

CNT-U Congress

[The tenth Congress of the CNT-U was held in Madrid on 2-3 July 1987. This report comes to us courtesy of the Spanish Information Network.]

ANY Congress involving the participation of a large number of people is bound to produce disagreements, but within the CNT-U there has emerged a polarisation between two major attitudes.

Since the Congress of Unification in 1984 there has developed within the organisation a reformist 'official line' (OL). The Congress of Unification was largely a handshake between leading militants, with few examples of reunification developing out of co-operation at the basic level of the CNTs which unified; so the leaders were able to mould the new organisation and determine its public image according to their own preferences. The OL is characterised by words like 'moderation', 'efficiency' and 'marketing'.

However, there 'is another reality within the CNT-U which has a trade union base as well as the 'globalist' (i.e. ecological, feminist, etc.) perspective which some imagine to be its only strength. It is stronger in certain area such as Zaragoza and Vitoria, but it is not really sufficiently organised to be called a tendency as such.

Just before the Congress an article appeared in a capitalist newspaper under the heading 'La Vanguardia de Barcelona',

claiming that the CNT-U would renounce anarcho-syndicalism and revolution at its forthcoming Congress. Many feared this may reflect a genuine intention by members of the OL (Jose Marc, Bernal, etc.) and this galvanised the more radical elements into a defence of the CNT's traditional values, including stickers being worn at the Congress demanding an explanation for the appearance of this article, though no-one would admit to talking to the newspaper concerned.

As a result the most radical resolutions (e.g. all those from Vitoria) were passed unanimously and the A/S nature of the CNT-U confirmed. On the other hand, the OL's proposals were defeated.

This was a boost for radical positions within the CNT-U, but the people who would have been best suited to carry them out (e.g. Jose Collado from Vitoria) declined to be elected (despite the virtual insistence of several unions) on the grounds that they would be too busy organising a national tour against the frame-ups at Michelin, etc. This left the same people, the OL in Madrid, as the only real option, especially as they seem to have gone in for certain procedural irregularities, such as getting a bloke called Domingo from Barcelona on what was meant to be a committee drawn from the members in Madrid. (The procedure is that the national secretary and city of residence is chosen first then the members in that region choose the committee from amongst their number.)

Carles

ACF Anarchist Communist Federation Nat Sec, PO Box 125, Coventry CV3 5QT  
BANGOR A Collective, c/o UNCW SU, Deiniol Road, Bangor, Gwynedd  
BRACKNELL A's, Box 21, 17 Chatham St, Reading RG1 7JF  
BRIGHTON Brighton Bomber, c/o Priory House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton  
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COVENTRY Group, PO Box 125, CV3 5QT (don't mention anarchist on envelope)  
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FAP Federation of Anarcho-Pacifists, c/o John Hill 28b Clifton Road, Ilford, Essex  
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WORCESTER College of HE Anarchists, c/o SU, WCHE, Henwick Grove, Worcester

FREEDOM

ANARCHIST MAGAZINE

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SEASONAL GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS

ENNISKILLEN  
A SHOCK WAVE OF HYPOCRISY

LET there be no doubt that we abominate the Enniskillen bomb outrage of 8 November. But everybody says that, including several who are on the whole not displeased. We abominate the way all the world's bombthrowers leapt at the opportunity to improve their public images.

Remembrance Sunday is not an anti-war occasion, but a barbaric celebration of death in battle. Surviving ex comrades of the dead, medals prominently on display, join in ceremonial marches with still-serving personnel. Bereaved families are preached at about the heroism of the dead. Any suggestion that bombs as a whole are a vicious stupidity would be quite out of place. To a military mind only the other fellow's bomb is vicious; ours is necessary.

Among the ceremonies planned for Remembrance Sunday 1987 was a military parade through Enniskillen in Northern Ireland. Police carefully searched the route beforehand, using sniffer dogs for explosives. The Community Centre was not searched as it was not part of the route, but was to be used by part of the civilian audience. The Community Centre blew up, killing twelve civilians and injuring many more. A shock-wave of hypocrisy went round the world.

One of the first to telephone the Press Agency to say he 'regretted' the bomb was Gerry Adams, head of Sinn Fein, the 'political wing' of the Irish Republican Army, and an obvious case for derision. 'Mr Adams', *The Guardian* said, 'cannot regret killings as such; his party favours them as part of the ballot-and-bullet policy which it adopted at his behest... The bombers, whoever they were, have delivered his movement a body-blow and that, in all probability, is what his regret is about. His twin-track policy - heads we've been elected, tails we've planted a bomb - is now exposed as meaningless in the North'.

The Soviet press gratefully took the opportunity to warm the Cold War slightly by dropping its habitual support for the IRA. Colonel Qaddafi, of all people, sounded off about killing the innocent. The Irish bishops, who have



been waiting for an opportunity to condemn the IRA without offending the many Romanists who vote for Sinn Fein, put out a statement on behalf of God, that it was henceforth sinful to associate with the IRA.

The following Saturday, 14 November, was a day scheduled for 'Orange Marches', when the majority tribe in Northern Ireland march about in military formation banging drums, in a traditional insult to the poorer minority tribe; an important cause of the present tribal conflict. This year they compounded the insult by tying black ribbon to their banners, or pausing to lay wreaths at war memorials 'in honour of the Enniskillen dead', to suggest that the viciousness of the IRA justified their sneering dominance of their neighbours. Speakers like the Reverend Ian Paisley made a spurious rhetorical link between humane opposition to blowing people up, and political opposition to an international treaty which might reduce Unionist power.

Leaders of all the mainland political parties rushed to condemn the bombing, and most nauseating among them was the Prime Minister, television camera zooming closer and closer to her face as she read from an autocue about how dreadful it was to bomb innocent people. Who is she to talk? Admittedly she has not yet personally planted any bombs, but she is on

record that she would be prepared personally to press a button, and launch a bomb which would kill every innocent person within a thirty-mile radius of Moscow. She turned up at Enniskillen in person on 21 November, when the parade eventually took place, and spoke to reporters about 'the men of violence', as if the soldiers surrounding her were men of some other trade.

Our sympathy goes to Mr Gordon Wilson, the man whose daughter died as they were both trapped in the rubble, who did his bit to cool the inter-tribal warfare by declaring that he felt 'no bitterness'. Mr Wilson may have been a little embarrassed as he was clapped entering a Roman Catholic church, because he is a Methodist, and clapping in a Methodist church would be considered improper. If so, however, he would have included his slight embarrassment with his daughter's death, as part of God's incomprehensible plan (he would commit suicide, he said on television, if he did not believe there was a plan).

Unlike Mr Wilson we do not think the cruelty of war is part of a divine plan, and we do feel bitterness towards terrorists who blow people up. Not only terrorists trying to seize power like the IRA, but also terrorists who already have power, and like to be thought of as acting in defence of the people who get slaughtered.



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## Anarchist Forum

The London Anarchist Forum is a discussion group meeting every Friday during term time (it meets in a college) at 8pm. A speaker is invited to open the discussion on alternate Fridays. All are welcome.

- 4 December, Colin Ward, **Anarchy – Picking and Choosing**  
11 December, Open Discussion  
18 December, nothing arranged. Centre probably closed for Xmas  
25 December, no meeting  
1 January, nothing arranged. Centre probably closed for New Year  
8 January, George Walford, **The Source of Anarchism**  
15 January, Open discussion  
22 January, S E Parker, **Is There Life after Anarchism?**  
29 January, Open discussion  
5 February, Richard Hunt, **A Historical and Economic Analysis for Anarchists**

Mary Ward Centre  
42 Queen Square, London WC1  
Fridays at 8pm

## London ACF

The Anarchist Communist Federation will be holding the following discussion meetings, open to all:

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Abortion       | 26 November 1987 |
| Housing        | 10 December 1987 |
| Individuality  | 14 January 1988  |
| Urbanism       | 28 January 1988  |
| Sexuality      | 11 February 1988 |
| Technology     | 25 February 1988 |
| Family         | 10 March 1988    |
| Leisure        | 24 March 1988    |
| Education      | 7 April 1988     |
| Health         | 21 April 1988    |
| Future Society | 5 May 1988       |

Alternate Thursdays starting at 8.30pm  
Marchmont Street Community Centre  
Marchmont Street  
London WC1  
(Nearest tubes: Kings Cross, Euston, Russell Square.)

## Northern

### Northern Anarchist Network

Developing communication and solidarity between anarchists in the North. Next meeting: **Saturday 12 December 1987 at 1pm, in Bradford**  
For venue and further information contact 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion Street, Bradford, W. Yorks.



