

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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NEW LABOUR? DON'T TRUST THEM!

By the end of a fratricidal war costing the lives not only of the victims of the nazi holocaust but many more millions not only in uniform and in the trenches, as was almost exclusively the case in World War One, but death from the air on defenceless civilians and cities – by the end of that so-called 'war for freedom' some fifty million human beings had paid the price.

It was surely not surprising that in this country the Labour Party was overwhelmingly voted into office in 1945, and the Beveridge 'welfare state' introduced. It was both psychologically and financially the right moment. Obviously there was full employment to repair all the damage resulting from the 'war for freedom', while still maintaining 'austerity' which five years of war had accustomed the population to accept as normal.

The Labour lot dealt with it so successfully, so far as balancing the books (which meant austerity for the majority) that when it came to the general election in 1951 they found themselves out of office for the next thirteen years!

And needless to say in 1964 they came back with a small majority which, in 1966, was much increased, and of course they dealt with the Tories' free-for-all capitalist spending (for their mates) and so were out again for the short Edward Heath debacle, came back until 1979 when, having made the ordinary folk pay for the privileges of the rich instead of taxing them "until the pips squeak" (as one Labour Chancellor, now in the Lords, declared but never did), in came another Tory government with the Iron Lady ruling the roost, and she and her successors did so for eighteen years (apart from the trans-nationals who, after all, run the capitalist business worldwide).

We make no apologies for this 'mini-history', not meant for the oldies but for readers of the new generation who may be hoping that New Labour, with an overwhelming majority in the talking shop, will give them a fair deal. Not only has the term 'more equality' entered the language, and in fact has no meaning (one either has equality or one hasn't) but, rest assured, under the Labour lot there won't and *cannot* be a society of *equals*, meaning that irrespective of birth, influence, education, etc., we are all equal members of the human race because the Labour lot, just as the Tories and the Liberals, are *concerned with operating the capitalist system*. How can they therefore talk of an *egalitarian* society?

As we write, a news item informs us that Tony Blair has just sold his Islington house for a sum which surpassed expectations and gives him a £260,000 *profit*. As a good socialist shouldn't he contribute to

the funds to get the homeless off the streets? Perish the thought.

Expect nothing from those who want to run your life for you, from government to boss. All they are concerned with is to exploit you either for power or financial gain. The journal *Class War* (which ignored us or referred to *Freedom* as liberal) has packed it in because the workers are no longer revolutionary. We are all middle class. So what? Does it mean that we are only concerned with more money, more holidays abroad, more gadgets, more mobile phones, more cable television, more take-away food, and have to spend so much time working to make the lolly?

Tell us if this writer has some tinkling that anarchists are now the only people who are concerned with living their lives to the full without the gadgets and therefore the exorbitant cost of these? If we are not, then let's join the political parties.

COUNTRYWIDE ACTION AGAINST WORKFARE BONDAGE

Edinburgh, Nottingham, Bolton, Bristol, Brighton, Chichester and Merseyside all had protests against New Labour's 'Welfare to Work' plans last month. This was part of Groundswell's national campaign in which offices were occupied in Chichester, Nottinghamshire and Bolton, a minister button-holed in Birkenhead and Edinburgh claimants joined the Liverpool dockers' supporters in a rally against Workfare.

A full report of the Edinburgh action can be found on page 3. This joint action with the dockers' supporters is

promising. It follows a campaign against the dole bully Alastair Mathieson at Torpichen Street Benefit Office. A poster with a mug-shot of Mathieson has been widely distributed locally. Further action is pending against another dole harasser in Edinburgh.

There is in Edinburgh a 'Dole-buster's phone tree' in which folk join a reserve army to be placed on call to instantly respond to occupy benefit offices in the event of someone having their dole stopped.

Freedom Reporter

Freedom

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MERSEYSIDE MINISTERIAL ENCOUNTER

Verdict: Frank Field is uneatable

The worst thing about Frank Field (thinker of the unthinkable) is that he is uneatable! He is a distinctly unhealthy shade of grey when you see him close up – rather like a grey mullet.

Elizabeth David recommends grey mullet. She says that “for some reason it is sold in this country at prices far below its true value, and represents something of a bargain”. Mrs David suggests *Mulet aux Olives et au Vin Blanc*. But I couldn't possibly recommend Frank Field, even with or without wine and olives. The trouble with grey mullet is that it has a reputation as a 'shit fish' in that it spends its time dining in shoals around unsavoury sewage outlets. Some say Frank Field, the politicians, is rather like the grey mullet in this respect as well.

When, last month, Mr Field's surgery in Birkenhead Town Hall was stormed by anarchists dressed as convicts, Groundswell activists, militants from Wirral Trades Council and others, his colour was not helped by the lighting or his dress sense. He had on a pair of burgundy braces contrasting with a dark blue shirt.

DOLE DESPOT'S MANDATE

In the eyeball-to-eyeball session that took place between the Groundswell demonstrators and their quarry, Mr Field, his demeanour was decidedly snake-like. Twitching and strung-up with a thin reptilian face and body, one couldn't be sure if he would strike out at any moment or slither away into his office.

Now I know that in Extremadura in the south west of Spain the peasants eat snake, but I've never tried it and I still wouldn't urge Frank Field upon you.

The activists' beef with Field ranged around his support as a minister for the government's plan for Welfare to Work, and their continued administration of the Job Seeker's Act and Project Work left them by the previous Tory government. The issue which was upsetting the demonstrators was the notion of forced labour in the government's programme, and they saw Mr Field as one of the main proponents of the plan.

Mr Field didn't deny this. He said why shouldn't the jobless and others on benefits be forced to work for their dole. Why indeed! But the dole officers regulating and easing claimants into schemes may not be the best bet. Both the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency have a history going back decades equivalent to that of the nineteenth century Poor Law guardians. They spend their time squeezing the poor.

Under the Tories' Project Work was about getting people off benefits and saving money. It was a Cheap Jack's Charter to cut the billions spent on welfare without, as one benefit agency official said, causing 'riots in the streets'.

New Labour and Mr Field have more missionary zeal. Under their plan, according to John Pilger in *The New Statesman* last October: “The unemployed, the poor or simply the 'disorganised' who do not conform will get just £30 a week benefit. In other words they will be starved into submission, or more likely into crime. The mentally ill also will be subjected to 'sanctions' and 'structures'. This will mean the rich won't have to step over them as they leave the theatre.”

This juggling of the jobless is interesting. The last issue of *Freedom* covered New Labour's launch of Welfare to Work amid much huffing and puffing. At Bury Town Hall there was a parade of the local lower professional middle classes bent on drilling the out-of-work masses.

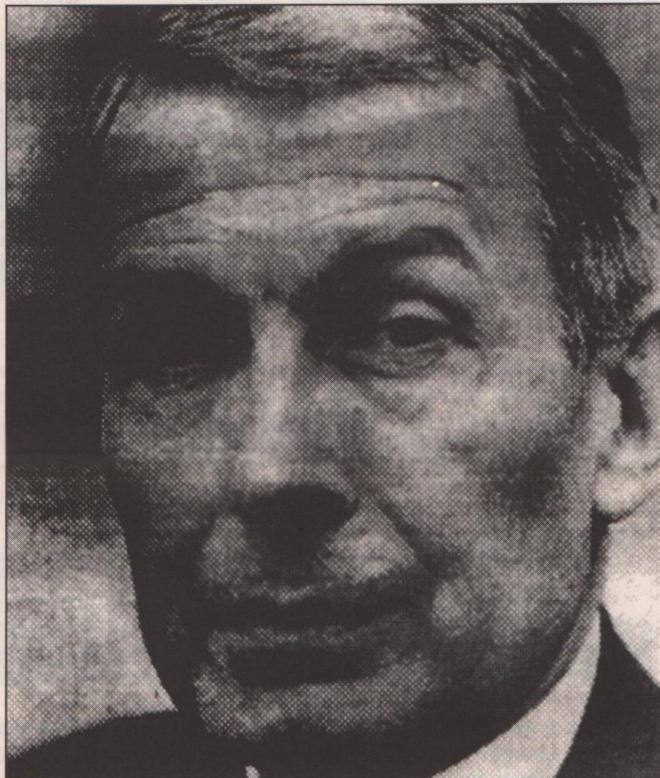
But Mr Field told the Groundswell protesters: “We have a mandate for forcing the jobless into these schemes”.

SOCIAL SECURITY 'SKUNK'

Today Frank Field is Minister for Social Security. In the 1930s a man called Professor Saintsbury had a similar influence. In his *Road to Wigan Pier* George Orwell says of him: “According to Saintsbury, unemployment insurance was 'simply contributing to the support of lazy ne'er-do-weels', and the whole trade union movement was no more than a kind of organised mendicancy”.

