

feb. '90

free

DIGGER

AND CHRISTIAN ANARCHIST

number

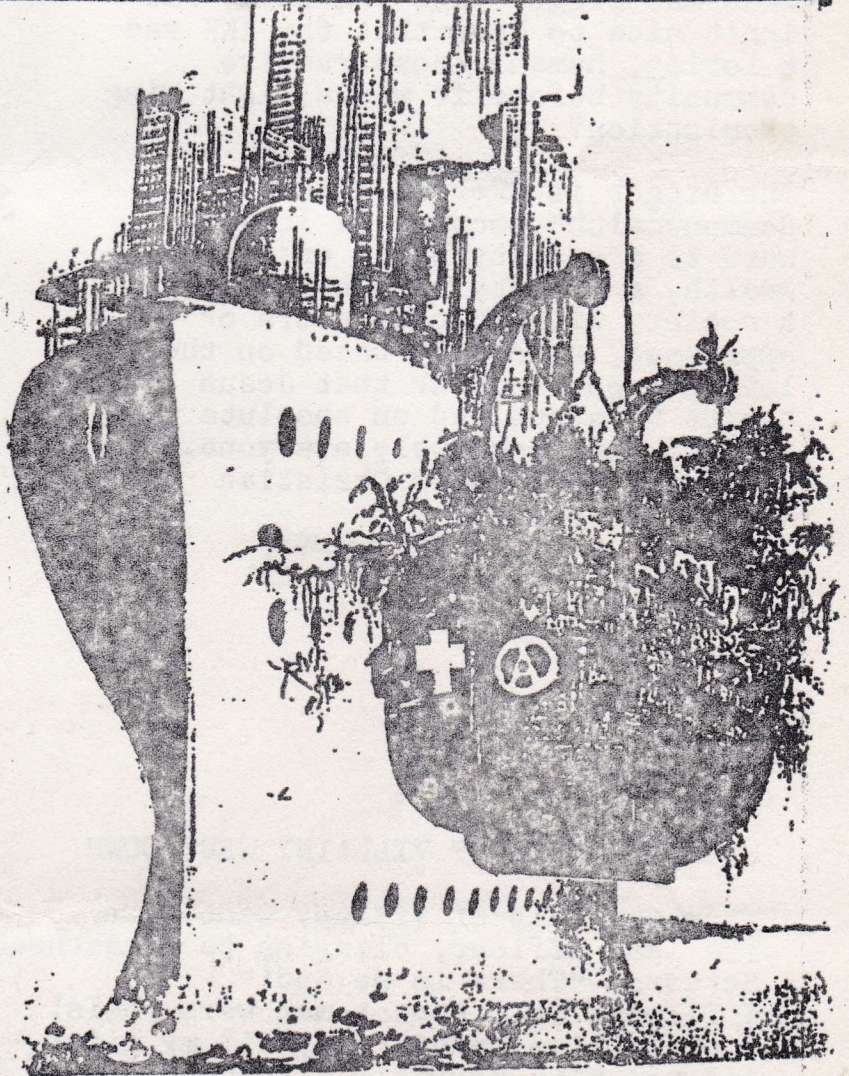
FOR A CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH

35

Commonwealth

For nearly five years now this paper has borne on its masthead the slogan "For A Christian Commonwealth". Supposing for now that we know what a Christian is, just what does the term commonwealth mean? Once upon a time there was a huge powerful octopus called the British Empire. When it died it left behind a slightly anemic squid called the British Commonwealth or Commonwealth of Nations. It is composed (or decomposed) of some thirty countries one of which is Canada. This is not the sense in which Digger uses the term. Some of the American states, notably Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky call themselves commonwealths. This is not the sense in which Digger uses the term. In Canada we have a milk and water socialist party called the New Democratic Party, (NDP). This party had its roots in the preceding Co-operative Commonwealth Federation which was a real socialist party.