North American Anarchist Gathering  
Toronto, July 1-4, 1988  
Contact: POB 435 Stn P,  
Toronto M5S 2S9, Canada.

## 'Anarchist' government front

Friends . . . to further update the news in regards to Pat Henry . . . apparently still in Mobile City Jail. FBI is pressurising anark friends that knew him to gather evidence in order to convict him . . . well known anarchist in Arizona system, Avi Naftel, was visited by FBI and as he refused to see them he was chained and put into isolation by prison administrators for bad behaviour . . .

Pat Henry – and Avi Naftel – to find out more about them contact Project 1313, PO Box 1313, Lawrence, Kansas 66044-8313 and Toronto ABC, PO Box 6326, Stn A, Toronto, Canada M5W 1P7.

Important – very – a group calling itself 'anarchists for justice in prisons and in the ghettos' emanating from a PO Box out of Cherry Hill in New Jersey, under the guise of scholarly research on anarchism, group purporting to help anarks is in fact a front for FBI, CIA and NSA in order to gain infos on all would-be anarks, their friends, supporters, etc. . . . in order to entrap, convict and jail them . . . already some prisoners that are anarks have started to get their so-called literature that centres exclusively on violence, have you ever been violent, what do your friends think about it, etc. . . . and loaded questions as 'if you were a Jew in World War Two would you ever have considered using violence if you lived in Germany?' . . . so pass the word. US Government is attempting to criminalise the term anarchism . . .

A new ABC group – Vancouver, Box 15642, Vancouver, BC V6B 5B4, also a Canadian black list book out soon about anark groups in Canada – enquire at same postal address . . .

R. Yves Breton

## CNT 'Vitoria Six' for trial

SIX members of the CNT trade union in Vitoria, capital of the Basque country, have been tried more than four years after their arrest. The first of two scheduled trials took place on 28 October, and dealt with various charges of arson, robbery, assault, making threats, and membership of an illegal organisation, the CAA (Anti-Capitalist Alliance). Most of the charges were dismissed, but a few stuck and four of the six were sentenced to between one month and four years imprisonment.

The second trial was set for 1 December, and going to press as we are before the end of November we do not know the outcome. The six accused, Guillero Guerrero, Santiago Abad, Vicente Alvarado, Jose Collado, Guillermo Argos and Andres Sanchez, were to be tried for collaborating together and with Jose Merino, in the attempted murder of Casanova Salazar on 16 May 1979.

Senor Salazar was personnel manager at the Michelin tyre factory in Vitoria. Senor Merino, the seventh alleged collaborator, is currently serving a 53-year sentence for the murder of a senator. The six on trial are all described as 'outstanding militants' of the CNT in Vitoria. Four of them were employed by Michelin until their arrest in 1984.

Michelin was in dispute with the unions in February 1979, when a Michelin official was kidnapped by the Basque nationalist group ETA and released after a public appeal from the works committee (on which CNT was a major union). The same dispute was still on when Salazar was attacked and seriously injured on 16 May.

The only evidence against the six consists of confessions they made while held under the Spanish anti-terrorist laws for seven to nine days in 1984. They all renounced their confessions on release, and claim they were extracted under torture and threats.

Friends of the six ask for international pressure on their behalf. Protests from Britain may be telephoned to the Spanish embassy at 01-486 0101. The address to write to is: Ministro de Justicia, Ex. Snr D Fernando Ledesma Bartret, c/San Bernardo 47, 28015 Madrid, Spain.

Letters in English are acceptable, and letters arriving after 1 December will help to discourage further victimisation.

information from  
Spanish Information Network

## FEDERATION OF ANARCHO-PACIFISTS

IN THIS article we should like to present some information about the Federation of Anarcho-Pacifists. It was founded in London two years ago. We have a paper membership – or rather contacts – of about sixty, mainly in Britain, but with somewhat tenuous connections in France and the USA also. However, ours is as yet the only group, and actual attendance at meetings is usually only a handful. Ideally, we envisage a federation of groups, both nationally and internationally, functioning independently but in co-operation. We aim to be a study and discussion circle with a mainly educative role, first steeping ourselves in the major works on all the issues mentioned below in our statement of aims, and then trying to promote anarchism within the peace movement, pacifism among anarchists and both to people engaged in activity for a radical transformation of society. We hope to live our ideals as far as possible and share our social life as friends. Although we are very small at present, we have a good mix ethnically and in gender among our regular attenders. Later we may commit ourselves to non-violent direct action as an affinity group, although this would not be unanimous, as one of our most valued members, Derrick A. Pike, author of *Anarcho-Pacifism; Questions and Answers*, advises us against this. We aim for an open style of work and take a positive, non-sectarian attitude of solidarity with anarchists of other tendencies.

Our commitment to non-violence is based on three principles:

1. Reverence for all life – animal as well as human. To deprive even an opponent of life is the most authoritarian act possible.
2. Means determine ends. Military action generally requires authoritarian hierarchy to be effective and would almost inevitably result in a violent, authoritarian regime, as nearly all previous revolutions have done.
3. With the paramilitary technology of the modern state, a violent insurrection would be easily annihilated. In the words of Martin Luther King, 'We no longer have a choice between violence and non-violence. The choice is either non-violence or non-existence.'

We envisage three inter-related aspects of the transition from state domination and capitalist exploitation:

1. Personal lifestyle – drastic reduction of individual consumption, particularly of commodities resulting in exploitation of the Third World, animal abuse and ecological devastation.
2. The counter culture of an alternative society with its communes, workers' co-operatives, alternative technology, homeopathic medicine, meditation, free festivals, organic farms, vegetarian and world development stores, etc.
3. Non-violent revolution through non-co-operation and mass subversion when attacked by the armed force of the state. The importance of class struggle merits serious consideration.

As well as being influenced by Tolstoy, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, we are also guided by the writings of such pacifist anarchists as Nieuwenhuis, Bart de Ligt and Gustav Landauer. The analyses

of contemporary libertarian thinkers, ranging from Paul Goodman and Murray Bookchin to the situationists, have much of value on many significant issues. The kind of society we wish to see is essentially the communist anarchism advocated by Kropotkin, Malatesta, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman.

Our statement of aims is as follows:

The Federation of Anarcho-Pacifists opposes war, violence, oppression and exploitation and therefore struggles for non-violent revolution to abolish government, the state and all forms of coercive authority, capitalism and militarism and to replace them with a peaceful, free and egalitarian society based on voluntary association for mutual aid through common ownership and self-management in federations of autonomous communities.

The Federation draws inspiration also from feminism, anti-racism, animal liberation, ecology and world development. We seek solidarity and co-operation with anarchists and pacifists throughout the world.

For further information, please contact: Nigel and Genevieve on 01-769 5619; or John on 01-554 0179.

Our next meeting will be held between 2:00 and 5:00pm on Saturday 28th November at the Quakers International Centre, 1 Byng Place, near Dillons Bookshop. We meet one Saturday each month between these times at this venue. All are welcome.

John Hill for FAP





# Abortion: the right to choose

'TO BE a Roman Catholic is no longer a treasonable offence in England and since emancipation it has also been permissible to be elected to office. Nor is it a crime to have once considered the possibility of a full-time Christian vocation.'

'Twenty years ago events took me into politics and for the foreseeable future that is where my commitment remains. Similarly, that I am single is surely a matter for me. Over the past few weeks I have been variously labelled a misogynist, infertile, a chauvinistic heterosexual and homosexual. All of which is very interesting but hardly disqualifies me from holding a view about abortion. Being human is qualification enough.'