Professor Saintsbury held that “to be paupers, in the sense of being wholly or partly supported at the expense of other people, is the ardent, and to a considerable extent achieved, aspiration of a large proportion of our population”.

But Saintsbury knew the value of unemployment to the rich and powerful, he just wanted to make the jobless as uncomfortable as possible: “Is not 'casual' labour the very secret and safety valve of a safe and sound labour-system generally? ... In a complicated industrial and commercial state constant employment at regular wages is impossible; while all dole-supported unemployment, at anything like the wages of employment, is demoralising to begin with and ruinous at its more or less quickly-arriving end”.



Frank Field: a man with a mission (see page 5)

When there is no casual labour to be found then homelessness and the workhouse would presumably beckon under the Saintsbury system.

The Saintsbury philosophy gets worse: “Even the 'right to live' ... extends no further than the right to protection against murder”.

It seems to me that Mr Field, Minister for Social Security, is a kind of late twentieth century Saintsbury and, as Orwell said of Saintsbury, “it takes a lot of guts to be openly such a skunk as that”.

LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY WORKHOUSES

New Labour looks like bringing in a system of late twentieth century workhouses for the poor. Field could be the architect of the scheme called 'Welfare to Work'. From time to time, as I watched Field, his head wavered like a cobra.

These are the kind of people who can ruin lives. Carol Cox, after being summoned to her local Job Centre in Oldbury in the West Midlands and told to give up her voluntary work and devote all her time to looking for work, recently hanged herself. In Burnley and elsewhere there have been similar suicides, as reported in *Freedom*.

An article in *The Guardian* about the Carol Cox case shows that the jobless are immensely active. In Carol's case she spent four days a week doing voluntary work in local nature reserves. Advice work and social and

community care depend on the unemployed. Recently someone on Kaleidoscope claimed the best subsidy to the arts was the dole giro.

Now anarchists don't care much for state subsidies, but we must ask ourselves are all these energies and talents on the dole going to benefit from being dragooned by the likes of the dole-house bully and Tony Blair's 'smarmy army' of Welfare to Work professionals?

As I write, Mr Field has just told benefit workers in Exeter that he wants to hand over more control of benefits and benefit levels to them. 'Whoopee' said one official. But their union warned that staff could be vulnerable. There has already been a build-up of violent incidents at the dole and benefit offices. More control for staff would mean more culpability when things go wrong and claimants blame the local officials.

If the artfulness, skills and enthusiasms of those in the dole queue are to be used it can't be forced. The slave's work is done uncaringly.

In 1937 Orwell asked why do unemployed working people make so little use of their talents? He asked: “Why don't they sit down and write books?” and he responded “because to write books you need not only comfort and solitude – and solitude is never easy to attain in a working class home – you also need peace of mind”.

“The mentally ill also will be subjected to 'sanctions' and 'structures'. This will mean the rich won't have to step over them as they leave the theatre.”

Now to give control to bureaucratic busybodies and petty professionals, as New Labour and Frank Field propose, will not engender a spirit of peace of mind among the dole queues of this land. Indeed the spirit, as Liverpool Direct Action Against the JSA's leaflet delivered to Field said, is one of 'coercion'. Coercion to work.

Mr Field at the Groundswell protest was told that he was being confronted by anarchists, more or less, to whom standing for election was beneath them. The anarchist I suppose would demand full claimant control of a scheme like Welfare to Work, cutting out the middlemen in the doles, TECs and other so-called services. As things are, the racket will profit the professionals and assist the career advancement of many of the small-time functionaries who will form the 'consortia' for the establishment of Welfare to Work.

When Mr Field surveyed his anarchist tormentors, it was as if he was surrounded by a tribe of cannibals. Would that he was not all gristle and bone, and thus we could make something out of him.

Mack the Knife

The Tradition of Workers' Control:
selected writings by Geoffrey Ostergaard
edited and with an introduction by Brian
Bamford
Freedom Press, £6.95*

Workers' Control is one of those diffuse concepts that covers a range of different ideas. From time to time it is touted as the means to everything from an ultimate replacement for capitalism to a method of making capitalism more humane, productive and comfortable. It is not very long since executives from *Fortune* were crawling all over a pump making firm in San Paulo to discover why this anarchistically organised firm was so successful that it was widely believed to be beating the capitalists at their own game. This July it was Britain's turn as Ken Lewis, Managing Director of Dutton's Engineering, addressed Margaret Beckett's 'competitiveness summit' on how 'business leaders' could transform their companies, become more commercially successful, and have a happy and contented workforce who can't wait to get started each day.

The historically minded might find his ideas redolent of Owenism but Ken Lewis claims to have taken his cue from Japan where one school of industrial practice has long favoured worker participation in the organisation of work. However he could have saved himself the journey. The gang system at Coventry, discussed by Reg Wright in *Anarchy 2* and reprinted in Colin Ward's *A Decade of Anarchy* provided enough evidence for the viability of workers' self organisation even within a capitalist economic structure. The ultimate failure of these forms of organisation seems to have been due to ideology rather than economics. The *amour-propre* of those convinced that "the job of management was to manage" was offended. Conservatives everywhere felt that society was imperilled if top down organisation was shown to be unnecessary. Hierarchy had to be re-established.

Professor Tajfel's experiments in Bristol suggested that if you divided people, however arbitrarily, into groups, then the opportunity would be seized by one group to discriminate against another group. This held even when the result was disadvantageous to the group introducing the discrimination. People in our culture seem to prefer to lose out rather than let another group benefit as well (this might explain the hostility shewn to some aspects of what used to be regarded as a welfare society – the middle classes benefited most from it and yet led the attack against it). It was certainly a characteristic of the British car industry. Colin Ward, in an addendum to Reg Wright's article, argued that although Standard's, operating the gang system, could show lower and declining administrative overheads as against the higher and rising admin. costs of more authoritarian managements, the gang system ultimately lost out because of the ideological forces ranged against it.

Ideas about self organisation for the workforce nevertheless recur and it is reported that Dutton's Engineering has been notably successful in capitalist terms, with paperwork reduced by two thirds, sales per employee twice the national average, reject rates barely measurable and a nasty overdraft turned into a healthy balance. Ken Lewis has written a book, *How to Transform Your Company and Enjoy It* and now receives six hundred people a year studying 'his' methods. He leaves the company to run itself. The staff decide their own salaries, work patterns and hours, and apparently take all the decisions and twenty per cent of the profits. Ken Lewis happily argues that he hasn't taken a decision in the last two years and that he and the staff "work smart not hard". Far from being revolutionary he seems to regard such a manner of organisation as a commonsense way of organising work operations within capitalism and "improving the quality of life for everyone".

This sort of thing is frequently mocked as meliorism. So it is – but most of us would sooner work at Dutton's than at Fords, at least until, like Standard, they are taken over and the non-union workforce find themselves up

The Tradition of Workers' Control

WORKING ON A CHAIN GANG?



NO: ★WORKFARE!
★BENEFIT CUTS!
★CASUALISATION!
★SACKINGS!

UK-WIDE

DAY OF ACTION

• RESIST LABOUR'S PLANS TO EXTEND COMPULSORY WORKFARE (ALREADY FORCED ON 16-17 YEAR OLDS). NOW THEY AIM TO COMPEL 18-24 YEAR OLDS TO WORK FOR THEIR BENEFIT MONEY. • RESIST THE CUTS IN BENEFITS FOR SINGLE PARENTS. • SOLIDARITY WITH THE SACKED LIVERPOOL DOCKERS & THE WOMEN OF THE WATERFRONT, FIGHTING FOR THEIR JOBS BACK & AGAINST CASUALISATION (JOB INSECURITY + NO RIGHTS). • SUPPORT THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE 2 SACKED EDINBURGH POSTAL WORKERS.

Organised by Edinburgh Claimants and Edinburgh Support Group for Liverpool Dockers
INFO: EDINBURGH CLAIMANTS (0131) 557 6242

the creek without a paddle. For the moment though in a month when it's been revealed that the rail industry sees fit to penalise train drivers for wearing moustaches (they are "considered offensive and aggressive") the degree of personal freedom apparently obtaining at Dutton's Engineering is something to be encouraged and trumpeted abroad. And there is always Reg Wright's contention that such arrangements create "erosion within capitalism".