In seventeenth century England the term meant literally commonwealth and it was used in a social sense by such political liberals as Locke and Hobbes. In the wake of the English civil war in which the king completely lost his head, England was known as The Commonwealth. Radical Christians like the founder of the Digger movement, Gerrard Winstanley and the founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn used the term



" All aboard the Ark "

in both a political and spiritual way. This is the sense in which Digger uses the word.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, labour used the term commonwealth to mean a society ordered upon universal labour union lines. The commonwealth of labour and the commonwealth of toil appear in many old

union songs. This is the sense in which Digger uses the term. In the 1880's an anarchist named Burnett G. Haskell edited an anarchist magazine called Truth in San Francisco and helped found a community in the foothills of the Sierras called the Kaweah Kooperative Kommonwealth. There in the giant redwood forest they named the largest tree the Karl Marx tree. Today that tree is known as the General Sherman tree. It is in that spirit (but without K's) that the Digger uses the term, and isn't nice to know that the KKK was a loving, humane, constructive community before it was a right wing abomination?

The Digger is "For a Christian Commonwealth" because we look forward to a society based on common wealth, a society with no poverty, a society with no oppressors or oppressed, a society based on the love for one another that Jesus taught us about and on absolute freedom for absolutely everyone. We look forward to a Christian Anarchist society.

Kenny

WHEN THE SHIP OF VILLAINY WENT DOWN

When the ship of villainy went down
 The last officer, clinging to a masthead
 Screamed "There is no God!"
 I figured it...Honest men were fools!
 I could live by villainy all my life!
 And now, this horrible situation proves it!
 There is no God! There is no God!

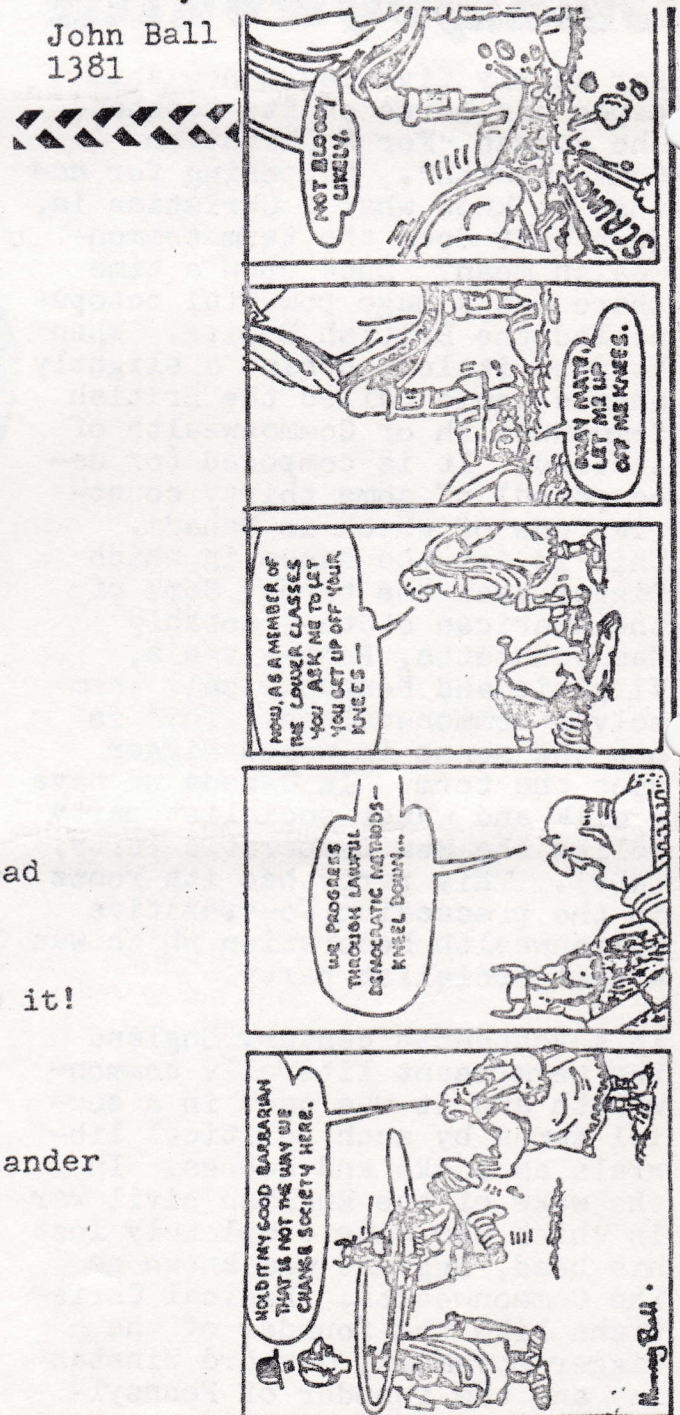
Upon which (he dreamt or maybe saw)
 The sky unzipped like a tent flap
 And a dusky chap - perhaps a Newfoundlander
 Looked thru to say"

"B'ye
 How be's it ye're complaining?
 Haven't ye lived by villainy
 All yer life?!"