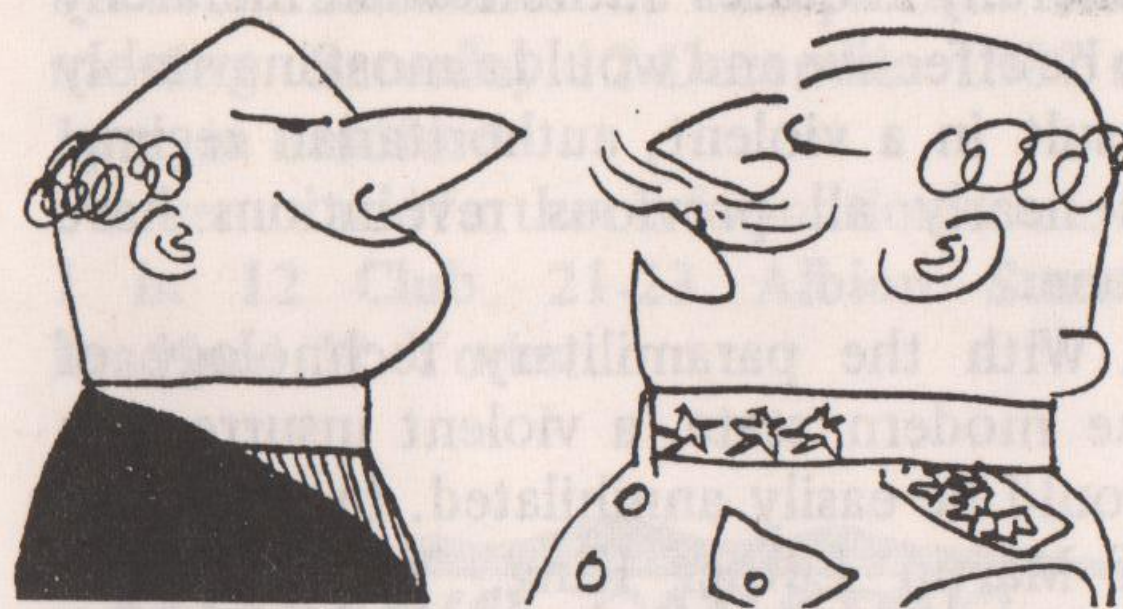
So wrote Mr David Alton, Liberal MP for a Liverpool constituency in the *Guardian* for Monday 5th October last, and what he says is fair enough, as far as it goes.

It does not, of course, go far enough. What he should have added is 'Being human, however, is not in itself a qualification for forcing my opinion on others.' But this is exactly what he is trying to do, and in doing so is calling up rather more-than-human rights; he is calling up the authority of God, as represented here on earth by the Catholic Church.

It is interesting that 20 years ago, Alton 'considered the possibility of a full-time Christian vocation.' Presumably this is a windy way of saying 'priest', although it could of course have been training to be a nurse in a Catholic hospice, helping the aged to approach the arms of gentle Jesus, or going to wind bandages for St Theresa in Calcutta.

But there was no money in that and, more important, no power. And it is interesting, also, to note that in 1967, when little David took his change of direction, the Abortion Law Reform Bill went through Parliament in Britain, making legal a course of action that women had been following, semi-legally or frankly illegally, for centuries.

As he says 'events took me into politics'. Took him up by the scruff of his neck and threw him into the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party? Well, probably he stood a better chance to climb the ladder in that small party than in either the Tories or Labour, both of which have plenty of Catholics already. His motivation must surely have been to get into Parliament and fight against liberalisation of the abortion laws; it is simply coincidence that the Reform Bill that went through in 1967 was steered as a Private Members' Bill by David Steel — then as now leader of the Liberals!



Personally, I'm totally opposed to killing children, before they are born.

Like many reactionaries who in fact go back centuries for the fundamentalist bases of their arguments, when it suits him Alton brings in modern medicine and its technological advances to justify his changes in the law: that nowadays prematurely born babies can be kept alive — are 'viable' as they say — at a much earlier age than previously. Thus they claim the present legal limit of 24 weeks for termination is much too late, since a viable baby is being destroyed. Nowadays 18 weeks is sometimes not too short a time to save it, in intensive care.

The number of late abortions is very small anyway, and no woman — or girl, for we have to consider teenaged youngsters in this as well as mature women — would wait for the weeks to pass if she could help it. Weeks of worry, perhaps indecision, but more likely weeks of not knowing what to do about her predicament. For that is what it is for so many: a predicament, not always the source of joy and happiness the smug fundamentalists pretend it is.

The title of Alton's article in the *Guardian* was 'Why the right to life must be paramount', and the while gist of his argument was based on the concept of the foetus as a human being from the word 'go' with the 'right to life'. But may we ask when the Catholic Church, throughout its bloodstained history, ever considered the right to life for its opponents? Not just unborn infants (born, incidentally, with 'original sin') but men, women, children? What was the task of the Conquistadores in South America — a continent still groaning under the yoke of Christianity — if it was not the elimination by fire and sword of the Aztecs and the Incas, the ancient civilisations which just happened to make splendid use of gold for their domestic art?

And in our own country — if we can think of it as 'our own' — what concept of the right to life directed the burning

and torturing of heretics — according to whether the Protestants or the Catholics happened to have the temporal power at the time?

There are no more ruthless killers than religious bigots. Take a look at the Middle East today, or the Iran-Iraq war. Or listen to the fundamentalist born-again Christians of Reagan's America, who would willingly burn the world to a crisp for *their* concept of right and wrong. Or if you can't see that far, take a peek across the Irish Sea...

The 'right to live' gimmick is — a gimmick. David Alton says 'Late abortion is violence approved by the state'. But when was violence *not* approved by the state — as long as it is *state* violence? The enemy state, of course, is always wrong — but *our* state is always right. Coventry bad; Dresden good. Pearl Harbour bad; Hiroshima good. If any of our readers think we are going back too far, please remember that the Catholic Church is eternal and will never let go; it will continually try to get back its grip on both male and female sexuality. On the one hand, morality brings with it obedience, and on the other, the nuclear family, with no knowledge of contraception, pumping out children, provides more recruits for Mother Church.

It is ironic that this new attack on the abortion law practically coincides with the new educational attitude — on the part of the government, that is, not of teachers — to cut back on sex education in schools. Parents (and guess which ones) will be able to withdraw their children from classes on the birds and the bees, on the specious arguments that 'progressive' councils trying to teach children tolerance, were encouraging teachers to lead their children away into homosexuality!

Our children are to be brought up in controlled ignorance as far as sex is concerned if the state and the church has anything to do with it. Where the three 'Rs' are concerned, and national history and patriotic geography, and the sort of physics and electronics and languages that are useful in commerce, they will be drilled into a core curriculum which will fit them for the 21st Century of cloned proletarians. Sexual freedom is recognised as the enemy of *that*! Remember 1984?

There is one more aspect that is even more cruel. The apparent defence of the life of a foetus does not define the *quality* of life — any more than the view of the life of the prospective mother takes into consideration the quality of life for her. For many women, bringing a healthy child into the world, with all the

responsibilities that entails, can mean a life of drudgery and unremitting struggle. And that's just if she's married. Many women face that prospect willingly because they want to have babies and will face the consequences on their own if need be. If that is their choice, that is their right.

But it is also their right to choose otherwise, without all this mealy-mouthed moralising from celebrate men, and even more is it their right if the same modern science that enables foetuses to be saved earlier can also diagnose, through scans and probes, that the foetus is seriously deformed. Some of the more serious defects, however, (spina bifida is one) cannot be diagnosed before the 18 weeks at which Alton is trying to draw the line. So this gallant Christian gentleman is quite happily prepared to force women to go ahead to full term in the knowledge that at the end they will produce a child for whom the quality of life is, to say the least, seriously impaired. It is more subtle cruelty than the rack or the stake, but then so much of 20th Century cruelty is.

We could go on, but most of the arguments have been well aired. In 1978, we fought off the Corrie Bill and we must fight off this Alton attempt — and indeed go further. It's time we got the whole issue of abortion off the Statute Book altogether and that cuts in the National Health Service which now lead to delays were eliminated so that women's right to choose is a reality.

And how about the baby's right not to be born.

Justin

## Hungary 1956

THE London Anarchist Forum is a discussion group meeting every Friday during term time (they meet in a college) at 8pm. Details of forthcoming meetings (and their address!) are given elsewhere in this issue of *Freedom*. On the 6th of November they had for guest speaker Ken Weller, the long-time member of Solidarity, who spoke on the subject 'Hungary '56 and all that'. He didn't talk about the international events of that year, the Hungarian Revolution, the Suez invasion, and Khrushchev's speech criticising Stalin, but about the consequences those events had for the revolutionary movement in Britain. Briefly, Ken's thesis is that the collapse of the (British) Communist Party that started after 1956 opened the way for both the Trotskyist and libertarian left. (Ken reckons that before '56 there were maybe two hundred Trotskyists in the whole of Britain, and now look how many there are!) The upsurge in CND (with the libertarians active in the Committee of 100) began in the late '50s and Ken attributes this to the open atmosphere resulting from the loosening of the Communist stranglehold on the left. Ken was a long-time Communist himself and his account was illustrated by personal anecdotes about the strength of the CP before '56 and about the bad use to which that strength was put. Before '56 the CP controlled four major unions (most famously, the Electricians) and Ken told how militant workers were dis-