So this selection of Geoffrey Ostergaard's essays, taking its title from one part-published by Freedom in the mid-fifties, is a timely adjunct to any serious discussion of alternatives to the way things are presently done. In addition to the main historical analysis of the concept of Workers' Control and its vicissitudes there are discussions of Fabianism, managerialism, the nature of the Labour Party and the neatly named "socialism by pressure group". In addition there are two historically important pieces. One is an un-attributed essay 'What's to be Done' seen by Ostergaard as an early instance of anarchists taking a conscious decision to operate within the organisations labour was developing. The other is Malatesta's discussion of syndicalism and anarchism – unavailable for many years. There is also a warm and succinct obituary by Nicolas Walter.

There are a few caveats. It is irritating that the contents and sources are laid out in such a manner that it is not always clear whom one is reading at a particular moment. More importantly Brian Bamford's introduction and postscript are written in the manner we have come to expect from him. It is not always clear what he is saying, to us, or I suspect, to

himself. He refers to Dr Ostergaard as an historian – which he wasn't – and finds difficulty in coming to terms with him being one of the academics he despises. He rubbishes Eric Hobsbawm for "intellectual somersaults" but quotes him approvingly a few pages later. He comes close to doing something similar with E.P. Thompson and throws in his usual approving quote from Malcolm Muggeridge. At one point Bamford actually says "the anarchist intellectual has to act in the realm of ideas without ideological props". Really? Does he mean what he is saying? What a philosophical elite these anarchist intellectuals must be?

Thankfully the bulk of the book is Ostergaard's own work. The centrepiece is the historical sketch of the idea of Workers' Control and a discussion of its fortunes in the hands of socialists, trade unionists, anarchists, syndicalists, and various combinations of

these groups. The concept itself, the phrase was coined by the Guild Socialists, is properly located by Ostergaard as part of the reaction to the agricultural and industrial revolutions, and the consequent alienation and commodification of labour. (Marx's concepts as used here – despite Bamford's predictable and ahistorical equation of Marx's analyses with CSPU orthodoxy.)

It may be, as Larry Gambone appears to suggest, that the factory has had its day as a dominant form of production, that a computer driven variation of the domestic system is on the cards. This could offer new opportunities for the idea of Workers' Control. Before we get too hopeful though we should take a careful look at what the domestic system meant for most of the people involved in it. Like many concerned with the dehumanisation of the industrial revolution Geoffrey Ostergaard seems at times to romanticise the pre-industrial period. Of course he was a political analyst. He took PEP at Oxford and his PhD was on the idea of public ownership. So perhaps he is occasionally naive in handling historical materials, although this impression might be a result of the inevitable compression involved in a newspaper series.

In any case Ostergaard was not an historian nor did he ever embrace a Whig theory of history as his editor seems to suggest in the postscript. He was hopeful and hope was not without foundation at a time when it seemed, however painfully or slowly, things were getting better. We had not experienced the forced reincarnation of nineteenth century Economic Man. We had not seen at that time the spectacle of truckers from Essex gleefully breaking a major strike. We did not know, as we wrote and organised, that children were being exported from British orphanages to support the myth of white supremacy in Australia, or to act as bonded labourers in Canada. We were creatures of our time who shared just a little of the post-war feeling of improvement, just as Brian Bamford now reflects the dispirited hopelessness of a post modern condition where truth has been deconstructed, where we are told that any attempt at objectivity is just another story. Nevertheless Brian Bamford has not lost his hope that people will continue to want to control their own lives enough to make a difference to us all. Hope is not naive optimism and he is wrong to attribute such naiveté to Geoffrey Ostergaard.

This is an important collection, well selected for contemporary relevance by its editor. Ostergaard writes lucidly without academic jargon and readers will find much of what is said now about social necessities foreshadowed in Ostergaard's work. There are inspirational insights as well as much needed historical grounding in this volume. It is one of those books we will all need in the years to come.

John Pilgrim



The Tradition of Workers' Control

by Geoffrey Ostergaard

Workers' control of industry, a phrase coined by the Guild Socialists, recalls the libertarian aspirations of the first rebels against the slavery inherent in the capitalist mode of production. As Geoffrey Ostergaard shows, libertarian socialism is not dead. There are workers in Britain who own and control their workplaces, and although this movement of workers' control in industry is not large, it is flourishing.

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— Groundswell Sheffield Conference —

WAR ON 'WELFARE TO WORK'

Sixteen groups, over a quarter of the membership, attended the August conference in Sheffield. Plans to wage war on New Labour's 'Welfare to Work' plan alongside opposition to Project Work and the JSA were hatched at the conference.

Tameside Unemployed Workers called for a campaign against the Secretary of State, Harriet Harman, and the ministers in her department Frank Field and Andrew Smith. Brighton announced plans for a demonstration at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton on Sunday 28th and Monday 29th September. The target of the action will be 'Welfare to Work'. At the last Labour Conference in Brighton two years ago there had been several arrests of anti-JSA demonstrators.

The Liverpool dockers and their supporters are expected to protest about the same time. Some joint action is probable.

Oxford urged that the trend of 'social exclusion' in British society ought to be the focus. The concept of a caste of 'untouch-

ables' is growing, with people forced into compulsory work, onto low pay and into terrible treadmills of time-wasting idiocy devised by the state.

OTHER BATTLES ...

Some consideration was given to the coming G7 Summit pre-meeting in London next January. The flexible labour market and low tax costs are to be on the agenda. London groups are likely to fix up some action.

It was thought that 'three strikes' could now be extended to include training providers under Project Work and Welfare to Work. Enthusiasm was expressed for the value of the practice of 'three strikes' as a force for raising the level of debate.

It was pointed out that since the Groundswell campaign against Grand Metropolitan plc, the company had pulled out of Project Work schemes in Brighton and Edinburgh. In both these places Groundswell has strong groups. Groundswell started its campaign against

Grand Metropolitan as a training provider in February.

... AND CAMPAIGNS

It was decided that the Peoples' Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) be targeted next. This is another training provider under Project Work, and one that could be open to influence. Project Work is set to continue to the end of the financial year under the new government.

The Labour government is even extending the 'Workstart Subsidy' and employers who take on jobless people of more than two years on the dole will get £60 a week for 18-24 year olds and £75 for those aged 25 to 50. This puts Project Work in line with Labour's 'New Deal'.

Problems of the Job Seeker's Agreement at Burnley dole was discussed. The conference

was told of a large demo of over a hundred people against the JSA in Bradford city centre, and a forthcoming demo at Huddersfield in August. The Huddersfield protest is against Project Work. Blackburn expressed concern about private job agencies and the collusion of the state benefit agencies with these cowboy operators.

Freedom Correspondent

— COPY DEADLINE —
The next issue of Freedom will be dated 6th September, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 28th August

— Edinburgh —

ANTI-WORKFARE DEMO

Anti-workfare demonstrators rallied in Edinburgh city centre and then occupied a Job Centre as part of the Groundswell network's UK-wide day of action on 21st July.

Edinburgh claimants and the Edinburgh Support Group for the Liverpool Dockers' joined forces to organise a rally on the theme of 'No to Workfare, No benefit cuts for single parents, No to casualisation and sackings'.

Around 30-35 demonstrators were joined by passers-by to listen to speakers from Edinburgh Claimants, the Dockers' Support Group and the newly-formed Claimants Union in Wester Hailes (a large council scheme in the west of Edinburgh).

Over twenty protesters moved on from the rally at The Mound (Edinburgh's speakers' corner) to nearby St Andrews Street Job Centre. Inside the Job Centre, demonstrators stuck up posters and gave out leaflets to claimants and staff. In between blowing whistles and chanting, an impromptu speech was made through a megaphone appealing to benefit office workers to join the resistance to workfare.

Meanwhile manager Berny Jaster, having called the police, dashed about frantically

trying to tear down posters and telling claimants not to believe the demonstrators — surely they didn't think that Tony Blair would do anything wrong? Suddenly a loud shout of 'Fuck off Jaster!' rang out from behind a Job Centre board, causing consternation among the manager's underlings.

Police ejected the demonstrators but there were no arrests and the protest continued outside for around half an hour longer, until several hundred leaflets were all given out. All in all, a successful day, and the joint organisation between Edinburgh Claimants and the Dockers' Support Group augurs well for future co-operation.

Contacts:

Edinburgh Claimants, c/o Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Tel: 0131 557 6242.

Groundswell: 01865 723750.

Liverpool Dockers: J. Davies, 19 Scorton Road, Liverpool L6 4AS.

Note: the demo was reported in *The Herald* newspaper and on Edinburgh Live cable television.

