategy that has so far lost every port [in Britain] save Liverpool, much to the dismay of maritime workers around the globe. Anything more, they cry, would threaten sequestration of 'their' union treasuries. This aristocracy of labour, while bemoaning draconian Thatcherite anti-labour laws (which their darling Labourite Tony Blair has vowed to uphold if elected!) actually use them as an excuse for inaction. Besides Blair's election requires labour peace, i.e. subservience to the employing class ... What really underlies ITF fear of a successful strike in Merseyside is the creation of a parallel organisation of dockers. The Liverpool dockers have inspired maritime workers around the world to come together to discuss how they can concretely support them in the heat of battle. Beyond that there is the obvious need to organise a co-ordinated, militant, international effort to defend workers against

privatisation and attendant casualisation attacks from global ship-owner alliances that we all face. As the ILWU slogan warns: 'An injury to one is an injury to all'. Should a militant co-ordinating network of maritime workers arise, so be it."

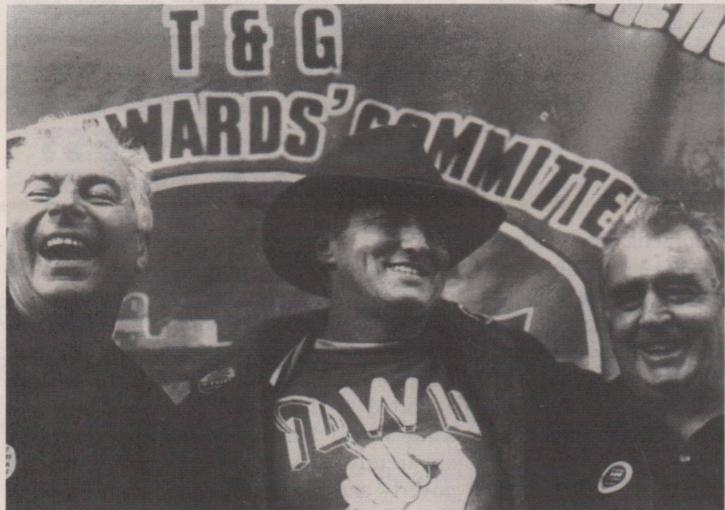
What form would such a network take? A mailing from Peter Waterman argues that "unions have to re-invent themselves as social movements ... that are fit for the era of globalisation. They can learn here from the international women's movement. They have no general secretary, no headquarters, no international organisation of free women's associations. But they have an internationally networked movement that mobilises, empowers, adapts, that communicates to national and international civil society, that lobbies and negotiates (from a clearly-articulated position of 'autonomy') and that is evidently capable of imposing many of its demands on national and inter-state organisations." He emphasises that he wants to see existing organisations reformed rather than being replaced or abolished.

Kevin Brandstatter argues from a different viewpoint that "the international structures of the trade union movement are part of the problem not part of the solution. While

**Blair's election requires labour peace, i.e. subservience to the employing class.**

workers are divided along national lines and encouraged to see their problems in purely national terms, only turning their attentions to international activity as a last resort, we will always be the losers ... I would have thought it inevitable that we as union activists of whatever persuasion recognise that transnational capital can only be dealt with by transnational unionism. To my mind this is part of the problem the dockers have faced. Were they part of an international marine transport union, uniting all seafarers and waterfront workers, international solidarity could have been sought instantly ... Instead their own union, the TGWU, with 900,000 members, less than 1,000 of whom work on the waterfront, are expected to use a cumbersome bureaucratic organisation such as the ITF to suddenly realise that a class war was being fought on the waterfront of Liverpool. I am not at all surprised by the outcome so far."

The debate goes on. An article in *Freedom* can only cover a small selection of the views expressed. If you have access to the Internet a closer investigation is recommended. For everyone else the November issue of *Dockers Charter* has invited readers to continue the arguments on its letters page. Write to: Dockers Charter, Liverpool Docks Shop Stewards Committee, c/o 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS. The Internet address is: <http://www.gn.apc.org/labournet/docks> JH



Jack Heyman of the US West Coast International Longshore Warehouse Workers' Union (centre) with Jimmy Davies (left) and Jimmy Nolan, secretary and chairman of Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee.

In the last issue of *Subversion*, Dave Graham of the Dockers Support Group in Liverpool wrote that "the only 'negotiations' going on are those sponsored by Bill Morris and the T&G national and local officials, ably abetted by the ITF [International Transport Workers Federation], who have made it quite plain that a 'compromise' must be found over the heads of the dockers. And obviously not in the interests of the dockers but because Morris and Co. have been visibly shaken by the dockers' international campaign and the open discussion on five continents of the idea of forming a new international dockers union."

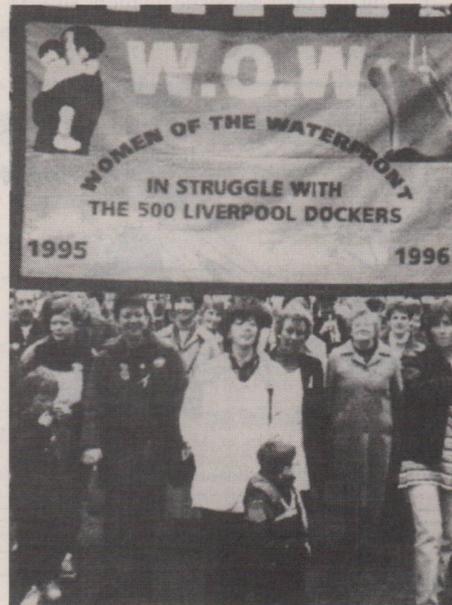
This gets to the root of the matter. Many union officials would dearly like to see an end to the dispute and to any threat of their organisations and authority being undermined. This goes for the ITF as well as the TGWU and TUC. For the most part international solidarity has gone ahead despite the ITF's efforts rather than because of them. The role of the ITF was questioned at the international conference and it remains to be seen where this will lead.

The inner workings of international union organisations can be obscure. Fortunately a debate on the Internet is throwing some light on the activities of the ITF. E-mails to the Liverpool dockers site criticising the ITF provoked a response from Richard Flint, the

**Unions have to re-invent themselves as social movements ... that are fit for the era of globalisation.**

T&G. It was agreed that the ITF will not send a request to its affiliates asking them to organise or initiate supportive actions. Participating by an ITF inspector in the meeting in Liverpool would be a violation of this agreement ..."

In August faxes sent out by ITF General Secretary David Cockcroft led to some European ports pulling out of the second



## — NEGOTIATING THE DOLE QUEUE —

## UNION EUNUCHS LABOUR LOST

Neither use nor ornament' is the saying that sums up the British trade unions today. The letters, shown right, and others seen by *Freedom*, show that the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the TUC are trembling when confronted by a tin-pot body by the name of Groundswell and its 'Three Strikes' strategy.