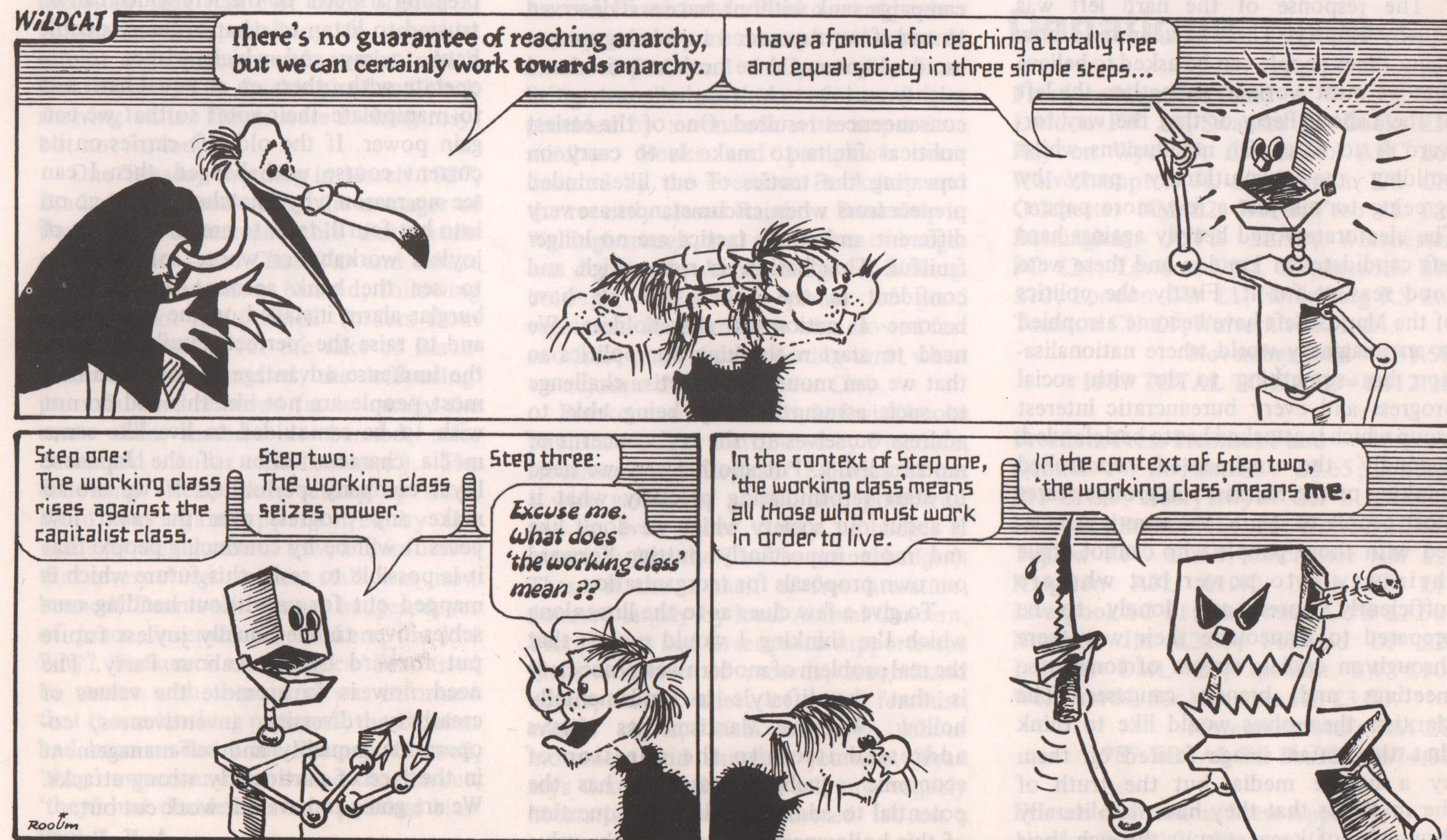
suaed from striking in order to protect the position of the Communist full-timers in the union. After '56, over a period of a few years, the CP lost control of all these unions.

Ken's thesis is both fascinating and plausible, though, of course, unprovable. He went over much of the ground covered by his talk in a recent issue of *Solidarity*, I believe. Also very interesting was the response to the talk by the Forum's resident refugees from the class struggle. They seem to be trying to live an anarchist life in a non-anarchist society and to have forgotten about the revolution that must take place before society can be restructured on anarchist lines. In part their rejection of traditional class politics seems to be based on the Marxist fallacy that states that all those who are forced to sell their labour power are working class. But no doubt this is a misunderstanding of their views and they could do much more justice to themselves.

Mo

### Anarchist Songbook

We need your favorite anarchist protest, anti-nuclear, feminist, gay, lesbian, drinking, animal liberation, BOB aVAKIAN, etc. songs for the first edition of the anarchist songbook, to be available in spring 1988. Send your songs and melodies to: **ANARCHIST SONGBOOK** c/o Wooden Shoe Books 112 S. 20th St. Philadelphia, PA. 19103 and don't forget to plagerize....





# Anarchism in the New Britain

WHATEVER way you look at it the election was a depressing business and after it was over I found myself doing some serious rethinking.

The campaign mounted by the reformist left was a disaster. Many of the things they were arguing for, such as putting more bobbies on the beat, accepted the logic of the new right without challenge and on the few areas where they did have a strong case (e.g. more money for the NHS) they were shown up as big talkers who had nothing of substance to offer. The debacle of watching Healey lose his temper when he was asked to explain why his wife jumped the queue just about summed it up. When even a hollow minded media personality like Selina Scott can see through you verbage then you know you're in trouble. The much-praised campaign came across as hollow and dishonest. As I watched Neil and Glenys strolling across the hills of Wales and heard the immortal words 'For Neil MP means man of principle' I felt a mixture of astonishment and disgust which will take a long time to pass away. Thatcher has been proving for eight years now that the British public respects people for saying what they really believe, yet the only conclusion Labour could draw from its previous defeats was that it ought to get itself a slick advertising agency. Impressive thinking! No wonder their conference failed to generate the smallest excitement.

The response of the hard left was equally empty. There is a limit to how many times people can be asked to believe that we must work to strengthen the left of the Labour Party or that the way forward is to vote with no illusions whilst building the revolutionary party by agreeing to sell just a few more papers. The electorate voted heavily against hard left candidates in London and there were good reasons for it. Firstly the politics of the Marxist left have become atrophied in an imaginary world where nationalisation has something to do with social progress and every bureaucratic interest group which is attacked has to be defended. Secondly the regimented, controlled thinking of the Marxist sub-groups scares most people to death. Marxism is associated with those people who cannot argue their way into power but who are sufficiently bored and lonely to be prepared to manoeuvre their way there through an endless stream of committee meetings and branch caucuses. The Marxists themselves would like to think that this unfair image foisted on them by a hostile media, but the truth of the matter is that they have had literally thousands of keen recruits through their

hands over the past fifteen years and most of those have left with a bitter distrust of them. Put another way, the better you get to know them the more you distrust their psychology and methods. It was evident that during the election campaign these sub-groups of entrists were so aware of the unpopularity of their policies that very few of them even had the guts to argue for their beliefs. Instead they were hoping to ride to power on the backs of the Gould media hype and then throw their weight about later. No wonder they lost votes.

I might have been less appalled by the necessity of coming to terms with the bleakness of the political scene this leaves us with if the anarchists had shown much sign of improving on things. Instead we mounted an almost invisible don't vote



campaign which struck no chord in the popular imagination and which had all the signs of an automatic knee-jerk response to events rather than an action which was positive and inventive. Our campaign sank without trace as it deserved to and if we succeeded in turning away a hundred voters I'd be both surprised and mighty curious to know what constructive consequences resulted. One of the easiest political faults to make is to carry on repeating the tactics of our like-minded predecessors when circumstances are very different and those tactics are no longer fruitful. Thatcherism is riding high and confident in the belief that we have become a nation of shareholders. We need to start re-thinking our politics so that we can mount an effective challenge to such assumptions by being able to address ourselves to the real concerns of modern living. Put another way we need to start reformulating precisely what it is about our society which we don't like and more importantly putting forward our own proposals for reorganisation.

To give a few clues as to the lines along which I'm thinking I would suggest that the real problem of modern western society is that the lifestyle is fundamentally hollow. Whereas Marxism has always addressed itself to the question of economic equality, anarchism has the potential to address itself to the question of this hollowness and to assert the value

of creativity and control. Old fashioned socialism proved capable of persuading people to vote to establish a welfare state but proved utterly incapable of making it their own. Anarchism has within it the potential to respond to the genuine popular distrust of remote institutions established by the social democrats and the crudely authoritarian institutions established by the Marxist states. By seizing on the current vogue for opting out of large state controlled bodies and arguing for ways of placing schools, hospitals and DHSS offices under the control of the people who use them, we have the potential for mounting an effective campaign against those who would like to put control over everything in the hands of some get-rich-quick merchant. By going beyond the calls from the left to defend teachers privileges in education we have the potential to put the case for real education instead of for skills factories. By investigating tenants control and tenants design we have the potential to go beyond the association of all left wingers with high rise housing.