ANARCHIST COMMENTS IN BRIEF

THE SUPERMEN OF THE CITY Sir Colin Marshall has recently collected his *third* chairmanship of a large British company. He's already top man with British Airways and Inchcape, but he is *also* deputy chairman of BT and president of the CBI, plus a number of directorships I won't bother to list. Even the financial pages of the broadsheets ask whether Sir Colin has taken on more than he can chew, but he says that he loves being involved in all these enterprises. After all, as he points out: "You don't always have to be in the office. You can do an awful lot on the telephone or by e-mail". That's the 'revolution' of the year 2000!

YET ANOTHER REVOLUTION — THE DIGITAL CAMERA So photography as an enjoyment has ceased to be. Why? The latest advertisements are for Sony 'digital cameras'. A bit expensive for most pockets at £700, but what do they do? "Edit and store your pictures on your PC. No more film or processing — ever! Put your photos in documents, or e-mail them". Utopia, almost, for taking your photographs. Eventually, I expect, some technological genius will produce the camera that all you will need to do is to hang it round your neck and *it* will decide what photographs to take — brave new world!

I still think there will be more pleasure for most of us who enjoy photography to be involved in all the processes: from 'seeing' the picture and at the end producing the print.

I'm obviously prejudiced, but recommend readers to purchase the Freedom Press publication *A Weekend Photographer's Notebook** with no less than 170 reproductions for £6.95, all taken before the 'digital camera age'!

FOR GOODNESS SAKE! — PLAYING AT TRAINS

The Great Eastern Company (privatised, obviously) has launched the most ridiculous project of recruiting commuters to act as guards on their trains. They are offering free travel so long as you come all the way, plus £5.25 an hour. The first comment one feels that one can make is: Why don't you offer such generous terms to *your employees*? Needless to say, commuters are rushing to get the jobs. Really, it is pathetic and it could be dangerous, though for years I haven't seen the guards (on that line) doing other than pressing a button which gives the driver the go-ahead.

GOOD FOR YOUNGSTERS Obviously the case of the protesting schoolgirl who has been expelled is only beginning.

Sarah Briggs was excluded from her school for "writing to the local paper complaining about staff absenteeism and failure to address recommendations from the Office for Standards in Education, whose inspectors had found the educational standards unacceptable" (*Guardian*, 25th July 1997).

What is surely especially interesting in this case is that three other pupils who also signed Sarah Briggs's letter *withdrew their complaints* after Nicola Aitkin, the head teacher, ordered them to make a written apology, which Sarah refused to do, insisting her comments were true.

Whatever the head teacher thought she could do, Sarah has convinced the school standards minister, Stephen Byers, that he must call "for a full report on the case". Good for Sarah.

Libertarian



THE SMOKING GUN: IT'S FUN, FUN, FUN

It was a good month for death on the caviare circuit as 'these you have loved' had their sell-by date officially accepted by the front pages of the national tabloids. Little pink pinkies turning green as the bodies beautiful graced their individual mortuary slabs waiting their turn to be de-gutted like supermarket chickens by an official in the regimental blood-stained white coat seeking to answer the demands of the state for the reason for the death of the slab-happy individual – was it official or unofficial?

There is a vulgarity about the slaughter of entertainers that one does not find with the death of kings or small dogs and, as in life so in death, we the lumpenproletariat pay our coinage and demand to be entertained. Gianni Versace and Andy Cunaman died by the bullet, while Goldsmith and Strasberg shared the headline as a pair of old time Bowery burlesque bums in the style of *Second Bananas*, but not a patch on the long distance swimmer Maxwell.

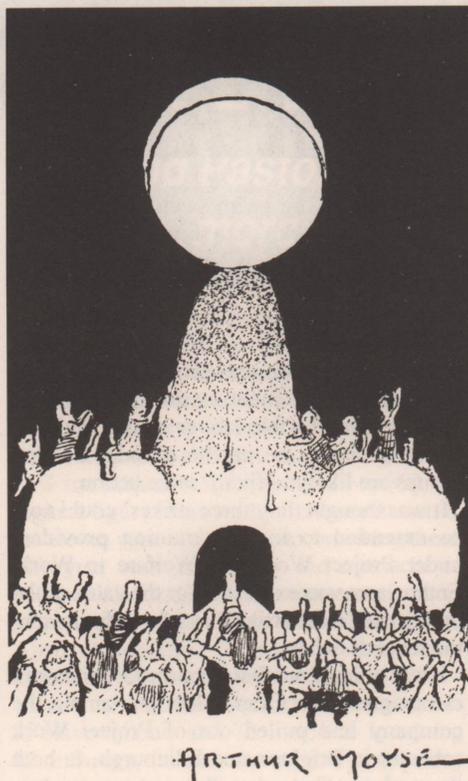
Raymond Chandler deplored the English rural murder with the colonel complete with a Persian dagger through the heart and stretched out kaput in the library, while Orwell sighed for the loss of the pre-1914 lower middle class murder with the body buried in the 'yard' or in the cellar, but then Orwell was a romantic.

In true Marxist tradition it was the Americans who gave a fresh life to murder, using it as no more than an amoral tool in their mid-west pilgrimage bank robbing. One Ford car, one sub-machine gun and a pair of pliers to cut the telephone lines and, in the manner of America's frontier capitalism, one was in business for it was no longer the poison from the kitchen fly-paper or the messy cut-throat but to settle the commercial business matter by 'mowing down in a stream of lead' one's economic competitor leading eventually, as it must do, to one's own skyscraper and a judge, a police chief and the mayor on the company

pay-roll pension, inflation linked.

The American boy from his Hicksville dirt farm fitted his action to suit the words as, cheered on by the bankrupt rural dirt farmers and their starving families, pulp-magazine style he Ford car'd his way across the American man-made dust-bowl slaughtering the good or the unfortunate if they sought to interfere in the robbery of the town's piggy-bank, but capitalism has no conscience and the all American boy would finally end up shot to shit in a dirt ditch leaving only a script for a bio-pic.

But we 'sycophants' ill gracing the table within the White Hart were shaken to the bottom of our beer glasses when the Town's weeping frau staggered in to cry that Nina Coltart was dead. White-faced and beer drained, we listened until an insensitive fool – I think it was me – asked "Who was Nina and why?" It was a good question, despite the sneers of my 'sycophant friends' and the answer is that Nina, God rest her, was a Theravada Buddhist psychoanalyst who preferred psychotherapy. For myself it is one aspirin, a shake of the aspergillum and a tablespoon full of the pink stuff in the large bottle. Nina wrote, and had published, her full measure of books and it is because of that that in this moment of grace one is forced to turn to the writings of Anthony Storr. Storr is the author of a number of books concerning the study of the human mind ranging from the *Art of Psychotherapy* to the *Essential Jung*, but Storr writes that "I have deliberately chosen to study gurus who, ranging as they do from saints to crooks, appear to be quite dissimilar. I hope to show that they have more in common than meets the uncritical eye". For myself I think that they are all fools, clowns or liars. Storr takes the dictionary definition of a guru as "a spiritual teacher: a venerable person" and if this were so then it must be me lording it among my 'sycophantic' associates within the White Hart for I am venerable and spiritual.



It is all pure street market with Jesus, Muhammad and the Buddha among the top ten of the week but, as Storr writes, gurus risk becoming corrupted by power or end up living in luxury and engage in sexual behaviour which would be condemned as irresponsible in an 'ordinary' person for, to quote one of the great social and political writers of our time, "the working class can kiss my arse, I've got the foreman's job at last". It's a false rhyme but by Christ it is the true basis of all economic and social philosophy. For me Storr appears to indulge in too much fence-sitting but, like the writer Colin Wilson, one agrees and disagrees with his findings but they make good reading. I would hold that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the old 'Bagwash' of *Private Eye*, with his 93 Rolls Royces and heavy with the stench of collected wealth and all the sex you wanted on production of your tantric card, is the model for any £1,000 a year student

thinking of taking up the guru's trade. Yet Freud, Adler, Jung and the rest of the boys cannot be faulted for their army of fools waving their moneys to buy salvation. It is agony aunt, street fortune telling and the three card trick. All things are physical and material and there are no spoken easy solutions to our personal or universal problems, but still there will be a con artist to offer a false dawn for the highest bidder.

Storr gives much wordage to Ignatius Loyola who bequeathed nothing but misery to the sad sacks seeking salvation, and he followed this with dear old Cardinal Newman and his script for Heaven *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, and dear old Newman continued to live high on the hog having taken the short road to Rome. Rodriguez S.J. wrote that one of the great consolations of monastic life is the assurance we have that in obeying we can commit no fault. You obey your God-elected superior and the bed, the food, the piss pot and the ceiling will be yours without any economic worries, see television on fun in the jailhouse.