Last July Frank Bonner's letter claimed: "What Groundswell is proposing is not simply harassment ... but it is an invitation to physical assault". Not even the bosses in the Employment Service or the Benefit Agency seem to have suggested that Groundswell, as an organisation of unemployed claimants and their supporters, is inciting violence against the staff. In their advice to staff the Employment Service declared: "The campaign [Groundswell campaign] has not, so far, involved physical violence against individuals and we have no reason to believe it will do so".

Job Centre staff are more at risk of random attacks from irate claimants than any political abuse. The security staff at Cheetham Hill dole told me they were constantly having to deal with disruption in the office. It was a change, they told the Groundswell demonstrators, to deal with rational folk.

Groundswell, in channelling the genuine anger and frustration of the jobless into constructive endeavours to get rid of the Job Seekers Act, are doing more to divert aggression from the staff than are the trade union bosses.

Mr Bonner, until recently a member of Militant Labour, seemingly can't understand that the poor might want to defend themselves from some overbearing civil servant in the dole office. Militant gained a record, during the Poll Tax protests, of being police informers so it is only to be expected that Mr Bonner's advice to staff would be to "tell the boss" if they have any difficulties with claimants or Groundswell.

Only last week, while we were handing out anti-JSA leaflets at Bury Job Centre, two men in anoraks approached. Then, as we tried to give a leaflet to a claimant, they grabbed him saying "Stuart, you're under arrest!" then off they went, without giving any identification, dragging him down the main road. Who told the police he was in there? Who told them he was about to leave at that moment? Mr Bonner's members in the Bury Job Centre?

One suspects that, as well as being bullies, there may be a touch of the tell-tale-tit in some of Frank Bonner's civil servants. Interestingly, I'm told the civil service unions, like the CPSA, are the only unions in which Militant Labour have much influence.

**'FARTING IN THE WIND'**

Groundswell has always pointed out that the vast majority of staff in Job Centres and Benefit Offices have nothing to fear from them or 'Three Strikes'. But executive managers are fair game, as are JSA Implementation Managers (JIMs).

Even a fair chunk of the North West TUC favour occupations of Job Centres, and even 'Three Strikes'. Alan Manning doesn't like this, nor does the top brass of the TUC.

So what do they do? They start acting like bosses' men! 'Bonner the Grass' says tell the boss. Manning the 'Mary Ann' says we don't want anything to do with campaign tactics "which include the exposure, targeting or action against civil service workers".

So what do they do? They start 'Farting in the wind'. Mr Manning gets Terry Abbott, North West TUC Regional Organiser for the Unemployed, to issue special postcards by the cartload. Postcards to send to MPs and government ministers to complain about the JSA.

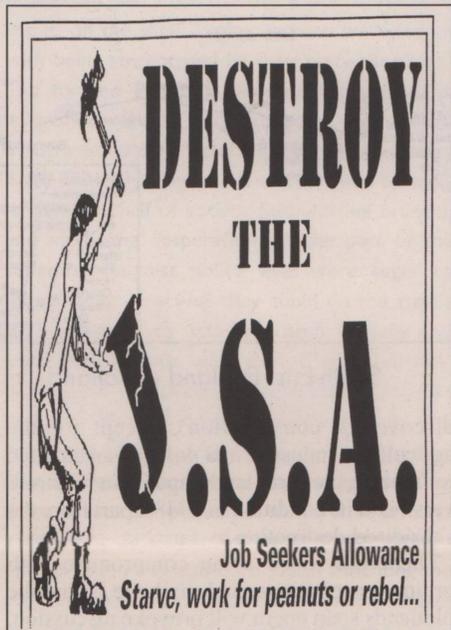
So what do they do? They look to Europe for salvation. They put their feet up and sit back,

waiting for cases to take to the European Court. It will only take five years to process the case against aspects of the JSA through all the channels to the European Court.

These kind of people have been too long without a proper job. Too long off the shopfloor. Condemned to vegetate in their offices for donkey's years, they have become more like the managers they negotiate with, than the working people of this country who they are supposed to represent.

**'ANARCHISTS HAVE AIDS'**

What of the poor? What of the unemployed in their dole queues? What of the single mothers? They can all wait for the European Court to dispense justice, or for the MPs to have a change of heart owing to the deluge of postcards.



Cover of a leaflet by Tameside Unemployed Workers' Alliance

Of course the union bosses who suggest such mediocre methods go on about Groundswell having 'AIDS'. These union chiefs' are studiously doing nothing much, while the anarchists and Groundswell are actively challenging the Job Seekers' Act and Project Work.

It's impotence versus innovation and initiative.

Why are the trade unions impotent? Partly it is a result of the senility of old institutions, but some of it is self-imposed because they want nothing to endanger a victory for the Labour Party in the next general election.

Hence people can be thrown off benefits and starve, the jobless can be corralled into unwanted low-paid jobs and the single mothers can commit suicide. Just so long as the trade unions can ensure a victory for the Labour Party. **BB**

**REINSTATE ROB ROONEY**

On 14th November Rob Rooney, Father of Chapel at the *Hull Daily Mail* newspaper for the NUJ and a delegate to Hull Trades Council, was sacked by management for putting out a satirical NUJ workplace bulletin *The Spoon*.

The *Hull Daily Mail* is owned by the national Daily Mail group and has de-recognised unions.

The journalists are balloting for industrial action and have recruited eight new members since the sacking. We in the Trades Council think Rob will get his job back through direct action and solidarity. A support group has been set up and is planning to hit the paper where it hurts — financially. Rob's friends in the Trades Council have a wealth of experience in organising action and it is that, not his industrial tribunal case, that will win him re-admission.

*Freedom* readers can send letters of support to Rob Rooney, c/o Hull Trades Council Disputes Convenor, 31 Sheriff Highway, Hedon HU12 8HA.

## A TALE OF TWO LETTERS

From: CPSA Employment Service Agency Section, ES/GEN/29/96

To: All members in ES

31st July 1996

'Three Strikes and You're Out'

Dear Colleague,  
Various fringe anti-JSA groups around the country operating under the banner of 'Groundswell' have started to leaflet ES [Employment Service] and BA [Benefit Agency] offices with leaflets advertising a 'three strikes and you're out' policy. The target of this policy is members of staff in ES and BA who they believe are over-zealously implementing the JSA or 'harassing' claimants ...

Unacceptable threats

The union has opposed the JSA since its announcement ... However, we cannot accept that threats directed against members of staff can have any role to play in such a campaign. There is already far too high a level of assaults on staff in Job Centres.

What Groundswell is proposing is not simply harassment, bad enough in itself, but it is an invitation to physical assault. The union is fundamentally opposed to such tactics and threats ...

What should you do?

... The union has written to management asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the steps they intend to take to protect the health and safety of members in the ES. At present their proposals deal with what they will do if an incident occurs. That is not sufficient.

In the meantime, however, members should report any threats they receive to management and to their local union representative in order that steps can be taken to prevent any further harassment ...