Milton Acorn

In the beginning all human beings were created free and equal. Evil men by unjust oppression first introduced serfdom against the will of God. Now is the time given by God when the common people could, if they would, cast off the yoke they have born so long. Therefore they should be of good cheer and like the good husbandman of the bible uproot and burn the tares which have choked the good grain. The tares are the lords, judges and lawyers.

John Ball
 1381



milton acorn

Milton Acorn was born in 1923 in Charlottetown Prince Edward Island. His family had lived here for several generations ("One of my great-great-grandfathers was a carpenter. He was also a nobleman. A great-grandfather on a different line went to sea at a young age as a ships carpenter. I was born poor. I also became a carpenter. I am from what you might call a Red Tory breed.")

Before he was twenty, Acorn enlisted in the army, and suffered a serious head injury on the way overseas. He spent a year in England and Scotland, and then returned to Prince Edward Island. He worked at various jobs and trained as a journeyman carpenter, his principal trade during these years. In 1956 he moved to Montreal. He privately published his first collection of verse, *In Love and Anger*, with drawings by Robert Rousil. At this time he met Irving Layton, Al Purdy and other poets. He sold his carpenters tools to devote himself full time to writing poetry and joined the Communist party. With Al Purdy he started a small poetry magazine called *Moment*.

In 1960, *The Brains The Target*, a collection of verse written between 1956 and 1960 was published. In 1962 Acorn moved to Toronto and married Gwendolyn MacEwan, this marriage ended after about one year. In 1963 *Jawbreakers* was published and he moved to Vancouver. Here he met Bill Bissett and Red Lane and joined a group of Trotskyites and protested the war in Viet Nam in the late sixties. He fell out with the Trotskyites and helped found the famous underground magazine *Georgia Strait*.

During the '60's Acorn was deeply involved in political activity and in public readings of poetry. At the end of the sixties he moved back to Toronto.



In 1969, *I've Tasted My Blood* was published. When this book was passed over for the Governor Generals award for poetry, a group of poets called a meeting at Grossmans tavern in Toronto, where Acorn was awarded the as yet unique Canadian Poet Award, on the reverse side were inscribed the words *THE PEOPLES POET*, which remained his nom-de-guerre.

In 1972 *More Poems For People* was published and Acorn appeared in the 1972 "Spirit of 37 Festival" as an actor and reader. He did a radio program "Milton Acorns Island" for the CBC. In 1975 "The Island Means Minago" won for him the Governor Generals Award for poetry. In 1977 *Jackpine Sonnets* appeared and a play *The Road To Charlottetown* was produced by Acorn and Cedric Smith. In 1981 Milton Acorn returned to Prince Edward Island. He died there in 1986.

Although he called himself a Marxist Lenninist and worked with Trotskyites, it seems to me that Acorns personal political philosophy could not be hemmed in by party semantics. He was a pragmatist who could work with anyone on any project as long as need be. His poems are strong and evocative and many are political and we would do very well to pay more attention to them today.

RIDING WITH JOE HENSBY

Riding with Joe Hensby in a ten speed trailer
Down 401 the cab so high we're on a flying throne;
No need to worry of traffic, it worries of you...
The jungle trails clear when the elephant comes.

Thirty tons of steel behind, fifty miles an hour:
No need to worry - if we got stopped sudden
And all that metal came crashing through
You could spread us on a sandwich and we'd never know.

He plays the gears like a man at a piano
Cursing every time - two or three seconds apart;
At no one in particular
He lives the road...he lives the abstract world of his curses.
Sometimes I come into his consciousness, but no one else

But when that stream of vehicles clogs, we slow:
sitting up there like conjoint kings
One of us's got to point a moral; and I
The official poet:-

"Jesus Christ Joe
There's ten million dollars of equipment in sight
-how is it we're poor?"