Your problem is what is normality in relation to the human race, and I will maintain that every single member of the human race acts out a false image the moment they come into contact with another member of their social grouping. The flaw in Rodriguez S.J. offer is that though the bar and the beer is free at the payment of your own freedom, you can still rationalise your actions and then, the greatest sin of all, question them. Between the wars I knew of two workmen who – at different periods – in economic desperation in that Tory means-tested world, cut their own throats, and I will maintain that given economic salvation they would not have died that awful death and all the psychoanalysing has never fed a hungry and broken man. I knew of a small boy who was sent to be psychoanalysed because he was incontinent. I do not know if he stopped peeing at the wrong times, but I doubt it. I am 83 and incontinent and have a hernia, and if any gurus or psychoanalysts can tie a knot in my dick or deflate my hernia – mit the mouth, mit the mouth – then I will act out my role as a guinea pig, but I doubt it. Meanwhile, sycophants, whose round?

Arthur Moysé

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ... AND ACTION!

Some recent arrivals in the Freedom Press Bookshop

Anarchy: a journal of desire armed (No. 43). After a long absence, the American magazine is once again being published by CAL Press in Columbia, after New York's BAL Press gave up having managed just two issues. It is obviously in trouble, and having difficulty getting people to do the hard and unrewarding work like keeping subs up to date, doing the mailing lists and getting the magazine sent out. So it is not accepting any new subscribers for the time being. Its problems mean that many of the periodicals described in its usually lengthy reviews section are two years or more out of date, and the other contents have been put together hastily. But there is no escaping yet another chapter – they're up to 22 – reprinted from Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life*.

Honestly, what is the point? When they began, the price even in the UK was £4.50 and even now is only £7.95. Reading it in the pages of *Anarchy* would cost you (at our price – other shops and distributors sell it at a much higher price) around £75, and that's excluding the postscript and postal charges, and would take you (even if the mag appeared religiously every quarter, which it hasn't been doing) over six years. The question is, what will they do when they get to the end? How will they fill the space? Find another book to regurgitate in large chunks? Start again from Chapter 1? Or perhaps (oh please, please) find some original and varied material. 64 pages, £3.00.

Squall: necessity breeds ingenuity (summer '97, No. 15). In an altogether different league, and also reappearing after a break (though in this case a planned break), *Squall* has a useful summary of the McLibel trial and, given that it was published before the court's decision, an accurate prediction of the verdict. The regular piece on the British political situation, 'The State It's In', asks what kind of employment conditions will be negotiated from the Social Chapter now that Labour is in power and liable to be persuaded by the likes of McDonalds to keep the minimum wage down to little more than £3 an hour. As if to underline this, there's a photograph of Blair serving in a Coventry McDonalds. The usual

good crop of news stories and amusing anecdotes is backed up by features such as the increasing use of heroin in ex-mining communities; the new police powers of intrusive surveillance; an update on the Exodus Collective's battles with authority; the thugs employed by BP against any opposition to their oil operations in Colombia; a review of the sacked Liverpool dockers' predicament; the Manchester airport protests, and a lot more. Lots of good photographs and 60 worthwhile pages for £1.80.

Peace News: for non-violent revolution (August/September). A major article on political prisoners in Indonesia is complemented by a piece warning that the nuclear industry has set its sights on Eastern Europe, and calling for a boycott of the Siemens Corporation. Other topics covered are the marching season in Northern Ireland and the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Plus news, reviews and letters. We still have a few of the May, June and July issues. All are £1.00 for 24 pages.

Lobster (No 33, summer '97). An excellent sworn affidavit issued by Peter Dale Scott on the extensive involvement of the CIA and other US agencies in the drug-running between various Latin American countries and the USA, and in the selling of cocaine and crack on the streets of US cities, is reason enough to get the latest issue, and this is

backed-up by another longer piece by Daniel Brandt and Steve Badrich on the CIA's drugs connections and the US media's failure to investigate, and indeed active suppression of the report. Also three articles analysing New Labour, covering Nationalism, the Blairites and the Labour Party; New Labour, New Atlanticism; and The British American Project for the Successor Generation. 48 pages, £2.50.

The Allotment: its landscape and culture* by David Crouch and Colin Ward (Five Leaves Publications). "This unique and fascinating book explores the culture and landscape of the allotment and the part it has played in Britain for 150 years". Now re-issued in an attractive paperback edition with a new introduction, footnotes and appendix. Read it while you wait for your tomatoes to ripen. 314 pages, £10.99.

Notes: *Deschooling Society* by Ivan Illich (Marion Boyars) is now £8.95. Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* (Penguin) is now £11.00.

KM

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— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK —

THEIR OWN PLACE

I was asked recently by one of the charitable trusts to write a report on some efforts to provide facilities for some of the jobless and homeless young. Naturally I felt bound to insert some information about ventures to help them to house themselves. The famous British example was the Zenzele Self-Build Housing Association, nicely described by Job Broome and Brian Richardson in *The Self-Build Book* (Green Books).

It led to further initiatives in Bristol and elsewhere and in 1989 to the report *Building Young Lives*, commissioned by Charity Projects which also allocated funds to provide support for groups of young self-builders. Meanwhile the Walter Segal Self-Build Trust, formed to propagate the simple system of house construction evolved by the architect Walter Segal until his death in 1985, had demonstrated in a series of projects that the most disadvantaged of young people could dramatically change their situations by building for themselves. For example, the Fusions Jameen Housing Co-operative in South East London consists of young black unemployed men and women, some of them single parents, who have changed their life chances by housing themselves. Their co-chairman Tim Oshodi explained that: "What we are doing is building up their confidence so they feel they can do things. We're building not only houses but people's belief in themselves. They know that once they have built their own homes, they can do anything."

Then the same body, with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, commissioned a further study of eleven self-build projects called *I've Started So I'll Finish* (Community Self-Build Agency, 1994). The author, Danny Levine, identified some of the innumerable problems involved in initiating this style of project where the enabling of housing has a social and educative dimension, not taken into account in normal housing finance. His summary conclusions included the following:

- Young homeless single people can successfully self-build their own homes; the support costs are high and need to be available through standard funding systems, rather than from charitable funds, if this sector is to expand significantly.
- The process of development is time consuming for the housing associations involved. A development allowance, similar to the Special Projects Promotional Allowance from the Housing Corporation, would encourage associations to develop youth self-build schemes.
- Schemes need a clear statement of the roles and responsibilities of the various parties in self-build in order to function well. That requires housing professionals to use plain language, not jargon, and to explain systems clearly.
- Where support workers are involved with a group, those with a youth work or social work background are the most effective.
- Where there are no support workers each of the professionals involved must have a clear responsibility to inform and train the young self-builders and there must be a system for developing life skills and access to support after the scheme is completed.
- If youth self-build is to develop, local authorities need to incorporate self-build into their strategies, urban/economic regeneration as well as housing.
- Most of the youth self-build groups in the study found the level of bureaucracy time consuming and hard to grasp, and felt this was a factor in self-build being such a long process.

This formidable list of the necessary organisational changes before self-help solutions by the young homeless unemployed can become a normal procedure is the hard-won fruit of experience.

Like Foyer projects, self-build schemes depend upon a careful marshalling of a variety of sources of support, often the same bodies, like the Housing Corporation. The Youth Self-Build Association on North Tyneside, for example, (well known because its evolution was watched in Channel 4's *Raising the Roof* series) was the result of joint action by Barnardo's and the North British Housing Association. Other schemes broke down when their complex juggling with potential sources of support collapsed. Their failure had nothing to do with the capacity of unemployed young people to learn building skills and put in a day's work. Indeed, one unique venture in this field attributes its success to "hard work and low pay" and to the fact that "with no mainstream funding, or no single financier or central/local government money, we were in total control" (*Freedom*, 29th April 1995). This is the Gyroscope Housing Co-op in Hull, a city so depressed that the escalation of house prices in the 1980s passed it by. In 1985 a young unemployed man, Reg Salmon, borrowed enough in small loans from similarly situated friends, completely on trust, to pay the deposit for a mortgage on a small run-down house valued at about £7,000 which, together, they set about renovating, learning the art of building repairs from DIY handbooks. With that improved house as security they got a bank loan to buy a second house, and rented rooms to other homeless people.

Then, with the help of the Humberside Co-operative Development Agency, they set up a building co-operative, Gyroscope Ltd., whose directors were all under 25 and unemployed. The aims of the co-operative are "the purchase, renovation, modernisation and



furnishing of houses in poor condition" and "the renting out of these houses to unemployed people and to other disadvantaged groups such as single parents and disabled people".