CPSA campaigning

CPSA will continue to campaign against the JSA ... We will continue to work with other groups who oppose the JSA. Clearly, however, this cannot and will not include groups who threaten and harass CPSA members ...

Yours sincerely,

Frank Bonner

Section Secretary, The Civil and Public Services Association, Leeds Regional Office

**JOBSEEKER TOLD TO BE 'DISHONEST'**

Among the JSA rules is a requirement that pregnant women must be "available for and actively seeking work" until the 25th week of pregnancy. A local free-sheet reports that a nineteen-weeks pregnant woman was told at the Brixton Hill Job Centre, South London, that her allowance would be stopped if she did not produce evidence that she was seeking work. It seems obvious that employers would be reluctant to take on new staff who would be entitled to maternity leave after a few weeks. "I said that no employer would want me once they knew I was pregnant and they basically said don't tell them. When I said it would be obvious, it was suggested I cover up the bump in some way."

In other words, by one interpretation of the rules at least, job seekers are required to be dishonest in their search for work. This particular expectant mother was suffering back pain from her pregnancy, so was able to go on sickness benefit when her JSA was stopped, and not reduced to penury. It remains true that the rule is absurd.

**Brixton OAP**

From: Trades Union Congress, North West Regional Council

To: Trades Union Councils and Unemployed Workers Centres

12th November 1996

'Campaign Against the JSA and Project Work'

Dear Colleague,  
The NW TUC believes that the campaign on the JSA is of considerable significance and we are appreciative of the efforts of Trades Councils and Unemployed Centres in the North West over many months ...

The announcement of the extension of the Project Work scheme to Preston, Bolton, Bury, St Helens and Wigan adds real urgency to our general work in this area.

The NW TUC is calling on all affiliated organisations to participate ... We also plan various contacts with the Labour Party at regional and parliamentary level on the campaign.

Close liaison with the Civil Service unions is of particular significance and the NW TUC has clearly recognised that there is no place in our campaign for tactics which include the exposure, targeting or action against civil service workers and it is expected that all TUC bodies would recognise this and act accordingly ...

Yours sincerely,

Alan Manning

Secretary, Trades Union Congress, North West Regional Council

(Letter excerpts from *Subversion* no. 20)

**THE JSA IN WALES**

The organisation Cymru Goch (Welsh Socialists) claims:

"The Job Seekers' Allowance is the latest Tory attack on the unemployed ...

Its main aim is to force claimants into taking low-paid jobs and forcing down wages for all workers. So even if you're in work, you should know what the JSA is all about.

Wales is already the low-paid capital of the UK, now the Tories want to make it the low-pay centre of Europe. The average factory worker's wage in Wales in £173 a week — would an MP who voted for the JSA turn up for that? (MPs get £670 a week plus expenses.)

It's time to fight back without relying on the politicians who claim to defend us."

Groundswell, and most anarchists, would quibble about their slogan 'Jobs not JSA', but most would agree with the text of what they are saying.

The Welsh Socialist JSA Helpline is 01222 832570.

**OLDHAM'S JOB SEEKERS WEAR MAKE-UP**

This last month Oldham has set up its own anti-JSA group. More than twenty attended the founding meeting at a pub on Union Street. An anarchist speaker from Sheffield, who seems to have initiated more anti-JSA groups than Soft Mick, addressed the gathering.

A follow-up meeting two weeks later decided to start picketing the three local Job Centres, beginning with Royton in the near future. Links have already been established with the Oldham Trades Council.

One claimant told how she had been told to wear make-up by a lady in twin-set and pearls who was her claimant adviser at a Restart Interview.

The next conference of the NW Against the JSA is to be held at Bury Unemployed Centre, Tithebarn Street, on Thursday 28th November at 12 noon.

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

# PLOTS OF FREEDOM

Not many words from the private jargon of planners enter the language by way of television soap operas, but I have a strong vested interest in the BBC television series of six episodes coming in the new year, called *Plotlands*.

The word was coined by planners as a convenient shorthand description of those places in South East England where, in the agricultural depression that lasted until 1939, speculators divided land into small plots and sold them, often in unorthodox ways, to people wanting to build their holiday home, country retreat or would-be smallholding. It evokes a landscape of a gridiron of grassy tracks, sparsely filled with bungalows made from army huts, old railway coaches, sheds, shanties and chalets, slowly evolving into ordinary suburban development.

Lots of friends of mine, and of Dennis Hardy, must read *The Independent on Sunday* because they all cut out of the issue of 22nd September a report describing the forthcoming series, headed "New BBC drama has more plots than most". It explains how a site of ramshackle properties has been put up on a couple of acres in Hertfordshire ready for the cast of the series, and that "the few passers-by blink with astonishment when they spot the sign at the end of the crumbling man-made track: 'Langton Fields - 45 plots at £5. The Cheapest Freehold Land Near London'."

The reason for our vested interest in this drama series is that Dennis and I wrote the history of these settlements in a book called *Arcadia for All: the Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape*, published in 1984. We had both been exploring the story of the plotlands for years, because it was the last example in British history of low income people exploring the freedom to improvise an environment for themselves. They were abhorred by all right-thinking people when new, but have much to teach us today. (The lessons are discussed specifically by Simon Fairlie in his book *Low Impact Development*, described in this column for 7th September 1996.)

Of course, the series we'll be watching in the new year is, explicitly, a drama, not an attempt at documentary reconstruction, and we are promised "the right melodramatic ingredients of sex, violence and intrigue". There won't be angry letters to the *Radio Times* about the peaceful co-operation that was the norm in the plotlands, as opposed to conflict, simply because our informants from years ago must all be dead by now.

We must have been only just in time to gather the recollections of the last of the original generation of pioneer settlers on the South and East Coasts, the Thames Valley, South Essex, the North Downs and the Hampshire Plains. But the plotland

settlements are part of the family history of a great many people. For example, Ivan Waterman reported in *The Independent* that "the idea of turning a little-known piece of social history into television drama came from Jane Root, a director with independent production company Wall to Wall, whose grandparents told her of their own experiences on their tiny strip of land."

And the producer of the series, Louis Marks, explained to him his expectation that "hopefully the young will associate with this through their grandparents and possibly their own thoughts on starting a new life, of having dreams and ideals, of being frustrated with their lot. It touched a chord with me. There was something very appealing about it."

Well, it touched a chord with me too. I have raised continually, in and out of this column, the question of who is entitled to settle in rural England? In the eighteenth century the vast majority of its inhabitants were known collectively as The Poor. The Enclosures and agricultural change in the nineteenth century led them to migrate *en masse* to the overcrowded industrial cities and beyond. In the early twentieth century the transport revolution enabled the affluent to move out of the cities. Ebenezer Howard was right in predicting ninety years ago that it would be the period of "the great exodus".