Call it a machine, call it a beast, call it a kind of a hand
For it becomes an extension of the man.
When it roars it's we together are the lion:
And we live like lions
often moving, often waiting
years to pounce.

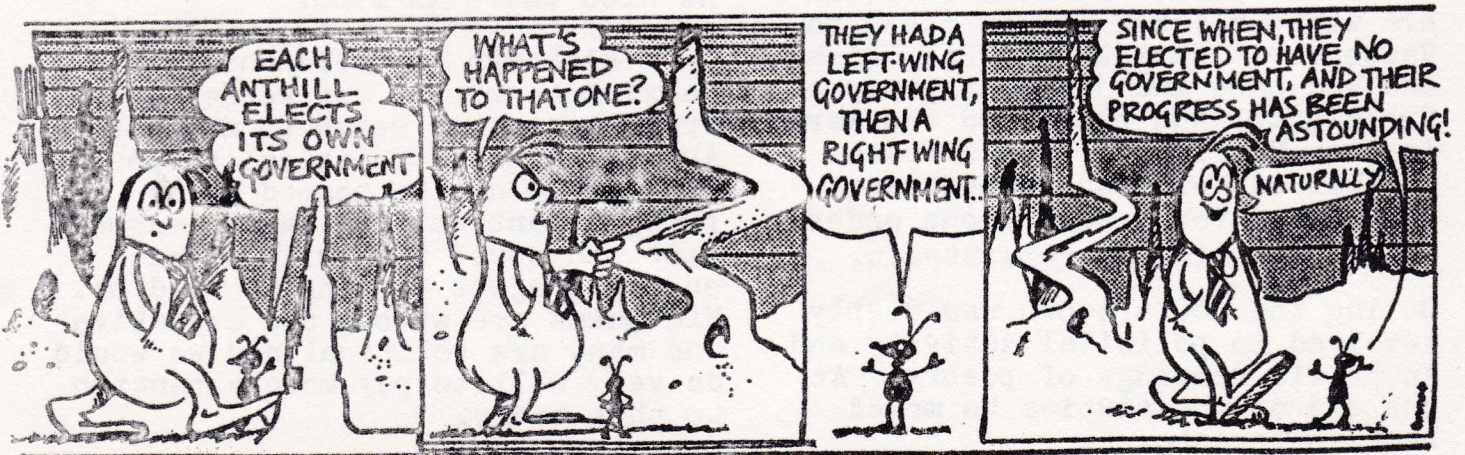
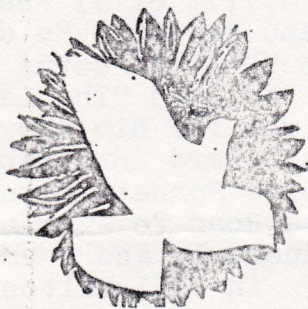
Milton Acorn

THE BIG SAW

Many's the time when I was on the job
The sawman came to me:
"You're able - And you can work fast.
Why don't you handle the big saw?"

Upon which I'd hold up my hands
Thumbs and fingers spread out:
"Look. Count 'em. Ten isn't there?
That's how many there's going to be!"

Milton Acorn



SAVING SUNDAY

As if the stranglehold of consumerism was not tight enough, we now face the prospect of Sunday shopping. Cloaked in the 'free enterprise' lingo, store owners argue for the right to determine their own store hours which would include the unrestricted right to open for business on Sundays. As you probably have already guessed, I am opposed to loosening the Sunday shopping laws.

Firstly, I think of the plight of the small independent store owners who have to compete with large retail chains. Their having the virtual monopoly on Sundays has acted as a kind of affirmative action that has allowed a limited survival of these small entrepreneurs. Changing the restrictions on Sunday store openings would spell the end of many such stores and would take us ever deeper into this oligarchical economic quagmire.

Secondly, there is the labour issue to consider. Common sense reveals that the stated assurances that working on Sundays would be optional for retail employees is ludicrous. Even if they legislated that working Sundays in a store must be voluntary, such a law would have no teeth. People would be fined for refusing to work Sundays and any excuse could be given for the reason of termination. Applicants would also be judged on their willingness to work Sundays. Hiring and firing is totally at the employers discretion and no law designed to protect employees not wanting to work Sundays would affect that. Even if employers do not overtly demand that their employees work Sundays, there would always be a more subtle pressure. Employees refusing to work Sundays would be judged as having a poor motivation level which would effect their chances for advancement. Even if some employers would not act this way, many employees would still work Sundays for fear of affecting their work situation.