This aim has kept them busy ever since, for when I first visited them in 1988 the members of Gyroscope explained to me that in their city 47% of the housing stock belonged to the council, yet at least 3,500 families were officially described as homeless, while this minimal figure ignored people who were young, single and footloose and all those teenagers obliged to leave home after a marriage breakdown or a family row or because to stay in the parental home was, for one reason or another, intolerable. At that time

the co-operative owned eight houses accommodating about thirty young unemployed people and four children.

When I next met them in 1995 they were housing about sixty people, having acquired nineteen formerly derelict buildings, including a creche run by parents and a corner shop leased to another co-op, a joint housing project with MIND and an alternative energy experimental house. By this time it housed about sixty people. Gyroscope is firmly rooted in the co-operative ideology. The corner shop is run by the People's Trading Company, and explains that:

"Today the longer-serving members of the co-operative are the trainers and we are slowly developing a training system for new workers. Sometimes we are fortunate in that a new worker will bring a skill with them when they join, but this is by no means a criterion for membership. The training we give is mainly 'on site' with some back-up theory sessions. Skill sharing is a vital part of our work and means that if someone leaves the co-op we are not left with work which no one can do. Between us we can now re-wire, re-roof, install central heating, plaster, build window frames, bricklay, lay carpet, operate a computer, devise financial plans, counsel young people, lobby politicians and much more besides.

We are members of a network of co-ops across the United Kingdom called Radical Routes, and part of our working in this group involves training. The network has a very wide skill base which enables us to hold training sessions open to anyone. Such topics dealt with at these events include setting up worker/housing co-ops, fund-raising, alternative energy, co-operative decision making, and much more."

I list this range of activities just because of their rarity. They are among the very few initiatives in contemporary Britain to recognise the impact of the collapse of employment for the young. The prevailing view, both in government departments and in public opinion, is that if young people can't find the jobs which were taken for granted by their parents, it is somehow not the result of devastating economic change but the fault of the young themselves.

Colin Ward

Frank Field MP:

A MAN WITH A MISSION

Frank Field, the MP for Birkenhead, is a man with a mission. As the newly appointed minister with responsibility for welfare reform at the Department of Social Security, under a 'New Labour' government, he has been told by his boss Tony Blair to "think the unthinkable". For many people such a wide brief in the hands of Mr Field is tantamount to inviting a vampire into a blood bank.

On previous occasions in his capacity as the chairman of the all party House of Commons Social Services Committee, Frank Field has called for unemployed claimants in receipt of benefits to be DNA tested as a measure to counter social security fraud, and he favours such measures as compelling the unemployed to sign-on each day and even lowering the school leaving age to fourteen.

Not surprisingly Mr Field is admired by many Tories, including Margaret Thatcher, and this admiration is reciprocated by Mr Field, even though as MP for Birkenhead he represents a constituency with over 20% unemployment. He said recently: "We are grateful for what the Tories did but it is not the end of the story". Clearly Mr Field's admiration for the Tories is not one which is shared by the people of Birkenhead or the unemployed in general. Moreover, his 'get tough no-nonsense' approach to the unemployed and his disparaging remarks about "lager louts on benefit" has not gone unnoticed by groups such as Groundswell (the network of unemployed groups), which campaigns against such measures as Workfare and the Jobseeker's Allowance.

On 25th July unemployed activists, along with anarchists and trade unionists from Wirral Trades Union Council, took part in a

Groundswell day of action which involved an occupation of Mr Field's constituency surgery in Birkenhead. Wearing convict overalls, some of the activists, in full view of Mr Field's constituents, demanded to see him, declaring that they had come to report for Project Work and to be DNA tested by Mr Field.

Despite waiting patiently to see Mr Field, many of his constituents who were present in the waiting room found the protest highly hilarious, not least when a ruffled and highly embarrassed Mr Field emerged from his waiting room to see what the disturbance was about and was confronted by demonstrators dressed in convict garb. Although several police officers arrived shortly after the occupation, they left after speaking to Frank Field, who had already told the protesters that he would speak to them after seeing his own constituents.

When we did get to speak to Frank Field, he told us that he didn't support Workfare and it was apparent that he finds it uncomfortable talking to unemployed people about unemployment issues. But when I asked him why I should work for my dole as an unemployed person, and if he was working for dole plus a tenner, he told me it was because the British taxpayer insisted upon it. He was no less impressed with the argument that if work is identified for the unemployed to do (whether on a community task force or in the voluntary sector) then they should be paid the going rate for the job because, by definition, they were no longer unemployed.

Curiously Mr Field's concern for the British taxpayer, which he was eager to display to me, was not a factor when he and other MPs flew to Chile at the taxpayers' expense to study the Chilean pension scheme. It was claimed

afterwards that most of the information he obtained had been available in the House of Commons library. Likewise, there does not appear to have been much concern for the British taxpayer when most MPs awarded themselves a whopping 24% pay rise. Nevertheless, although talking to Frank Field was like talking to a brick wall, it was particularly gratifying to see some of his own constituents arguing with him and, judging by his own agitated state, it was clear that he found the whole experience disconcerting.

Those who criticise Frank Field's writings on social policy have often referred to an inherent naiveté about him, and many of his ideas (such as DNA testing for the unemployed) are certainly bizarre. Some critics have even suggested that like all men on a mission who mix politics with religion, he is mad or very scary. However, my impression of Mr Field, upon meeting him, was that of a typically English middle class male who appeared emotionally constipated and insecure as well as slightly naive.

Nevertheless, what many should find worrying is that a single middle-aged middle-class man with limited work experience, such as Frank Field, who has no experience of bringing up a family and whose only experience of poverty is as a former director of the Child Poverty Action Group, is now to be entrusted to reform the welfare state and will have the power, as Minister for Welfare Reform, to make decisions which will affect the lives of millions of people in Britain whether unemployed, single parents, elderly or disabled. No doubt with Mr Field on their doorstep the unemployed of Merseyside and groups such as Groundswell will be keeping the Minister for Welfare Reform under close scrutiny. Perhaps the Minister for Welfare Reform would be well advised to think twice before thinking of implementing the unthinkable.

Joe McCarthy

NEWS FROM THE NET: Land and Indigenous Peoples

Siberia: UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concerned about situation of indigenous peoples

At its recent session which ended on May 16th the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has expressed concern at the situation of indigenous peoples living in the Russian North, Siberia and the Far East. Two thirds of Russia's vast northern and eastern territories are inhabited by about 30 'small' indigenous peoples which number from only 200 (Enets) up to 50,000 (Nenets) people.

Most of Russia's natural resources like oil, gas, timber, diamonds, coal and gold are found in their territories. Large scale industrial development has led to the reduction of traditional food and income sources like fish, reindeer and forest products. The life expectancy of indigenous people is 10-20 years below the Russian average which after the breakup of the Soviet Union has fallen to the lowest level of all industrialised countries.

Especially alarming is the situation in the areas occupied by the oil and gas industry. Today international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF are urging the Russian government to increase oil production and exports in order to cover the state's debts. In its concluding observations the Economic Rights Committee states:

"The Committee expresses its concern at the situation of the indigenous peoples of the State party, many of whom live in poverty, and have

inadequate access to food supplies, and some of whom suffer from malnutrition. The Committee is particularly concerned for those whose food supply is based on fishing and an adequate stock of reindeer, and who are witnessing the destruction of their environment by widespread pollution. It is alarmed at reports that the economic rights of indigenous peoples are exploited with impunity by oil and gas companies which sign agreements under circumstances which are clearly illegal, and that the State party has not taken adequate steps to protect the indigenous peoples from such exploitation ...

The Committee recommends that action be taken to protect the indigenous peoples from exploitation by oil and gas companies, and more generally that action be taken to ensure their access to traditional and other sources of food."

The complete document can be downloaded from the UN human rights website at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

More information on the human rights situation of Siberian indigenous peoples can be found in a parallel report which FIAN (FoodFirst Information and Action Network) and INFOE (Institute for Ecology and Action Anthropology) have submitted to the UN Committee. The report is on the Web at: <http://www.koeln-online.de/infoe/report.html>

Information concerning inadequate agreements between oil companies and reindeer herders can be found at: <http://www.koeln-online.de/infoe/nenets.html>

Land Pastoral Commission denounces more conflicts in rural areas

The annual *Conflicts in Rural Areas: 1996* report issued by the Land Pastoral Commission this week in Brasilia once again confirms that violence and impunity still prevail in land conflicts in rural areas in Brazil. According to the report, conflicts grew by 26% in relation to 1995, from 554 to 750, the highest figure recorded by the commission in the eleven years it has been documenting them. The year was marked by the massacre of Eldorado de Carajas, where nineteen members of the Landless Movement were killed on 17th April. Altogether, 54 rural workers were killed in 1996, thirteen more than in 1995.