In the early half of the century the plotlands were one of the means that poor people were able to join this outward movement. In the later half of the century, not only were plotlands outlawed by planning legislation, but the industries that provided a livelihood for the city poor collapsed. Meanwhile we

discovered 'conservation', except for the agricultural industry, and policy was directed to freezing the rural landscape in an idealised version of its condition in 1948, apart from the subsidised destruction by farmers.

There has to be some compromise with ordinary aspirations, and my hope is that the plotlands soap opera will provoke discussion, apart from the melodrama, of how this kind of recognition of all those private dreams can find a place in the new landscape of the next century.

The book that Dennis Hardy and I wrote (with the aid of a grant from the then Social Science Research Council, than enabled me to travel endlessly to meet the last survivors) is long out of print. It won a literary prize and endless glowing reviews, and sold out. But the publishers were a victim of the take-over bids of the 1990s and nobody knows what became of the typesetting and illustrations. And, as a serious study, it was over 300 pages long.

This means that no publisher (and this includes the BBC itself) is going to consider a

reprint until it is known whether the *Plotlands* series turns out to be a huge success or an unnoticed failure. If it succeeds, there will be a demand for an instant book to be delivered next Monday, rather than one that places the story in the context of popular access to land. For the most thought-provoking conclusion on the plotlands was drawn, not by us but by another historian, Anthony King, in his history of the bungalow as a global building type. He remarked that: "A combination of cheap land and transport, prefabricated materials and the owner's labour and skills had given back, to the ordinary people of the land, the opportunity denied to them for over two hundred years, an opportunity which, at the time, was still available to almost half of the world's non-industrialised populations: the freedom for a man to build his own house. It was a freedom that was to be very short-lived." This particular freedom to build was the result of particular circumstances at a specific time, but it has lessons for all of us.

Colin Ward



South-East England - plotlands in the 1930s

## AN ANARCHIST STRUCTURAL REFORM

People everywhere are facing severe cut-backs of social services. How should we, as anarchists, respond to this crisis? Do we simply tail the authoritarian left? Do we pretend that the present unrest is the prelude to the revolution which in reality never comes? Or do we try something new and propose solutions that, if enacted, would lead society in a libertarian direction? Now, I don't claim to have all the answers, but here are two simple measures which could radically transform society, but don't appear wild and off-the-wall.

The first would be to take all the social services (education, health, welfare, unemployment, insurance, pensions) now delivered by the state and give them over to, or transform them into, democratically-run mutual aid societies and community organisations. The 20% or so of the population too poor to pay their contributions would have the fees paid by the government to the mutual of the insuree's choice (this would overcome the drawback to the older system of mutualism

which effectively excluded poor workers).

The second measure would be to replace the present government pension system, where the younger workers pay for the older, with proper investment funds. Another aspect of this would be to make all pension funds run on a co-operative basis - one member, one vote.

The result of these actions? The government social service sector is a large chunk of the economy, amounting to some 70% of total state expenses. Mutualising it would shift at least 25% of the economy into the hands of the people. The state would be reduced from 50% of the GNP to less than 25%, a figure lower than the wildest dreams of the Thatcherites. Within about twenty years the corporate sector of the economy would be owned outright by the workers through their pension funds. Democratising the funds, as suggested, would ultimately give workers the control of the corporations, as they would be the largest shareholders.

These measures could gain massive support, since most people are both against big government and in favour of social services. This way 'they can have their cake and eat it too', for mutualism unites these contrary desires. Most public sector workers, who are understandably hostile to cut-backs, could go to work for the new mutuals. The left only combats the neo-conservatives with calls to maintain the statist status quo, but these measures force the neo-conservatives to put up or shut up.

No, this wouldn't usher in the anarchist millennium, but what it would do is to re-introduce notions of mutual aid, responsibility and solidarity long undermined by state capitalism, give people greater control over their lives and introduce a level of community involvement and grassroots democracy hitherto unseen. Such experiences would be a good jumping-off point for the next level of struggle - abolishing the state and capitalism outright.

Larry Gambone

## The Raven 33 on Anarchism and the Arts

this edition of our quarterly anarchist journal includes: 'Rendering Reality on Film' in which Brian Bamford discusses the politics of the makers of the film 'Land and Freedom'. Also included are interviews with the writer Jim Allen and director Ken Loach, revealing the difference between the film they wanted to make and the film that they could afford to make.

96 pages £3.00 (post free anywhere)

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT ... AND ACTION!

## MORE GOODIES FROM THE FREEDOM PRESS BOOKSHOP

**Soft Core: moral crusades against pornography in Britain and America\*** by Bill Thompson, Cassell. Anti-pornography campaigns have been used over centuries to prevent the dissemination of material on sex education, contraception and venereal disease; to justify flogging prostitutes' husbands or boyfriends; to incarcerate and torture 'nymphomaniacs' in mental hospitals; to deny women's sexuality; and to get rid of unwanted racial minorities who supposedly controlled prostitution or pornography. Britain has about the most repressive censorship in Europe, yet pornography is rarely out of the news. It began with the 1580 Obscenity Bill, since when innumerable attempts have been made by the moral guardians and thought police to suppress free speech. From the Victorian morality campaigns to Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers and Listeners Campaign; from the American witch-hunts by McKinnon, Dworkin and Meese, right up to the recent crusades of the Campaign Against Pornography, Women Against Violence Against Women, and the Lesbian Avengers, among others. Most use the pretext of 'cleaning up' prostitution or protecting 'the public' from corruption; latterly it has been groups trying to demonise porn by repeatedly claiming 'new' and 'conclusive' evidence that it causes sexual discrimination and sex attacks against women. The lack of any real evidence over the centuries that pornography causes anything doesn't bother the crusaders at all: they either distort the scientific findings or quite simply invent their own, and there are plenty of examples. Thompson, a criminologist at Reading University specialising in sex crimes and moral issues, brilliantly debunks the myths and ideologies of these pro-censorship crusades, demolishing their pseudo-science and exposing their hidden political agendas which would silence all dissent from their views and enforce conformity of personal behaviour to some supposed norm. *Soft Core* is also about hard core, the title being merely a punning reference to the emptiness of the pro-censorship lobby's arguments (although most British 'hard core' is classed as soft core in Europe and the US). The book reveals that despite all the media hysteria about hard core child pornography, Internet porn and 'snuff movies', the vast majority of material seized by police and customs is mundane newsagent-type soft core – a policy which devours millions of pounds of public funds each year – and to date not a single genuine snuff movie has ever been found (the origins and development of this mythical *bête noire* of porn is nicely exposed in chapter eight). Tuppy Owens points out that the moral indignation is often "a mask for something more sinister and ... is built on a myth, a fear of sex and an ideologically-motivated craving for power". Thompson shows how the current separatist-feminist anti-porn campaigners (who are largely refugees from the defunct Stalinist political parties seeking a new home for their authoritarian attitudes) have allied themselves with the right-wing Christian fundamentalists and have, as their ultimate aim, not the prevention of sexual abuse against women and children at all (which has not been reduced by any anti-porn campaigns, of course), but the inhibition of women's free sexual expression. The anarchist group Feminists Against Censorship say it is a fallacy "to believe that anti-pornography ideology has any place in movements to improve life for women and children", and Women Against Rape split from the WAVAW Stalinists (Thompson calls them Marxists) over this very issue. Despite the amount of empirical evidence, Thompson combines a scathing critique with a lively and entertaining polemic and makes suggestions for "a more healthy and rational approach towards the enjoyment of erotic material". A very readable book with a comprehensive 'further reading' list and index. Highly recommended, whatever your views. Now

available from us at £3.99 (reduced from £13.99) for 300 pages.