As an anarchist I am reluctant to be writing an article in defense of a law, but the present gross inequality between workers and owners does not allow for a just and balanced negotiation process as one would envision to be the case in a humane society. We presently need what little protection that the powers that be have granted us.

My third reason for being opposed to Sunday shopping is related to the quality of family life. As the economy presently stands, breadwinners (be they single parents, husbands, wives, lovers what ever) are forced to spend far too much of their time away from their loved ones while trying to make a living. Up to now the vast majority of Canadians have at least had the security of always having Sundays off and to be able to rely on their partners to have that same day off to spend together if they so choose. Should the law change, this security would be gone for many people. Again human happiness would be sacrificed at the altar of consumerism and business. It is not surprising that women who form the bulk of retail employees will suffer the most should this law be changed. Women who need this one day off would find even fewer employment possibilities in a job market that is already to closed to them.

One of the loudest lobbying cries from those who favour Sunday shopping is the jobs this will create. Firstly I think it will lead mostly to extending the hours of existing employees, not to new jobs. Also with the extra day of shopping even more money will be spent on even more worthless items causing us to work more to keep up with our costly consumerism. And mostly I do not think that the victimization of existing retail workers is justified to create new jobs.

Lastly, I dread to think of how life will suffer if we lose the one really peaceful day of the week we have left. On Sunday we can take a leisurly walk through the streets without the hustle and bustle of busy shoppers and racing cars. Sundays have the feel of bygone days. People have a little more time to chat. The streets are quiet enough to think. Driving becomes leisurly and enjoyable rather than a panic stricken effort to survive and let survive. On this one day we are afforded the luxury of inhaling a little less carbon monoxide with every breath we take. Why in the world would we want to change all that?

Richard Hamilton

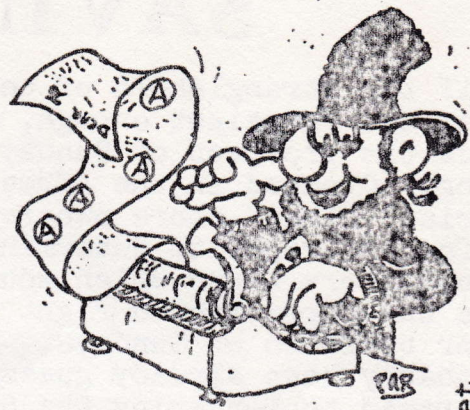
Have faith in the forever unknown,
And bless what comes to be;
Today is a gift to wake to,
Tomorrow comes easily.

A space for surprises and laughter,
A day like walking on air;
When pain is part of a song,
It can be sung anywhere.

Knowing the right thing to do,
And when tere is nothing right;
Have faith in that unknown within you,
And walk where the living is light.

Marcus Jokinen

We'd like to hear from you. Write Digger and Christian Anarchist, 455 Park st. N., Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, K9h 4R1. Articles under 300 words gladly received, as also any small amôunts of CASH. Send cheques or real money or anything of value. Make cheques payable to Kenneth C. Hone please. Thank you for your kind consideration.



Raised well bred,
Graduates well read,
Sleeps well fed,
Exits well dead.

Marcus Jokinen

"Well we're just not going to let them spoil our parade!"

television commentator commenting on a demonstration by aids sufferers at the Rose Bowl Parade.

As twilight falls between us
And twin silences contend,
I dread the bitter absolutes;
Will neither of us bend?

We once walked in love,
Now edge is all I feel;
No laughter and no quarter, cold
Formality of steel.

Some things are etched in us
That time will not obscure;
Though Hell and hurt will pass away,
Their scars are what endure.

Marcus Jokinen

TALK ABOUT BUSH

How sweet of President Bush. It is his thanksgiving speech to the American public in 1989. "Firstly, we begin our thanksgiving off with a parayer (obviously not to the God of the poor). Then we think with thankful hearts of the democracy (demo-crazy?) we install in the world. THE DAY OF THE DICTATOR IS OVER. Our muscle power frees those bound by communism. We applaud people demanding freedom. Look at those free elections (isn't it wonderful). We see freedom in West Germany and despair in East Germany. But now power and freedom brings down the wall. Our economics experts, loans and grants and investments are penetrating the countries of Hungary and Poland. NOW! their hard work will PAY OFF. Our fight for freedom and democracy succeeds throughout the world. The exceptions being Panama, Cuba and Nicaragua. The two latter keep resisting freedom and democracy.