What is needed is for us to refuse to repeat any of the arguments of the left until we have thought out for ourselves whether they are really valid. We need to start work on the creation and popularisation of a set of ideas which combine the idea of equality with the idea of control and creativity. We need to begin work on the slow steady job of creating a sector of the left which can be trusted to listen to what ordinary people have to say and which wishes to co-operate with others on an equal basis not to manipulate their votes so that we can gain power. If the old left carries on its current course unchallenged, then I can see no reason why Thatcher cannot go on into her fourth term to create a society of joyless workaholics whose sole desire is to see the bank account rise, a good burglar alarm installed on the front door, and to raise the 'perfect' family. We have the immense advantage on our side that most people are not like this and do not wish to be remoulded to live like some media characterisation of the Japanese loyal company performer. If we are to make any progress over the next few years it will be by convincing people that it is possible to resist this future which is mapped out for us without handing ourselves over to the equally joyless future put forward by the Labour Party. The need now is to promote the values of creativity, diversity, inventiveness, co-operation, equality and self-management in the face of particularly strong attacks. We are going to have our work cut out.

A. K. Brown

# The birth of Blackcurrent

FOR several years Northampton's only outlet for 'alternative' literature was Doorway Bookshop, a co-operative venture which moved shop several times, eventually ending up on the ground floor of Northampton Centre Against Unemployment (NCAU). But Doorway closed down about eighteen months ago, partly because of lack of support, partly because it was unable to pay the high rates bill which it received from the Northampton Borough Council.

With the closure of Doorway, the Northampton Anarchist Collective stalwart Chris Bradford, who had been a Doorway volunteer for two years, decided to go it alone and set up his own stall in the Market Square with a mixture of remaindered Doorway stock, plus a wide range of magazines, periodicals (anarchist, feminist, green, etc.), and ephemera. The Tuesday market, with its mix of second-hand clothes, records, tools, bric-a-brac and wholefood stalls, was the closest Northampton got to an 'alternative' market. So it was on Tuesdays that Brad shared a stall with two other ex-Doorway workers who sold books for a living. He called his half of the stall 'Blackcurrent', a catchy title with obvious anarchist connotations, and it soon became an important meeting place and focus for libertarians from Northampton and beyond.

Blackcurrent expanded, and Brad was able to offer a wider choice of alternative literature than had ever been offered in Northampton, specialising in anarchist books and underground comix, which were displayed in fetching red-and-black shelving units. Things were looking rosy, but not for long!

One Tuesday morning in March 1987, Brad was approached by the manager of the Market Square and told that certain publications — i.e. *Class War* and *Direct Action* — were now banned, following 'orders from the Council' (orders from Special Branch?); for the sake of Blackcurrent, Brad complied, the 'offending' journals were removed (as is usually the case when material is banned, sales continued 'under the counter'). The following week, while setting up shop, Brad was again approached by the manager, henchmen in tow, and informed that *everything* on his stall was now banned! Dennis the Menace badges, doves of peace, incense, ND stickers, the lot! Why? 'Because it was politics.' Brad tried to reason with them, and was informed that it was 'nothing personal', the decision had been made by the Borough Council, 'they' owned and controlled the Market, 'they' had decided to ban 'political bias' (sic).

This came as a great blow to many radicals (and comic buffs) in and around Northampton. Where could we now go for our *Direct Action*, *Troops Out*, *Peace News* or *Freedom*? Not W. H. Smith's or Boots, or anywhere in Northampton! And what was Brad to do with his stock!

The *Guardian* and the local Labour Party were approached, the Midlands Anarchist Network was informed, and letters were written, all to no avail, not least because the couple with whom Brad had shared his stall were reluctant to encourage a vociferous campaign which may have resulted in the loss of their livelihood!

Brad, however, was not despondent; he was more than ever determined to find a sales outlet. He asked for support to form a co-operative, he considered squatting and explored likely premises, he scoured the local press and pounded the streets looking for cheap shops, for sale or rent. Eventually he found one.

Thus it was, on the afternoon of Saturday 17 October, that I found myself interviewing Brad at the Blackcurrent launching party (this, however, proved impossible in the party atmosphere so this article is composed mainly from notes made after the event).

The little shop was packed with friends and well-wishers. Earlier in the day, Brad had advertised the event while being interviewed on BBC Radio Northampton. Music was supplied by a member of Street Accord, Fauvist style Blackcurrent posters were printed by an unemployed comrade at the NCAU and transport (for those living on the outskirts of town) was provided by a comrade with access to a minibus. Books and pamphlets were donated by the Freedom Bookshop and the recently closed Rainbow Bookshop in Wellingborough, and a selection of badges was donated by Abbey Badges of Wellingborough. There was plenty of good vegetarian food, and the wine flowed fast and free, until about opening time, when we adjourned to the Labour Club.

Blackcurrent is well stocked with books published and/or distributed by Freedom, Housmans and Elephant Editions. It has a wide variety of posters and postcards, and an even wider variety of badges (I especially like the Tin-Tin enamel badges). There is also a shelf of free literature, donated largely by local Animal Concern, Troops Out and Greenpeace supporters, a small selection of records, secondhand books, and a variety of green, feminist, animal rights, Irish solidarity, labour movement and anarchist journals. (Brad says that he's willing to sell any 'vaguely libertarian' journals, provided it's on a sale or return basis.)

Blackcurrent is situated up an alley, off Craven Street, which adjoins Earl Street (behind the *Chronicle* and *Echo* offices on the Mounts). Although it is only a short walk from the bus station, it is on the 'wrong' side of town in an inner-urban area, so it won't attract the casual browser. Clearly Brad is not going to make a fortune here. If he can but 'break even', however, he'll be more than satisfied.

Brad works part-time for the Spastics Society for his 'bread and butter', so he's reliant upon volunteer help for one or two days a week. He needs all the help he can get, so if you're in the area (Northampton is situated about 60 miles up the M1 from London and 50 miles down the M6 from Birmingham), pop in and buy a book or two.

I asked Brad why he'd chosen to stick with the name 'Blackcurrent'. He answered that, by retaining the name of the banned market stall, he was making a small, but significant, gesture of defiance; Blackcurrent wasn't so much a physical entity as a symbol of struggle and of hope — and, in my opinion, a testimony to the faith and dedication of a dear comrade, Brad.

Chris Jones

Following the deaths of Iranian pilgrims in Mecca during the summer, Iranian radio announced: 'At 7.30am on Sunday, spontaneous, unorganised demonstrations will start in a hundred places in Tehran'.

## Donations NOVEMBER

### Freedom Magazine Fund

London PW £4; Swansea EC Books £5; Hay on Wye BR £5; Bristol AFC £6; Wolverhampton JL £2; London KW £2; Colchester NM £2; Wolverh'ton JL £2; Birmingham AJPB £2.50; Winchester PC £24; London DML £5; Ipswich BW £10; London GW £1; Heidelberg RS £6; Taunton CIJ £1; Wolverh'ton JL £4.

November total = £81.50  
1987 TOTAL TO DATE = £812.25

### Freedom Press Premises Fund

London PW £6; Bath BV £2.65; London BH £1.30; Aberystwyth GK £1; Ripley DCM £1; Bristol AFC £5; Wolverh'ton JL £6; Taplow EFC £1.50; Colchester NM £2; Kingston AJL £1.40; York SB £1; Liverpool SC £1; Birm'ham AJPB £2.50; Norwich JM £2.35; Polstead DP £2; London DML £5; Ipswich BW £10; Wolverh'ton JL £6; Muenster HB £3.50.

November total = £61.20  
1987 TOTAL TO DATE = £674.31

### Friends of Freedom Press Appeal

London FY £100; Glasgow JC £20.