**Tales from the Clit: a female experience of pornography\*** edited by Cherie Matrix, AK Press. By sheer coincidence this book arrived at about the same time as the one above, and how snugly they fit together. Until the 1960s most women were expected to submit to male domination, sexism and being told what they thought about a whole range of things, including sex and sexual imagery, by men. They were not expected to complain. By the end of that decade many were fed up and began meeting to discuss women's liberation, later known as feminism. By 1989, says the preface, after years of some of those women "trying to tell us that we all hate pornography, that no woman likes it and that every woman wants to see it 'off the shelf,'" other women were fed up with being stereotyped by their erstwhile sisters and formed Feminists Against Censorship in response. Quite a courageous move with Thatcherism and the Victorian family values nonsense in full flood, growing reaction to feminism by many in the male half of society (neanderthal branch), and increasing desperation on the part of the separatist-feminist police who were eager to demonstrate how well they could do the state's work (unpaid) by attacking both verbally and physically those who dared demand free expression. This book is a collection of pro-sex essays by FAC members – their fifth to date – and comprises intimate, soul-baring (and body-baring) true stories about what pornography means to them. No stereotypes here, and they have all found it liberating. From sex writers to a feminist porn teacher, from a British-born Indian lamenting the suppression of India's Gupta period erotica, to sex magazine publishers, not to mention the poor little convent girls who missed out early on and are now gagging for it. Well, we all know about convent girls! There's a piece by a blind and deaf woman who reads hers in braille, a sex toy manufacturer and loads more. Some are intellectually stimulating, others are just plain *horny*. Their criticisms are that

porn is still not easy for women to obtain, is too expensive, is produced mainly by capitalists and by men, for men. However the increasing amount being produced by women should solve some of these problems. My criticisms are only two: the editor's claim that the image on the cover stands up on its own as a brilliant piece against censorship is just silly, it nothing of the kind; and one writer credits Nabokov's *Lolita* to Emile Zola! Still, as she was only 13 when she read it I imagine she was far too busy reading the juicy bits than noting the author's name. FAC are to be congratulated on this one. 144 pages, £7.95.

**'Searchlight' for Beginners\*** by Larry O'Hara, Phoenix Press. Aimed mainly at those who are unfamiliar with the magazine, or who read it and are unaware of – or unconvinced by – the serious and, if true, disturbing allegations about this ostensibly anti-fascist periodical. *Searchlight* in its current form was taken over by editor Gerry Gable when the former editor, the ex-CPGB member Maurice Ludmer, died in 1981. Prior to that it had appeared only as an irregular news-sheet since 1965 by Labour MPs Joan Lestor and Reg Freeson, among others. Not only is Gable a former CPGB member, but he is also known to supply information to the authorities. The first information on this surfaced in the 1970s when he was working for LWT and informed on one of his colleagues to Special Branch. It is now thought that he also has contacts in MI5, Mossad and French intelligence, and passes on names and addresses, meeting points and so on, of anti-fascists who contact *Searchlight* or do not agree with his Stalinist views (sound familiar?). This pamphlet concentrates on the main players and events, such as the spreading of disinformation in the left, green and anarchist movements, and the attempt to use a self-confessed MI5 agent to infiltrate *Green Anarchist* with offers of weapons. Essential reading. £2.00.

**STOP PRESS: Solidarity Forever: the IWW – an oral history of the Wobblies**, reviewed previously, is now post-free at £2.99 (formerly £9.95), and

*William Morris: a life for our times*, on the booklist at £12.99 has now gone up to £16.99. **KM**

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## ORDERING BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Despite its dubious historical and religious basis, not to mention the tasteless money-fest that it has been for years now – it seems to start in August or September in many shops – we do recognise that many anarchists actively celebrate, or at least exchange presents, at Christmas (Yule, Saturnalia, Winter Solstice or whatever). We are, as always, happy to send you books, pamphlets and periodicals for the occasion, and only ask you to remember our last despatch date. To ensure delivery before Christmas make sure your order reaches us no later than Wednesday 11th December.

The books mentioned on this page, and Freedom Press books listed elsewhere in this issue, are all suitable for Christmas gifts. Compared with many other mail order book services we have been told that we are quick and efficient, and will do our best to send your goodies off as quickly as possible (please remember to list alternatives to avoid delays).

Opening times and dates of the bookshop between 22nd December and 2nd January are not yet decided, but we will be closed for at least a week. Further details in our next issue, which will be dated 14th December.

The bookshop Christmas Party this year is on Saturday 21st December from 12 noon until about 6pm. Do pop in if you're in the area, with a bottle if you can.

## RETURNING TO THE TEACHINGS

After sending an earlier communication to *Freedom* describing an innovative community justice system, I encountered Ross's *Returning to the Teachings*.\* Here is detailed the attempts of various Amerindian groups to practice more traditional forms of the administration of justice. The author is a practising crown prosecutor who has worked for several years among Amerindian communities in Canada and has been most favourably impressed with what the Indians have to offer. An earlier work of his was *Dancing with a Ghost*. *Returning to the Teachings* not only covers examples of Aboriginal justice, but at the same time it often reads like a primer in anarchist thought. Additionally, it is like an introductory text for social anthropology, since throughout Ross seeks to show Aboriginal ways of thought, language use, methods of healing and political organisation. While there is a heavy emphasis on the community of Hollow Water, he draws on other peoples in Canada as well as Navaho and New Zealand Maori. Central to the Aboriginal system as it now operates is a team or committee, also referred to as a sentencing circle, which considers specific cases and advises a presiding judge on appropriate treatment. The committee is often composed of community elders. At Hollow Water it includes various types of social workers, teachers and nurses. The actual traditional set-up would not have included the judge – an element imposed by the Canadian legal system. Nevertheless, committees do think and operate in terms of the traditional system. Thus we read from a proposal prepared by an Ojibwa-Cree community:

"The Indian communities view a wrongdoing as a misbehaviour which requires teaching or an illness which requires healing."

In response to the author's question as to what was done to miscreants in traditional times an elderly lady answered: "We didn't do anything to them. We counselled them instead."

Ross believes Aboriginal peoples contend that offenders should not be punished. Rather "the focus must be shifted instead towards the teaching and healing of all the parties involved, with an eye on the past to understand how things have come to be, and an eye on the future to design measures that show the greatest promise of making it healthier for all concerned." While there should be public condemnation of wrongdoing, there should at the same time be a "public assertion that the offender, as a person, remains a valued member of the community".