"I want Mikhail to know where we stand on the issue of freedom and democracy. Of the five points I plan to discuss with him, one is the need to respect human rights. Lastly my dear American family, remember that security does not come from empire and domination". Excuse me M/s/r/rs/iss Reader, it's time to get back to reality. I must tell you that the above is ALMOST an exact redndition of Bush's Thanksgiving speech. Need I say more. This is a very good introduction to the topic of military control of the economic systems in much of the world. Bush presupposes a number of things. The means is the cordial gesturing of terrorism.

And what of this supposed FREEDOM floating about so tenaciously amidst the perpetual distortions heavily laden particulars? I am amazed - no made to feel like a cat rushing in, gobbling her morsels and re gobbling to the point of mere exhaustion and exuberation. Our UNITY (prevent my re-ovulation gobbulation please) is direct: buy. notice motorcyclist: beep, wave - we are a team. we buy right. Secondly

buying invokes a morality of obstinance. we are what we buy. our goal isto buy. our life is to buy. HENCE the adom. work buy consume die.

Remember 'merry christmas' whatdoes that mean? it meansif you are stupid, no - brain dead - there is a distinction - to be made: ie. brain washed. accept all custom, traditions. ie. go through life wishing you were someone else, somewhere else, with someone else (if you are fortunate enough to have friends) or surrounded by something else. it is fair to interject some ILLICHISM: the re-acquiring of value to personal acts. What ever happened to fun? sitting home (no place to go) reading, writing, playing a guitar (naturally in a natural manner: not brain dead: not in the traditional manner: not as expected; not this chord that chord: FOR FUN FOR YOURSELF NOT FOR ACCEPTANCE NOT TO IMPRESS FOR YOU....

THIS IS strange talk. strangeness breeds a kind of grain unfamiliar. why this is so? firstly causing awkwardness. NOW! this = being harsh. reality is such. hence the anti-thesis BE POLITE IN THE PYRAMID YOU HATE... BENICE SMILE ALL THE TIME... SMILE AS THE COP HITS YOU OVER THE HEAD.. OR: PLEASE THANK YOU FOR PASSING THE SALT OF EXTINCTION, no simplicity excluded. BUT EXCLUSION: is the result. alone crying when stepping out of the shower or off the toilet forno apparent reason. but the pervading shattering of the dream once held. and this is just the beginning of truth.

Tony Hendry



Some Things Never Change

And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and he will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries and to be cooks and to be bakers. And he will take your fields and your vineyards and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants and your goodliest men and your asses and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel and they said: "Nay but we shall have a king over us."

1 Samuel, 8

mutual aid

The most vexing problem of the Anarchist plan was the question of an accounting of the values of goods and services. According to the theories of Proudhon and Bakunin, everyone would be paid in goods in proportion to what they produced. But this required a body to establish values and do the accounting, an authority, which was anathema to 'pure' anarchy. As resolved by Kropotkin and Malatesta, the solution was to assume that everyone would want to work for the good of the whole, and since all work would be agreeable and dignified, everyone would contribute freely and take from the community storehouse freely without the necessity of accounting.

In proof Kropotkin evolved his theory of 'mutual aid' to show that Anarchism had a scientific basis in the laws of nature. Darwins thesis, he argued, had been perverted by capitalist thinkers. Nature was not, in fact, red in tooth and claw nor animated by the instinct of each living thing to survive at the cost of its fellow but, on the contrary by the instinct of each to preserve the species through 'mutual assistance'. He drew examples from the ants and the bees and from wild horses and cattle - who form a ring when attacked by wolves - and from the Middle Ages. and from the communal field and village life of people in the middle ages. He greatly admired the rabbit, which, though defenceless and adapted to nothing in particular, yet survived and multiplied. The rabbit symbolized for him the durability of the meek, who an earlier Preacher had claimed would inherit the earth.

from The Proud Tower by Barbara Tuchman