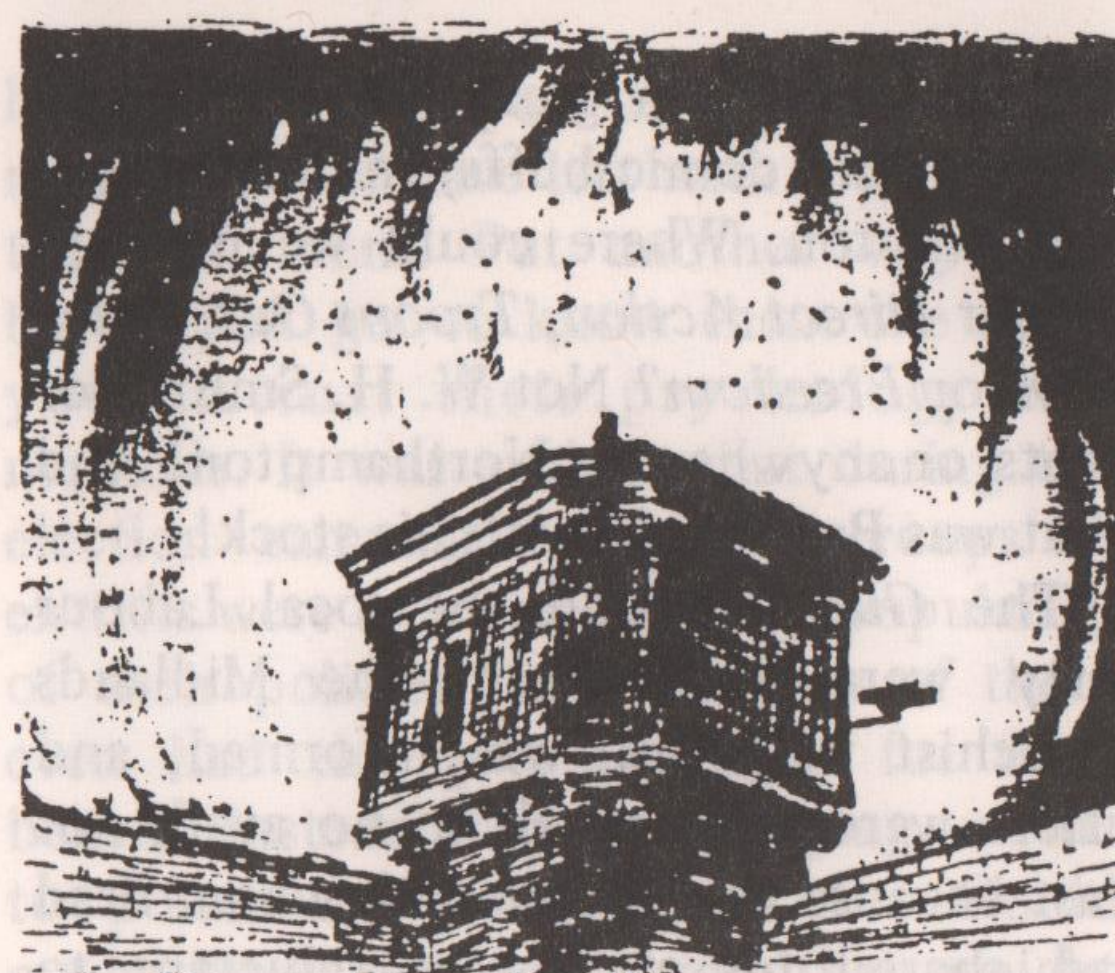


# Lincoln Prison from Inside

MY INTENTION is not to condone criminal behaviour but to describe how convicted criminals are treated in Britain today. *Freedom* has reported on this before as part of the discussion of prison riots, but at third or fourth hand; prisoners' experiences reported by prison reformers, probably reported in the national press, then re-written for a *Freedom* article. This report is based on recent real-life experience. I wish to remain anonymous in case I have to return to Lincoln Prison sometime.

The crimes which most excite the media, violent and sexual offences, are statistically speaking uncommon. Our jails are mainly holding-houses for non-violent offenders, mostly aged between 17 and 25, serving short sentences or on remand waiting trial for theft of and damage to property. Lincoln Prison, a short-term and remand prison mainly serving the Nottinghamshire area, is probably not the worst and may be considered an 'average prison'.

The transport of prisoners to prison is perhaps one of the most inhumane practices to be found in modern society. The 'meat wagon', as prisoners call it, is a large van divided into sheet metal cubicles or cells. These are not recommended for the claustrophobic. They measure 2 feet 6 inches by 3 feet, and contain a hard wooden bench to sit on and a coloured or darkened window measuring 6 by 3 inches. Prisoners are locked in these cells for about an hour on the average 30-mile journey. Most of them have spent some time previously in police custody where the cells have no sunlight. People often complain of headache and nausea as they emerge on arrival at prison. One thinks, with slight relief, that 'it can only get better'.



However, there is nothing in the reception process to improve one's self esteem. Teen-age car thieves and murderers are herded together with all the other arrivals into a side room, sparsely furnished with wooden benches and a table. Here each prisoner waits until his surname is shouted by an officer, when he is told to answer a list of questions including religion, next of kin, and previous prison experience. First time prisoners are instructed to address the officers as 'Boss' (older prisoners assured me they found this an improvement on the earlier indignity of having to call the officers 'Sir'.) You are then measured and weighed before being told to strip and put your clothes in a cardboard box. The undressing is closely watched by at least four officers; some prisoners are asked to touch their toes and an officer shines a torch up their anus. Other prisoners look on, waiting their turn. You are then led to a bath and supplied with prison clothes, a suit of rough material and a pair of black, slip-on, imitation leather shoes made for narrow-width feet. A medical examination lasting approximately 23 seconds, then you pick up a bedroll (blankets and bedspread) and are taken to a cell. Prisoners working on

reception told me the bed rolls issued are those left by outgoing prisoners that morning, without being laundered before re-issue.

After all that, the thought of a quiet cell to get your head together is quite appealing. But when you reach your cell, designed last century to hold one person, you find you have to share it with two total strangers. Because murder, rape, and armed robbery are uncommon, and because their perpetrators are usually sent to long-term, maximum security jails, one is unlikely to find oneself sharing with these high-risk prisoners; however it happens occasionally. If you are put in with a rapist, the social pressure inside is for you and your other cell mate to 'deal with him', at great risk of losing remission or serving extra time.

The cell measures five paces by six paces, with a small window barred inside and out, so high that a man of ordinary height must stand on a chair to look out. The cell for three is furnished with one chair, one table 2 feet 6 inches square, one single bed, one double bunk, one small cupboard, one plastic floor mat, one water jug, three buckets with lids, three plastic washing bowls, three plastic plates (for Sunday dinner), three plastic cups, forks, and knives. Infrequently, there is a picture board where photographs and pictures may be stuck with toothpaste (it is forbidden to stick them on the walls).

The three men are confined together for more than 22 hours a day. At meal-times prisoner A uses the table and chair, prisoner B uses the single bed for a table, and prisoner C (usually an inexperienced youngster or first-timer) crouches under the top bunk and eats on the lower bunk. The same problems of accommodation

arise at times of washing and shaving, done with blunt razors and no mirrors.

A recent concession to prisoners' comfort is the supply of individual pisspots instead of the former communal one. Nevertheless it is often necessary to empty a full pisspot out of the window, especially at night. The stench of three pisspots in the corner of the cell has not yet been addressed. Often a prisoner has to shit in a bucket (have you ever sat in a room with someone shitting in a bucket at the side of you?) and the aroma of turd is added to the atmosphere.

Another improvement, in addition to individual pisspots, is that each prisoner now gets two pairs of socks and two pairs of underpants a week. And at Christmas (but not New Year), each prisoner gets half a bag of sugar, half an ounce of tobacco, a bar of chocolate, an orange, and an apple.

Many prisoners claim they are locked in their cells 23 hours a day, but this is an exaggeration. In addition to the statutory one hour exercise period, you spend five minutes each mealtime fetching your meal, and another five minutes after each meal slopping out (ie putting meal trays out, emptying pisspots, and filling water jugs). Each week you spend 30 minutes having a bath, five minutes walking to the canteen, 20 minutes in the library, and usually (staffing levels permitting) 90 minutes watching a film. Thus the average time spent in the cell per day is only 22 hours 9 minutes; and my calculations do not include the optional 20 minutes weekly church service, or the five minutes daily which may be gained by reporting sick every day.

Staff shortages and work-to-rule have caused the suspension of workshop and education facilities, and the conveyor-belt queue at the prison shop. If you do not specify exactly what you want in ten seconds you are either returned to your cell without buying anything, or supplied with tobacco, cigarette papers and matches whether you smoke or not.

The privilege of possessing a two-band radio is always taken up. FM and VHF radios, and cassette recorders, are prohibited. So are playing cards, monopoly, and scrabble, because they encourage gambling. A pocket magnetic chess set was refused on the grounds that it might be used to make a bomb, Duracell batteries because they contain acid, and a guitar as it was 'not that kind of prison'.

Relations between the three men locked together in a tiny room are usually characterised by mutual respect, but there is considerable tension and it is not surprising that prisoners should seek a victim. This is the role of the sex offender, or 'nonce', or rule 43 prisoner (segregated for his own safety under rule 43 of the prison code). Prisoners working in the clothes store contrive to supply such men with outsize clothes even more ill-fitting than normal prison wear, and kitchen prisoners garnish their food with fish-eyes, fag-ends and matchsticks; I even heard a rumour that one kitchen prisoner went to the trouble of shitting in some beef pies one day. Baby-batterers are subject to a ritual considered an entertaining prison sport. They are advised by officers at reception not to apply for rule 43, but to pretend they are in for some socially acceptable offence such as robbery with violence or murder. An officer then informs some particularly embittered prisoners of the true offence. They attack the baby-batterer, and go to the punishment block with their tensions relieved.

