



The Value Of Anarchism

JOHN B. COWAN (LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY ANARCHIST GROUP)

ANARCHISTS HAVE LONG BEEN IN A small minority and the prospect of establishing any large-scale anarchist society has been, and is, very remote. What, then, can it achieve to declare oneself for the anarchist ethic and to proclaim one's intention to create an anarchist society when that becomes possible?

Firstly, even if there were no prospect of ever establishing an anarchist society, the anarchist or libertarian ethic would still retain its value. Anarchism as a way of thought, rather than a way of life, is applicable in any society. What is this way of thought? Anarchism contains a number of premises; anarchists believe in the integrity of personal freedom - this implies the rejection of arbitrary authority and that the only constraint on an individual's freedom should be that it does not constrain the freedom of another. Anarchism also involves the acceptance of the spirit of voluntary co-operation and the rejection of competition; achievement is measured not in terms of how far ahead one is of everyone else, but in how much one does to improve the quality of life. The principle of non-violence is closely interwoven with anarchism. For me, violence is a form of arbitrary authority - an elemental form of government, in fact. The power of anarchism as a way of thought is that it rejects assumptions and attitudes which are built in to the patterns of thought prevalent in our present society. The scope of any argument is widened by viewing it from an anarchist standpoint. The more people who can see society from an anarchist standpoint the better is the chance of improving that society - irrespective of the prevailing political system.

But I do not accept that we can never create an anarchist society. Experiments are going on right now

where people have formed themselves into what is hoped will be the nuclei of future anarchist communes where people can live a free co-operative non-violent existence. In this way an alternative society can be built up to challenge economically the State - a gentle revolution in effect. An anarchist society will be achieved when enough people consciously will it. This may not happen in our lifetime but we can make it happen sooner rather than later if we anarchists can maintain a communication amongst ourselves and hence make a constant attempt to present the anarchist case to all who are willing to hear it.

PEACE GROUP/ANARCHIST GROUP

Dennis Gould

POET

ANARCHIST

EDITOR OF "WHISPER & SHOUT"

Reading Poetry

Talking on
"Dehumanisation in Educational
Institutions"

* LADIES LOUNGE *

Tues 15th October

2.30 p.m.

N.B. ALL UNIVERSITY GROUP MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO NON-STUDENTS. AMONG FORTHCOMING EVENTS ARE A TALK BY ADRIAN HENRI AND A SHOWING OF THE FILM "THE WAR GAME". FULL DETAILS OF THESE EVENTS AND OF MERSEYSIDE ANARCHIST GROUP MEETINGS IN FUTURE ISSUES OF THIS BULLETIN.