Aboriginal justice aims to replace the Western European adversarial-confrontational system with one of healing and amelioration. While Euroamericans would say 'You are disgusting', the Amerindians would say 'I feel disgusted by what you did'. Ceremony – that is, group ritual – is an important feature of the Aboriginal justice system, Ross suggesting that it has great cathartic qualities. Traditional teaching argues for a principle of wholeness and the inter-relatedness of all things, so that in their deliberations sentencing circles cast a very wide net, exploring many different facets.

It appears that the Amerindians also question the idea of sending people to jail. At Hollow Water it is believed an offender should not be allowed to

hide by going to jail, but should be kept in his community where he can feel some part of the grief and other emotions he has caused.

Ross sees several limitations to the Aboriginal justice system. He notes that a truly Aboriginal system would "properly contain certain kinds of pressures that our system would think of as totally improper." One example he gives is that of a young man who was advised by his lawyer to plead not guilty to a charge. The young man consulted with the elders who convinced him to plead guilty. Ross believes there will always be certain kinds of cases which demand the adversarial nature of the Western system, and he notes that there are psychopaths and others in society who are too dangerous to be allowed to walk freely.

Chapter three describing traditional political systems should be of interest to *Freedom* readers. The Indian Act imposed on Aboriginal peoples empowers elected chiefs to tell people what they may or may not do, but in the traditional way "no one received such power over others". Decisions "came out of the clans and families from the bottom up, not the top down". There were, of course, leaders, but they were of a temporary nature depending upon specific needs. Further, leadership depended on persuasion and did not involve any hierarchical chain of command. According to one Aboriginal elder, a leader led without compulsion and "as a speaker, he did not utter his own sentiments but those of his people".

My main criticism of this book is that Ross leaves one with the impression that the traditional Aboriginal justice system is applicable to Aboriginals. He does not suggest that it be adopted elsewhere. While I doubt he ever intended it as such, the book promulgates a case for anarchism.

**Harold Barclay**

\* *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* by Rupert Ross, published in Canada by Penguin, 1996 (not available in UK).

# DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION '96: THE IRON FIST AFTER ALL

People around the world are familiar with the images from the streets of Chicago 1968: the police viciously beating antiwar protesters – along with journalists and anyone else coming within reach of their batons – right outside the hall where the Democratic Party was holding its convention.

Leading up to the 1996 Democratic National Convention (DNC), government officials and the media worked overtime to exorcise the ghost of 1968. The Chicago police, they said, was no longer the same force. The 1996 version, they said, is younger, more multinational, with more women, and “more respectful of civil rights”.

Mayor Daley – son of the original Mayor Daley of 1968 – even dropped by the ‘return to Chicago 1968-96’ concert and rally held the day before the DNC opened, which featured defendants from the Chicago Eight conspiracy trial, among others. He told the people there that, though back then, they might not have felt ‘welcome’ in the city, they should feel ‘welcome’ now.

Behind this attempt to whitewash over stigma of the 1968 police riot was the reality of police-state Chicago. During DNC week, the city was saturated with armed enforcers from 33 different government agencies and private security forces – from the Secret Service to the Illinois State police to thousands of local cops. High-tech military helicopters carried out surveillance from the air. The area around United Center, the convention site, was secured like a military zone – including parts of the nearby Henry Horner Homes projects.

The city set up two official ‘protest pits’ surrounded by fences and conducted a lottery to pick one-hour slots for protest groups. Even a federal judge ruled that this violated first amendment rights. But the judge’s ‘compromise’ was to allow a handful of protesters to get closer to the DNC delegates and pass out leaflets – while confined within what looked like a metal cage.

The plan for ‘preventing a repeat of 1968’ was to turn the city into an armed camp. Protests would be surrounded with overwhelming force, though stopping short of outright attacks especially when cameras were present. All the while, the mainstream media incessantly chattered about how ‘restrained’ the police were.

That charade came to a close on Thursday 29th August as the city cracked down on protesters. Eighteen arrested. A night time police raid. Activists beaten and gassed by police. Alternative media reporters swept off the street, their equipment destroyed and stolen by police. Charges against those arrested ranged from disorderly conduct to felony mob action. By taking these steps, the authorities openly shredded their carefully cultivated fairytale image of Chicago, while brutality, covert operations and political railroads took centre stage.

## THE ‘FESTIVAL OF LIFE’ ARRESTS

Thursday’s crackdown began with the roundup of activists associated with the Festival of Life. Based in Chicago’s downtown Grant Park, the Festival consisted of a week-long series of activities ranging from concerts and rallies to marches.

Before the march could even get off the ground, four Festival organisers and participants were picked off by police.

The activists all face identical felony charges: two counts of aggravated battery and one count of mob action. Specifically, they are all accused of striking one cop with a bottle, another with a fist, and inciting demonstrators to break police lines, march on the street, and toss objects at cops.

These actions are all alleged to have occurred at a protest held on Tuesday 27th August. That action was organised by the ‘Not on the Guest List Coalition’, and demanded freedom for Leonard Peltier and other political prisoners, denounced police brutality and the racist/classist ‘justice’ system and

called for an end to the death penalty.

The police waited two days after the ‘Not On The Guest List!’ protest to make their arrests. Why the delay? Rob McDonald of the Festival of Life had one answer. The authorities arrested them on these groundless charges to derail the peace march which was occurring the same day that Clinton would be addressing the Convention. McDonald also added that it is when groups are doing ‘coalition building’ – such as uniting across barriers of race that they are especially open to attack.

One of the plans for the Festival of Life march had been to link up with another action that was taking place in the Wicker Park neighbourhood that day. Called the ‘Festival of the Oppressed’, it was a mix of performance art and street protest a few hundred young people parading through the streets with elaborately worked on papier maché and wooden puppet art.

Though the cops didn’t stop the march, they arrested over a dozen people. Six of those arrested at the Festival of Oppressed march were members of CounterMedia, an alternative media coalition that had been active during the entire week documenting the protests and issues surrounding the DNC.ut CounterMedia.

## A CAMPAIGN OF HARASSMENT

The Festival of the Oppressed was one of a number of events sponsored by Active Resistance (AR). AR organisers describe it as a ten day ‘counter-convention’ involving over 700 activists from throughout North America and Europe taking on issues such as community organising and alternative economics.

## THE RAID ON ACTIVE RESISTANCE

On the morning of Thursday 29th August CounterMedia held a press conference detailing police attacks on their reporters, on activists and on Horner residents. A CounterMedia video cameraman arrested and his camera seized while filming at a clinic under attack by anti-choice forces. Another arrested while interviewing Horner children about their experience with the police. Twice

in one evening, a CounterMedia video team had their van stopped and boarded by police while they were attempting to videotape the ‘Cash the Check’ demonstration near Horner Homes. Both the van and video crew were searched.