In the punishment block meals are smaller, you are in the cell on your own, and beds are taken out during the day leaving no furniture but a chair and table. After counting the bricks there is ample opportunity for meditation. Those who cannot be contained in such conditions are stripped naked and put in the padded cell, where there is no furniture and no light and the wall tiles have pads underneath; but bouncing off the walls can still cause injury.

I never experienced the 'liquid cosh',

but I once observed activity suggesting it was used. On a visit to the hospital wing for dental treatment I heard somebody screaming and shouting. Six or seven officers ran along the corridor followed by another pushing a medicine trolley, there were sounds of struggle with shouts of 'no, no, no', and then quiet. The prisoner was later transferred to Rampton mental hospital.

Excon Lincoln

The numbers of prisoners in local prisons in England and Wales on 23 October 1987 is given below (with the certified accommodation of each prison in parentheses). Source: *Hansard* (written answer).

Bedford 346(176); Birmingham 1,190 (592); Cardiff 551(340); Hull 629(367); Leeds 1,306(642); Leicester 396(200); Lewes 567(364); Lincoln 691(359); Liverpool 1,233(967); Manchester 1,667 (969); Nottingham 298(202); Oxford 233(127); Reading 334(178).

September's edition of the Chinese official monthly *China Reconstructs* describes the Panchen Lama as 'not only a living Buddha, but also a vice-chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee'.

Spanish Information Network reports that members of the CIA-AIT including the General Secretary of the AIT, Manuel Plaza, and the editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*, Luis Edo, attempted to break up a meeting of the CNT-U in Barcelona on 12 March. They did not succeed, but three members of CNT-U were taken to hospital, one with stab wounds. Perhaps Pepe Gomez, the CNT-AIT secretary at Puerto Real, had such incidents in mind when he advocated the removal of CNT headquarters from Barcelona to Bilbao (*Freedom*, September).

## Sick prisoner on hunger strike

A SERIOUSLY sick man started a hunger strike in Parkhurst prison on 1 November, in protest against his conviction and his treatment in prison.

Martin Patrick Foran, an Irishman now aged 42, was convicted of a robbery which he maintains he did not commit. The only eye-witness, the man who was robbed, testified in court that Foran was not the robber. He was convicted on the word of one policeman, and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment.

In prison he protested his innocence in rooftop demonstrations, and was put in solitary confinement where he remained for years. His health deteriorated, but he was refused proper medical treatment until he took a prison hospital officer hostage. After the officer was re-

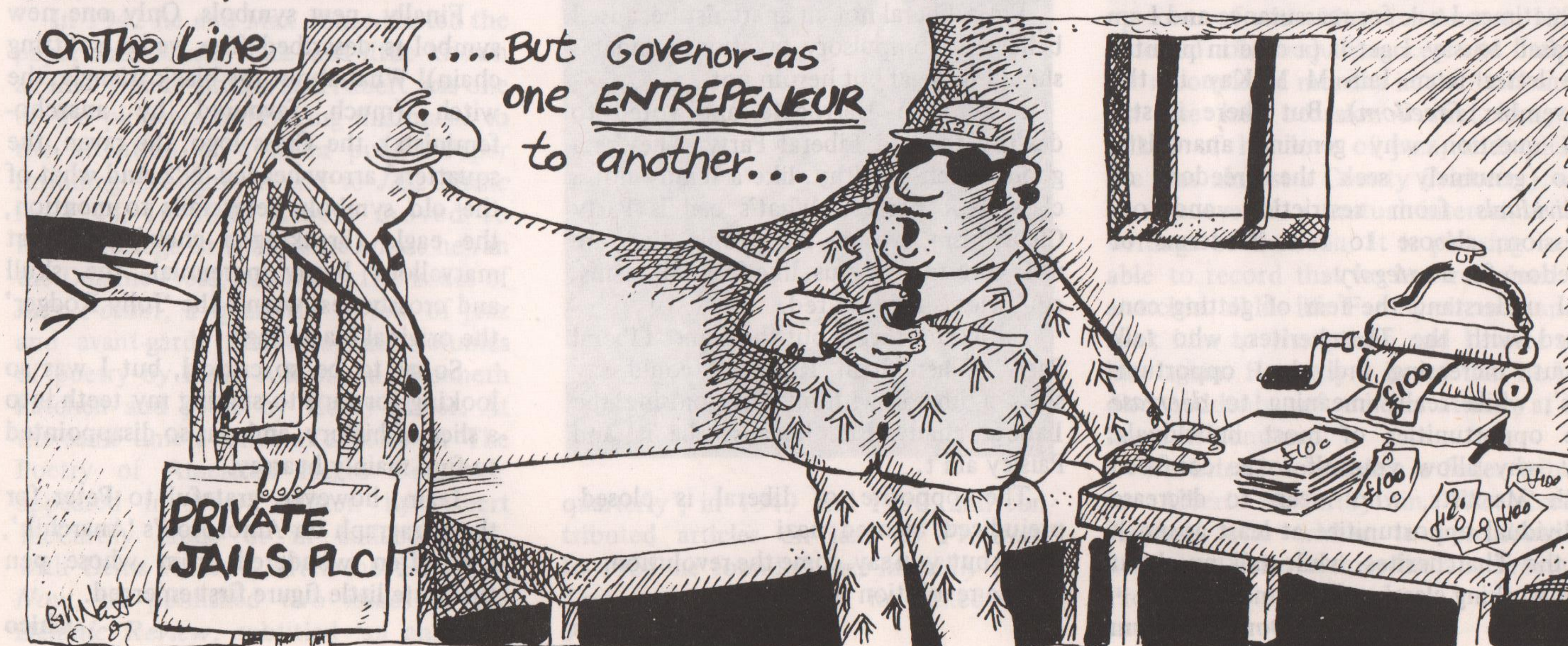
leased unharmed he was taken to an outside hospital for an emergency colostomy operation.

There is a dispute about what happened when he returned to solitary. The official report says he wrenched off his own colostomy bag. Foran says the bag was wrenched off by six prison officers who were beating him up. There is no dispute that he suffers from leakage from the colon and rectum, running sores on his stomach and an infected leg. The smell of his infection, which has been compared to putrefying flesh, pervades the unit. His diet (until the hunger strike started) was all liquid. He is supplied with Valium to keep him 'quiet and co-operative', but has to apply daily for analgesics, which are sometimes refused.

During October he was convicted at the Old Bailey of 'false imprisonment of a prison officer', and sentence was deferred for a medical report because he offered in mitigation that he was trying to get treatment. On 25 November the judge came to a decision and sentenced Foran to six more years. In the meantime his mail was stopped. He would like letters of protest sent to The Governor, HM Prison Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5NX. He would also welcome letters to himself, CS1706 Foran, at the same address.

More information from Martin Foran support group, c/o 121 Books, 121 Railton Road, London SE24.

information from  
Anarchist Black Cross







## Fascism

FASCISM is the doctrine that a class of people, the Nation or Race, is more important than any individual person. Indeed, it holds that individuals are to be valued only insofar as they make a contribution to the class. The writer of an aggressive and provocative statement of egoism was described as 'fascist' in a letter to the November *Freedom*, but this was using 'fascist' as a swearword, to mean 'one whose opinions I find objectionable'. As a political philosophy, fascism is exactly the reverse of egoism.

The theoretical justification for the authoritarianism and militarism of fascist states is the need to protect the Race or Nation from external and internal enemies. 'Internal enemies', or 'traitors to the Race' are those who fulfill the requirements of membership but disagree with the fascist doctrine, and would therefore benefit from a bullet in the brain.

The group currently in power in Iran espouses a doctrine closely resembling fascism, except that instead of a Race or a Nation, individuals are supposed to sacrifice themselves for the class of adherents of a Religion. Stalinism is another similar creed, replacing the Nation or Race with the Working Class or the Masses.

When I hear anarchists going on about the working class, I always have a slight worry about whether they are extolling the class as an entity in itself, independently of the things being categorised. Sometimes I ask for reassurance and I am pleased to say I get it (a case in point is the letter from Iain M McKay in the November *Freedom*). But there is still the question why genuine anarchists, who genuinely seek the freedom of *individuals* from restriction and oppression, choose to talk in terms of freedom for a *category*.