Last year, 653 land conflicts, nineteen cases of slave labour, and 78 incidents involving labor issues, unions, the agricultural policy and miners were registered, averaging two conflicts a day. Most cases, 256, were reported in the Northeast, but the state of Para was the one where violence prevailed more than in any other, with 72 deaths, including the massacre in Eldorado de Carajas. In 1996, more land areas (398) were occupied by landless workers than in the last eleven years, and the number of families involved (63,080) was almost twice the figure registered in 1995. This is a clear result of the action of the Landless Movement.

There was a slight drop in the occurrence of slave labour, from 21 in 1995 to 19 in 1996. The Land Pastoral Commission believes that this drop can be attributed to the fact that no slave labor was reported in charcoal kilns and alcohol distilleries in the states of Minas Gerais and Mato Grosso do Sul. The former state set up a parliamentary committee which investigated and demanded concrete measures against slave labour in charcoal kilns. However, slave labour was detected in coffee farms. A permanent committee to investigate

labor conditions was set up in Mato Grosso do Sul, with positive results.

According to the report for 1996, 976 persons were murdered in rural areas in the last eleven years, and there were 891 attempts on people's lives and 2,500 death threats. In average, 81.3 murders were registered, one each 4.5 days. Of these, only 56 cases were brought before the courts and only fourteen persons behind the crimes were judged, of whom only seven were convicted, five are in prison and two fled.

'Shout for Land Brazil' movement supports the cause of indigenous peoples

About 2,000 members of the 'Shout for Land Brazil' movement took part in a demonstration staged at the Compromisso square in Brasilia to demand justice and the end of impunity for murderers of Indians and rural workers. The square is located behind the bus stop where Indian Galdino Patexo was burned alive on 20th April. Speaking in behalf of the indigenous communities of Brazil, the representative of Capob, Mauricio Guarani, protested against the lack of interest of the federal administration in demarcating indigenous areas, which has caused invasions and violence against Indians. He assured that indigenous communities have joined landless rural workers in their fight for land, employment, and justice in rural areas. A group of indigenous leaders left flowers in the square in memory of Galdino Patexo and then the demonstrators moved on to the Ministry of Planning and the Planalto Palace, headquarters of the federal administration, to protest and demand that negotiations on the claims of the 'Shout for Land' movement be resumed.

Brasilia, 3rd July 1997
Indianist Missionary Council - Cimi

Demonstrations in Serbia

Busy with other obligations (in which we include the everyday struggle to survive), and only after carrying out a detailed analysis, we in Torpedo give our report on the occasion of the demonstrations organised by the 'democratic right opposition' coalition Zajedno on the occasion of electoral theft of the results of the local elections of 17th December 1996.

The demonstrations are characterised in the bourgeois press and in most of the 'left' press as 'positive', 'democratic', 'anti-dictatorial' or even 'unconscious class war'. It is necessary to pronounce that in these demonstrations there was nothing of any use for the working class.

Followers of the Zajedno coalition literally called, like sheep, for the change of one ruler for another. Blinded by the speeches of the professional politicians, they did not think about their own class, about their own class demands, about the class struggle - they thought about parliamentarism, about democracy, about how bad president Milosevic is and how someone else in his place would be better.

The students, following the traditions of student struggle in 1968 and 1991 (the velvet revolution in Belgrade), threw themselves into a real street festival. Instead of setting out clear political goals, demands for the autonomy of the faculties, linking up with workers and other progressive forces, they

made their protest into a carnival. On the streets of Belgrade everybody amuses themselves very nicely. The opposition politicians scored new points even though the students distanced themselves from the opposition protests (although their demands were the same). Financed by the Democratic Party (one of the partners in the Zajedno coalition) the students were, consciously or unconsciously, used by those very demonstrators from whom they had 'sharply' distanced themselves.

Neither did the workers take to the streets (apart from as participants in the demonstrations of the Zajedno coalition). There were no strikes. Social peace was tidily maintained because any big strike (to say nothing of a general strike) could still tip the balance towards an outbreak of real disorder. Here the trade unions played their role as a buffer zone between the ruling class and the working class excellently.

Initially clashes and disorders at the start of demonstrations were quickly stamped out. This wasn't done by the police but by the leaders of the demonstrations themselves who continually appealed to the democratic spirit of the demonstrations and to civilised civil disobedience.

Anything that could have been a seed of real proletarian disorder on the streets of Belgrade was wiped out right at the beginning. Class war was replaced with blowing whistles, with ridiculous slogans, with noise being made when the *Dnevnik* evening news programme started on state television with flowers being given out and with pleasant conversations with members of the special police. Continually appeals are made for restraint from clashes and disorder, for 'democratic struggle'.

Be that as it may, it must be clear to anybody with a grain of class consciousness that the demonstrations in Belgrade and other towns in Serbia were just a big masquerade, a further destruction of any sense of class belonging, of any form of class confrontation, of any form of class politics. That weapon of the bourgeoisie, democracy, has quietly entered the door of Serbia. That is a fact, but what does this say about our class?

As we write the demonstrations are in progress. The students are on one side, the coalition on the other. The working class - which suffered most in the course of war, inflation and economic collapse - is nowhere.

Milan Djuric, M. Velikog 12/10, 11300
Smederevo, FR Yugoslavia

Indigenous people face destruction of land and resettlement in Chile

The Pehuenche of Chile and environmentalists are struggling against a dam project on the BioBio river that will force 700 Pehuenche off their ancestral land and flood 9,000 acres of farmland and rare temperate rainforest in Southern Chile. On 6th June the \$600 million Ralco dam project was approved by the Chilean government's environmental office. ENDESA, the private public utility company claims that this dam, and ten more dams its size between now and 2013 are needed to satisfy the energy demands of the Chilean economy.

This project is seen by the Pehuenche and environmentalists as a violation of the new Environmental and Indigenous laws. According to the Indigenous Law, Pehuenches cannot be forced to relocate from their land. On 10th June a group of Pehuenches occupied Chile's Indigenous Affairs Bureau and Environmental Protection Board to protest the licensing of the Ralco Dam saying "the Chilean government has once again shown its colonizing mentality by not respecting our people or the law". ENDESA, the powerful utility company that has expanded to Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Peru, says that it can challenge the law in court.

This dam project will have severe social and environmental consequences. Displacement of indigenous people from their ancestral land has been shown to break up communities and undermine cultural conservation efforts. The seven Pehuenche communities affected by the dam project have formed a coalition against

the dam and have been fighting since 1989 to prevent its implementation. They suggest the development of alternatives to the dam project to satisfy the local demands for power that will not violate indigenous lands.

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Rich and Poor



As Freedom has pointed out many times, in the future anarchist society services will be run for need and not for profit.

In the present political epoch profit is the only yard-stick. Not so much the selling of individual items but the buying and selling of service companies.

A typical swindle is going on at the moment at Victoria Station (which, as I have remarked before, would make an excellent ballroom). There are two competing rail companies who will sell you tickets at ever-inflated prices – you may shop around for the cheaper tickets. This is of no consequence to either the well-named Connex or South East Railways, for they are both owned by the same company. A French company, of course, who are extremely efficient at home and specialise in sacking staff thereby increasing their revenue and then selling out to the next bidder, which is about to happen at any moment.

What if the French socialists nationalise their efficient railways? The question must be asked, is this nationalisation through the back-door? The curious situation might arise that Southern Rail might come under French jurisdiction.

As for jurisdiction, it should also be pointed out that in any future anarchist society jurisdiction will be a free commodity. At the moment barristers are raking it in. Well, those who work for such deadly firms as the manufacturers of Hawk aircraft, McDonalds and the rest of the service industry.

But to leave you on a gentle note. Expect a miracle by 1st January 2000. Leaflets from the Peace Barn in Carnyorth, Cornwall, have reached me which proclaim that on that day there will be *no war anywhere* – a concept which I have been asked to pass on and willingly do so as a free service to our readers.

Some very excellent comrades are intending to start a new anarchist federation. Could I, as its last acting secretary, suggest that the Anarchist Federation of Britain (AFB) be publicly buried. Individuals receive a decent send-off, so why not an organisation?

In the past so many years, as acting secretary, I had nothing to do whatsoever for I've only received seven letters, and all from the same person. As the AFB had no correspondence secretary or I myself any mandate to reply to letters, none of them were answered. Nevertheless the AFB can say this: it has lost no members, for it never had any; it has lost the support of no known groups as none ever supported it; and its treasury has been empty for there was no treasurer. Therefore however the AFB was started during the Second World War and for whatever purpose, and however that it was a focus for anarchist activities in its resurgence in the '60s, I feel it is time that some comrades could advise me how I could relinquish the post which is evidently not needed.