Later that Thursday night – about the time that Clinton was making his acceptance speech at the United Center – the police carried out a gestapo-style raid on a building used for AR programs. Some people were sitting out in the back of the building, which faces out onto railroad tracks. Upwards of ten cops came running in.

They kicked a woman, sprayed her with pepper gas. Others were grabbed and thrown to the ground. One woman asked if she could take her three-year old child away from the area. The cops said no. All but one of the cops had no badges or names plates visible – they claimed the badges were ‘lost’. The one with a badge kept his distance.

The cops showed no warrants. They gave no explanation for the raid, except for a flimsy excuse. The railroad company, they claimed, reported two individuals jumping onto a freight train. AR people deny this ever happened. By the time the police left, they had ransacked people’s belongings, dumped out two large pots of food and seized radio equipment and papers. According to one witness, the cops stated that the material was “subversion against the United States government”.

As police left, they sprayed another person in the face at point blank range with pepper gas. Though he quickly fell to the ground, police continued to spray him around his head, causing damage to one of his eyes. After getting news of this attack, and noticing large numbers of police gathering nearby, AR participants evacuated another building.

At a press conference called the following day, a member of the National Lawyers Guild – who will be representing some of those arrested – commented: “One of the most disturbing things was that this seems to be an orchestrated effort on the part of the police and possibly the Secret Service. It just makes you realise where our government’s at right now. And I think that’s a really disturbing statement about the nature of what’s going on in this country, and what’s going on with things like the crime bill that passed in ‘93, the anti-terrorism bill that just passed – this level of squashing dissent that’s going on.”

Countermedia

## INTERVIEW WITH EUSABIO PEÑALVER

Our feature on the Liverpool dockers began with a report on the third International Dockworkers Conference held in Paris on 26th and 27th October. Our correspondent reports that this was followed on 28th October by a one-hour stoppage at all Spanish ports – more expensive for shipping companies than it sounds, given the scale and tight schedules of modern container operations.

In Tarragona Eusabio Peñalver, the International Dockworkers Committee delegate from Co-ordinadora, called for a boycott of all shipping companies using the Port of Liverpool. The stoppage was also aimed as a warning that the Liverpool events could be repeated in Spain if the government goes ahead with European Union inspired plans to privatise Spanish port operations. Here Guy Cheverton, international secretary of the Hull Trades Council, interviews Eusabio Peñalver, the international secretary of the Co-ordinadora, Spain’s main organisation of dockers.

GC: Eusabio, can you tell us about the Co-ordinadora, its size and ideology?

EP: We have about 3,500 members, which is about 80% of Spanish dockers. We do not have an ideology as such, we are a left-wing rank-and-file union and strictly independent of political parties.

GC: What are your relations like with the other dockers’ unions?

EP: With the official unions [the Communist CCOO and Social Democratic UGT] they are

non-existent. With LAB [radical Basque nationalist] they are bad, with a history of insults and attacks against us. We have normal good relations with the anarcho-sindicalist CGT dockers.

GC: What was the attitude of the Spanish port employers to the 28th October strike in support of the Liverpool dockers?

EP: They did not like it! For a start solidarity strikes of this kind are illegal in our country ... This is just a start. We will continue to support the Liverpool dockers. We are in constant contact with them and wish to show other dockers the example of the Co-ordinadora in the new international Co-ordinadora which we play a full part in.

GC: Eusabio, you are an anarchist. My friend Mick Parkin tells me you are involved in the Ateneo Libertario [anarchist community centre] in Tarragona, where you live. Can you tell us what this does?

EP: We are very involved in campaigning in support of those refusing their military service and against militarism in general and also ecological struggles. The Ateneo gives us a place to meet, and we also produce our own monthly magazine, *Buitre Negro* (Black Vulture).

GC: What is your advice to the anarcho-sindicalist unions the CGT and CNT?

EP: They have wasted so much energy in internal struggles. I prefer to work in the dockers’ organisation the Co-ordinadora.

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## Cheating on Taxes

Dear Freedom,

I can sympathise with Libertarian's desire to make the rich pay more taxes ('Cheating on Taxes ...' in *Freedom*, 2nd November). This said, I'd like to ask what this has to do with anarchism? Years ago, Vernon Richards wrote about the impossibilities of social democracy and nowhere does this apply so much as with the 'left-wing' variety the author seems to favour. Faced with the reality of the modern economy, left social democrats have only the choice of compromising or creating a state capitalist dictatorship.

Libertarian seems unaware of modern technology. If it looked like Labour was about to be elected with a platform that included the prevention of capital export (something in itself highly unlikely) well before the election there would be a massive outflow of capital. People don't need to smuggle out bullion or pound notes across the Channel any more - a few key strokes on a computer and it's done. If they managed to get elected in spite of this, further capital flight, a boycott of foreign investors and a sharp decline in the value of the pound would create a severe economic

crisis for the new government. A weak currency would also create mass inflation. Many of Labour's supporters would feel betrayed as all the electoral pay-offs went down the tube. People who were moderately sympathetic or neutral would become enemies as they saw their jobs and savings disappear (this is what happened in Allende's Chile). The government would find itself opposed by the majority of the population and would face the choice of either backing down and becoming a normal right-wing social democracy (like Mitterand did in 1981) or turning to suppression, i.e. becoming Stalinist.

Rather than suggesting Labour adopt concepts that have failed so miserably elsewhere, wouldn't it be better to advance an *anarchist* programme and let the Labourites sink into the mushy liberalism they so well deserve?

Larry Gambone

please keep sending in  
your letters and  
donations ... 

## Child Abuse: a libertarian solution

Dear Friends,

As someone who works with child abusers, I must put Pat Murtagh and Malcolm Ledger right (*Freedom*, 2nd November) on a few things in their response to Amorey Gethin's and others' letters and articles.

The first thing that needs clearing up is the view that children actually enjoy being abused sexually, or having sex with adults. The evidence suggests that they clearly don't and are damaged physically and emotionally. Furthermore, they are also clearly frightened by the experience which can last for years to come. Many go on to become abusers themselves, especially where abuse is common within their own families.

Granted that children gradually develop their own awareness of sexuality and become sexually aware especially around puberty, that is a natural part of development and maturity. However, that is done within their own peer group and not forced on them by adults. I remember when young the thought of kissing any significant adult was disgusting, the idea of having sex with them was repulsive and never entered my thoughts. It certainly never

entered the thoughts of my peer groups either.

As to a libertarian way of dealing with abusers, the only way to deal with these people is through a comprehensive therapy programme that enables them to understand what motivates them to offend, how they 'groom' their victim, how their behaviour affects those they abuse. Finally the programme helps them develop ways of avoiding such behaviour in the future. It is a very long and slow process that requires a great deal of skill and patience to help them through the process. I don't feel that locking away these characters works and I would agree with Malcolm Ledger's view that to whip up hysteria and reaction and engage in witch-hunts is unhelpful.

On a broader theme we need to develop a more open attitude to sex and sexual matters, current taboos make it a major hurdle for many people to come forward if they have problems with sexual matters. Additionally, in a society not based on hierarchy and power sex can become egalitarian and enjoyable. Which is what it should be.

Chris Platts

## ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

**ELECTIONS BY PERCENTAGES** In the last issue of *Freedom* we depended on the British media for the results of the American elections. Thanks to *Time International*, one can not just talk of percentages but actually of numbers.

To remind readers of the percentages: Clinton got 49%, Dole 41% and Perot, with his millions of dollars, 7%. Translate that into actual votes and you realise that 96 million Americans voted and 100 million entitled to do so *didn't*. Though the number of eligible voters has gone up over the years, the actual voters are going down proportionally.

Far from being concerned about voting patterns as such, as an anarchist I cannot ignore those who don't, or, for instance, the *Independent's* report (7th November) on "Britain's missing two million voters". Officially, and unofficially, all kinds of explanations are advanced but neither despair ('nothing for me from either party') nor apathy ('I'm all right at the moment') are included.

**MILLIONS FOR RUBBISH - NOTHING FOR HEALTH** Having enjoyed the smiling service of staff at my local, but large, hospital (with 1,000 patients - apart from the clinics - and 3,000 staff) I was horrified to learn that they were proposing to close one or more wards because they had a £1 million deficit. On the same day (11th November) I read in the papers that a rare Swedish stamp "set a record yesterday when it was sold at auction for £1.42 million", an improvement on its 'value' at auction in 1990 of £800,000. I also learned that BSKyB was due to make £5 million from the Tyson versus Holyfield fight (*Independent*, 9th November). Another shocking item, for me, was a criminal case where a judge apologised to a robber for an excessive sentence. Good luck to the robber. But what interests me, and you the reader I hope, is that the victim was only robbed of her watch. But listen further, the watch was given to her by her parents when she was just thirteen years old. It was some watch. *Indeed, it was "a £12,000 Rolex diamond encrusted watch as a birthday present"*.

**CALL ME SEXIST IF YOU LIKE, BUT ...** How millions of people can enjoy so-called sports such as rugby (and the American equivalent, though the 'players' are so padded that perhaps they can survive) and boxing beats me. All the medical advice is to proclaim them as dangerous 'sports'.

*The Independent* ('Tabloid', 11th November) publishes a feature, 'Queen Bee', on one Christy Martin, described, under a picture of this lovely smiling woman "after her win in Las Vegas", by a vanquished opponent: "She hits like a man. She hits very hard". Another picture shows her landing a left upper-cut (is that the term?) to her opponent. What a disappointment for me, who has all his life looked upon women not only as the superior sex but also as the gentler and more intelligent sex.

Libertarian

## TAMESIDE ERRAND BOY DELIVERS

The People's March to Defend the Welfare State, which left Hull on 24th September en route to the Blackpool Labour Party Conference, received a civic welcome in every town it passed through, bar one. Tameside in Greater Manchester was the only council to snub the People's March.

At a Tameside Labour Group meeting on 22nd September 1996, an eyewitness informs us that council leader Roy Oldham demanded to know if any councillors knew where the marchers would be staying in Tameside and became furious when he learned that they were being accommodated in a local community centre. Apparently Oldham tried to block the arrangement between the marchers and the community centre by invoking fire regulations. However, this appears not to have been a problem on past occasions when visitors had been accommodated at the centre with council approval.

In the community centre the marchers received a warm welcome from a former Mayor of Tameside, Jack Pettit. However when Jack, later that evening, appealed for a financial donation for the march at a meeting of the Ashton Constituency Labour Party (CLP) this was successfully opposed by Tameside NUT secretary and North West TUC delegate Mike Custance, on the grounds that some of the march organisers were 'extremists'. Curiously Custance had been seen earlier that day attending the march rally outside Tameside's town hall, where one of the speakers was the North West TUC chairman, Brian Devine, who conveyed the TUC's support for the march.

It is well known that within Tameside's intimate political scene Custance is a close confidant of the council leader Roy Oldham.

Obviously Custance's presence at the rally, which was supported by the North West TUC, was not an indication of his own support for it but rather one of surveillance for council bosses.

After the event Oldham told the local press that the council did not offer a civic reception because he could not justify the expenditure this would incur, and in any event the Mayor was away on civic duties in Belgium.

Despite the council's abysmal attitude towards the marchers, a handful of local trade unionists, co-operating with members of the Tameside Unemployed Alliance (TUWA), nevertheless managed to arrange food and accommodation for forty marchers which a local authority had been unable or unwilling to do. Similarly Mr Custance's 'blocking efforts' were also thwarted when individual CLP members had a whip-round after their meeting and raised £36.50 for the march.

BB

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## CATCH AS CATCH CAN

In ordinary terms whatever happens in society affects the individual. But society is a number of disparate groups, and it is merely a matter of luck for the individual as to its treatment. The best we can hope for is to limit coercion the best we can.

When children play tag, the child touching captures the touched. This is why a tribe in India opted out of the game and became untouchable.

Metaphors are frowned upon by modern writers, but it is the best I can do.

The problem is that when authoritarian adults play tag the children become theirs, their *property*, become the plaything of the prison system with tremendous profit to Michael Howard, Home Office plc, more administrative jobs for the boys, more profit to the Home Gadgets Armaments Industry.

The anarchist movement will stand by the children whatever the cost.

On a less serious note, I read in *Black Flag's* current issue that preparations are going ahead for the parties planned for 31st December 1999 and 31st December 2000. This is to account for the dispute raging as to when the present millennium ends.

Personally, I'll be celebrating the first-footing back up in Mull (cf. *Through the Anarchist Press*) and urge comrades to start celebrations on the first day of the third millennium (this should keep the calendar industry fully occupied until then).

John Locke's description of tyranny is perhaps worth reminding us of:

"... a Divine unalterable Right of Sovereignty, whereby a Father or a Prince hath an Absolute, Arbitrary, Unlimited and Unlimitable Power over the Lives, Liberties and Estates of his Children and Subjects; so that he may take or alienate their Estates, sell, castrate or use their Persons as he pleases, they being all his Slaves, and he the Lord and Proprietor of every Thing, and his unbounded Will their Law."

A lot of capital letters all joined together and the Child becomes a Thing.

John Rety

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### - 1996 PROGRAMME -

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6th December The Pure Genius of Urban  
Occupation (speaker Andrew Lainton)

13th December Anarcho-nihilism (speaker  
Steve Ash)

20th December Christmas Party

3rd January General discussion

10th January Towards a Stateless Economics:  
the Case Against Anarchist Communism  
(speaker Dave Dane)

17th January General discussion

24th January Vacant slot

31st January Speakers from *Green Anarchist*  
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Peter Neville  
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## ACF

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Thursday 5th December at 8pm

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Further details from ACF, c/o 84b  
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