John Rety

please keep sending in your letters and donations ...

How do we fight capitalism?

Dear Editors,
I find it surprising that in an anarchist paper one needs to dot the 'I's and cross the 'T's, more so with your correspondent Francis Ellingham who has been a reader for how many years?

He takes me up for having advised the underprivileged that no government will do it for them, that they must "realise the power that is in their hands" as workers who produce the material things that everybody needs and seek to make something positive of their lives as well as developing a "fighting spirit against privilege and injustice".

Francis Ellingham then says that I conclude it means opting out "not from the capitalist system but from the capitalist mentality". Our intellectual comrade concludes from this that "the real enemy, you seem to be saying, is the mentality rather than the system. The capitalist system will last as long as the capitalist mentality is prevalent, so let's forget the mentality and evolve better forms of human co-operation and though our example and our campaigning we may encourage others to do likewise, thus gradually changing society".

My critic's comment is that "such a position may seem plausible, but to my mind your analysis doesn't go deep enough". He would have expected me to "ask where the capitalist mentality came from in the first place, or why it is so prevalent and enduring. Surely it wasn't instilled into human beings by some evil demon".

I won't waste Freedom's space with his apologia for capitalism which follows, but seek to explain my remark at the very end of the editorial. The final paragraph started: "Anarchists and many real socialists realise that we are facing an entrenched capitalist system which no government can dislodge, but we can start by knowing what we want to make of our lives and then seeking among our neighbours those who sympathise and are also seeking a similar way of life". I added that "we know this is already happening" – having in mind, for instance, the LETS movement.

And the concluding sentences was quite unequivocal: "We know this is already happening. We just want to suggest it for those who have not yet opted, not from the capitalist system but from the capitalist mentality".

Surely anybody other than an intellectual

nit-picker would interpret that last sentence to mean that for the underprivileged to say that they will opt out of the capitalist system now would simply mean they would die of starvation. What anarchists and their propaganda are seeking to do is to make more and more people utterly opposed to the capitalist system, and surely this means that they must change their views, their minds, their mentality about everything. Not just money but about human relations, solidarity and work itself.

Ellingham's conclusions are obviously of somebody who is one of the privileged members of society. His anarchism says that "everything in life, including our stupidity and its consequences, is part of a single unitary process or movement which nobody controls: Nobody, therefore, deserves blame or punishment, and no effort to do anything about human stupidity is called for. If life has made us stupid, life alone can make us intelligent: intelligence always operates unconsciously, without effort on our part".

Why does Freedom occasionally publish such crap?

Your occasional editorial writer

Project Work

Dear Editors,
I read with interest the report of Arturo Ui on the battle in Bolton against the Job Seeker's Allowance (2nd August). It was especially heartening to hear about the backing protesters received from Dole House Doris and her daughter Edna.

Arturo explains why these two goats support the campaign. They are incensed by Tony Blair's callous treatment of the jobless. He regards the unemployed as cattle, which he corals and tethers by fresh controls.

But the fact is this is wrong. Tony Blair treats people on the dole worse than cattle.

In the 1930s an eminent dietician, John Boyd Orr, calculated that a large proportion of British children suffered from malnutrition. Their parents received low wages or low unemployment benefit. These were inadequate to provide a balanced diet for a growing child.

Boyd Orr contrasted the plight of children with the relatively good diet of cattle. Looking around he could not find a single cow suffering from malnutrition. Were that to have happened, he said, a public outcry would have occurred. Newspapers would be full of the scandal. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals would immediately prosecute the offending farmer.

But Boyd Orr suggested there was a deeper reason underlying the contrasting treatment: there was profit to be made out of rearing cattle, there was no profit to be made out of rearing children. Therefore only a farmer who was a fool would ever contemplate not giving a cow sufficient food. For children, however, it did not matter so much.

What was true in the 1930s applies with even greater force today. Then there was the principle of minimum standards below which a person must not be allowed to fall. Now, however, this notion has been eroded. Civilised living no longer remains an objective for present-day government.

Likewise the principle of equality before the law also appears to have been discarded. At the same time as Dole House Doris may be prosecuted for soiling Bolton's illustrious pavements, no action is to be taken against the mascot of the Irish regiment, a dog, which behaved in the same manner.

Perhaps this proves the truth of George Orwell's saying: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others". To me it indicates another lesson: New Labour, Old Shit.

Raymond Challinor

Privilege and a just society

Dear Freedom,
John Wood's response (19th July) to my letter consisted of a broadside of what are basically left-liberal and environmentalist clichés. Now comes the problem of how to answer without seeming schoolmarmish or condescending. What can one say when confronted with someone who believes the developed world's working classes are 'privileged'? Privilege implies some sort of rights granted from above, yet everything we have today was worked and struggled for. Furthermore, the idea that the rest of the world cannot enjoy something approaching our living standards for ecological reasons is founded on a fallacy. About thirty years ago (when the claim was first made, to my recollection) environmentalists extrapolated from existing conditions, projecting these into the future. What they overlooked in their zeal was constant technological change, which involves doing more with less and that economic development does not occur overnight. (It will take at least another 25 years for the majority of the world's population to become part of the 'consumer society'.) Thus one cannot dogmatically assert this proposition as John does; at best it remains one possibility among others.

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the death of the so-called middle class has been greatly exaggerated. Real income trends in the last fifteen years are complex and contradictory, which is not to say those hit by cut-backs

aren't suffering. Furthermore, an economy which is two-thirds consumer goods cannot destroy its 'middle classes' without committing suicide. The biggest obstacle to spreading anarchism is not our refusal to tell workers to give up their 'privileges' but miserabilist ideas such as John proposes. Now I don't know John, so I won't accuse him, but it's hard not to tell where these ideas come from. This sort of anti-worker, worst-of-all worlds stuff is the product of the guilt-ridden professionals and the lumpen-intelligentsia which have infested the anarchist scene in ever-increasing numbers since the 1960s.

The so-called new anarchism I have been accused of proposing is a lot like the old kind. It consists of peeling away the lumpen-guilt-ridden crowd's political correctness, environmental extremism, third worldism, contempt for workers, etc., and relating to the lives of the ordinary person – as mutualists and syndicalists did a hundred years ago when anarchism had some mass support. Only then will we have the potential to revolutionise society. *This should be obvious.* (Sometimes I think resistance to this idea must have psychological roots.)

Maybe John could read some social history to understand how we won our 'privileges'. He should also think more critically instead of taking environmental and left-liberal propaganda at face value.

Larry Gambone

Raven & Religion

Dear Freedom,
In his editorial to *The Raven* 35 Donald Room writes: "all the contributors to *The Raven* numbers 25 and 27 on religion were atheists. We know of anarchists who are believing Christians, Buddhists and Pagans, and who consider their religion intimately connected with their anarchism, but we failed to persuade any of them to contribute, with the result that readers were denied the chance of finding out how they think."

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

Charles Crute

A few questions

Dear Freedom,
The last government ruled from Ireland by Unionist MPs who held the balance of power, it looks as if this government will be ruled from Scotland by Labour MPs who will hold the balance in future.

What of the English? Why can't we rule ourselves for a change? Let's have up to five regional parliaments and nobody holding seats in any other parliament and Westminster.

In fact why are we reforming the constitution? Let's get rid of Westminster and the royal household and become good Europeans.

While we are about it, why do we let the person with the most money to spend run the election? In Scandinavia only the government is allowed to spend more on elections by giving every voter £5 to spend on the party of their choice only. No private money can be used.

Jim Tidy

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meet every Wednesday fortnight at The Vine, Kennedy Street, Manchester
contact: Dept 99, 1 Newton Street, Manchester M1 1HW

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Discussion meetings open to the public are convened by the London group of the Anarchist Communist Federation on the first Thursday of every month. They start at 8pm at the Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square). Disabled access. Free entrance.

Further information from
ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Vigil for Sacco and Vanzetti

22nd August from 5pm to 10pm

New York Public Library (5th Avenue / 41st Street) will honour Sacco and Vanzetti

For more information call LBC at + (212) 979 8353
As part of this vigil Living Theatre will perform 'Not in My Name', a street-theatre play against capital punishment, at 6.45pm

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- 1997 PROGRAMME -

15th August Anarchism and Nietzsche (speaker Steve Ash)

22nd August The Execution of Sacco and Vanzetti (a celebrative talk by Emily Johns and Milan Rai on the 70th anniversary of this judicial murder)

29th August Anarchism and Science (symposium)

5th September General discussion

12th September What Now for Class War? (speakers from Class War)

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