I understand the fear of getting confused with the Thatcherites, who talk about 'increasing individual opportunities', while really meaning to *decrease* the opportunities of most individuals. But why allow yourself to be confused with Marxists, who mean to decrease individual opportunities at least as much as the Thatcherites, while talking about 'the working class' and 'the masses'?

Donald Room



## Why I am not an anarchist

A CHARACTER in November's *Wildcat* cartoon admitted to being a *Liberal*, in the sense of a broad-minded anarchist.

I joined the British Liberal Party in 1983 after Thatcher, the Belgrano and all that. To declare an exclusion zone and then torpedo outside it was not cricket. She's a murdering cheat.

To wear any label, whether Liberal, socialist, anarchist, hippy, punk whatever is, unless you're a clone or the leader, compromise. But if everyone who didn't vote had voted against them Thatcher wouldn't be in Number 10 attacking the poor, the left and the weird. You say you're innocent not voting, hands clean, well, you're guilty, it's your fault. Some governments are worse than others. And if her confrontation leads to bloody revolution it would be violent anarchy, dead kids, feuding gangs, lynching, survival of the fittest, barbarism.

One of my dreams is anarchism, mutual aid, nobody's naughty so the police and armies have no work so they're disbanded. Anarchism good, anarchy bad.

I'm a liberal not an anarchist because I believe in compulsory taxation. Cannabis should be legal but heroin not.

I went to Harrogate and voted to destroy the old Liberal Party. They're a good bunch, healthy, like a family not a class. Not perfect. What's bad is Party Chauvinism, we are the people, they are not, vote for only us, like football teams, countries, shades of red.

I'd like to throw out the name 'Liberal Party'. Then Joan Ruddock could say she's a liberal without antagonising the Labour chauvinists. Because she is, and Paisley ain't.

The opposite of liberal is closed, prejudiced, bigoted, nazi...

Ah but, you say, come the revolution... The revolution is today.

Dice George Miles

## Flag, torch, and fist

I SHOULD like to make some comments on the article 'Flag, Torch and Fist: The Symbols of Anarchism' by Peter Peterson (*Freedom*, November).

First of all, Peter misses the most obvious interpretation of the use of black, it reflects far more than 'the rejection of everything which prevents universal freedom'. Black is the colour of mourning, it symbolises our mourning for dead comrades, those whose lives were taken by war, on the battlefield (between states) or in the streets and on the picket lines (between classes).

Secondly, black and red. 'Only anarcho-syndicalists combine the anarchist black with the syndicalist red'. Nonsense! I know of several anarcho-communists, a few anarcho-pacifists and a couple of 'woolly' anarchists who regularly sport black and red flags on demos, etc., none of whom would accept the label 'syndicalist'. All that red stands for is *socialism*, being as most anarchists are, broadly speaking, socialists, we are all entitled to use the black and red flag. To me, the flag represents negative and positive, and is more optimistic that the purely black flag. Also, isn't the red and black older than anarcho-syndicalism? I seem to recall reading somewhere that the 18th century painter Hogarth witnessed the waving of a black and red flag during the prison riot at Newgate.

Thirdly, the sabot. Just because the wooden shoe was adopted by the IWW, it doesn't mean that the symbol was American in origin. Sabots were widely worn in rural areas of France and the Low Countries, mainly by peasants. Is it not more likely that the sabot was first used as a symbol of class struggle, perhaps with the coming of steam-driven threshing machines, in the fields of rural Europe than in the factories of industrial America?

Finally, new symbols. Only one new symbol is described (the wedge splitting chain)! What about the black triangle, the witch (much favoured by anarcho-feminists), the Crass logo, the raven, the squatters' arrow-headed 'N'? And what of the old symbols Peter fails to mention, the eagle (breaking a chain) and that marvellous hardy perennial, the skull and crossbones, wasn't the 'Jolly Rodger' the original black flag?

Sorry to be so critical, but I was so looking forward to sinking my teeth into a slice of history, and was so disappointed to find mainly hearsay.

I am, however, grateful to Peter for the paragraph on Ambrosoli's 'Anarchik', I've often wondered from whose pen that cute little figure first emerged.

Chico

## OBITUARIES

### Daryl Hepple

IT IS with great sadness that I pen this tribute to my close friend and comrade Daryl Hepple, who passed away on 24 September 1987, aged 68. Having lived in the north-east of England for over sixty years, Daryl moved to Milton Keynes on his retirement. On 2 October, at Milton Keynes Crematorium, we said our last and fond farewells to the gentle Geordie. Although an unassuming, politely spoken man of diminutive stature, he was a giant in the eyes of many.

Daryl's secular funeral was officiated by Jim Herrick of the Rationalist Press. In a fine tribute Jim spoke of Daryl's political and personal life. Thanks go out to Jim for such a sensitive rendition.

In Daryl's case the political and the personal were inseparable. His understanding, sense of fairness and a natural socialistic philosophy of life generated enthusiasm and optimism wherever he went. His innate libertarianism shaped and developed the family he leaves behind — Ruth and their four fine daughters bear testament to this. For Daryl, socialism was a practical, living ideal based on caring, and this was reflected in thirty years of nursing.

### Albert McCarthy

WE ARE sad to report that our comrade Albert McCarthy, the jazz writer and discographer, died on 3rd October at the age of 67.

In the 1930s he developed an interest in jazz and blues music, following bands and collecting records, and he became an anarchist. He was a conscientious objector in the Second World War and contributed to *War Commentary* and later *Freedom*, and at one time was well-known as a speaker.

In 1942 he and Max Jones started the paper *Jazz Music*. Jazz was little known at that time in Britain and Albert was one of the pioneers in bringing this music to the attention of a wider public. Paper rationing brought an end to *Jazz Music* in 1944. In 1946 Albert moved to Fordingbridge in Hampshire where he ran the Delphic Press, publishing five issues of *Jazz Forum*, a quarterly review of jazz and avant-garde literature, and volumes of poetry by Louis Adeane and Kenneth Patchen and prose by Henry Miller. At the same time a series of articles on 'The Poetry of American Negro Folksong' appeared in *Now*, written by Albert McCarthy alone or in collaboration with Denis Preston. After the demise of *Now*, he published two issues of the *Delphic Review*, subtitled 'an anarchist

Daryl was a life-long pacifist and socialist who supported and subscribed to *Freedom Press* for many years. He was also an active trade unionist, and as much a thorn in the side of union officialdom as that of management. Always maintaining that workers' struggles must be organised by the workers themselves.

As well as Daryl the activist there was Daryl the self educated working-class intellectual, a political theorist and student of socialism. A prolific writer of letters, never missing the opportunity of propagating his revolutionary ideals in bourgeois and radical press alike.

His political career spanned a lifetime. The early years saw involvement with the Independent Labour Party and later the United Socialist Movement, with whom he maintained contact for many years. Without digressing from his own line of libertarian and anti-parliamentism socialism he would enter into debate and discussion with the Socialist Party and the International Socialists. During the seventies and early eighties he was to be seen in regular attendance at the various libertarian gatherings in the Tyneside area. An easily recognisable character sporting a grey goatee beard puffing on a pipe, imparting his knowledge, insight, understanding and experience with all. His last major venture took him back to



quarterly', in 1949 and 1950, and contributed articles on jazz to *Freedom*. In 1955 he founded *Jazz Monthly* (later *Jazz and Blues*) which he edited until 1972.

his political roots. Working with the Black Star Collective he was involved with the reproduction of material produced by the United Socialist Movement, the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation and the works of Guy Aldred, a fellow revolutionary. Daryl had great admiration and respect for. Throughout his life Daryl was also actively involved in the peace and anti-war movement, from the Committee of 100 to the present day CND. Maintaining a consistent commitment to independent working class organisation and class struggle for the realisation of its aims. Towards the end, despite being dogged by ill-health, he was beginning to take an academic interest in the development of the Green and Ecological movement, analysing a class-struggle perspective.

When the curtains finally closed at the Crematorium, obscuring his resting place from vision, it signalled the end of an era. We had said goodbye to a true socialist and revolutionary. A great man who will be sadly missed by family, friends and comrades alike. As we left the building to the strains of New Orleans Jazz we took in the fact that the influence of the gentle Geordie will live on.

A. N. Dimmick  
Sunderland

By this time Albert McCarthy had become well-respected in the jazz world as an authority and scholar, contributing to pioneer discographies, and writing in many papers in many countries, his name often appearing on record sleeve notes. In the 1950s and 1960s he travelled widely in the United States, interviewing and recording musicians of the swing era. He produced critical studies of Louis Armstrong and Coleman Hawkins, and his researches culminated in the publication of *Big Band Jazz* (1974).

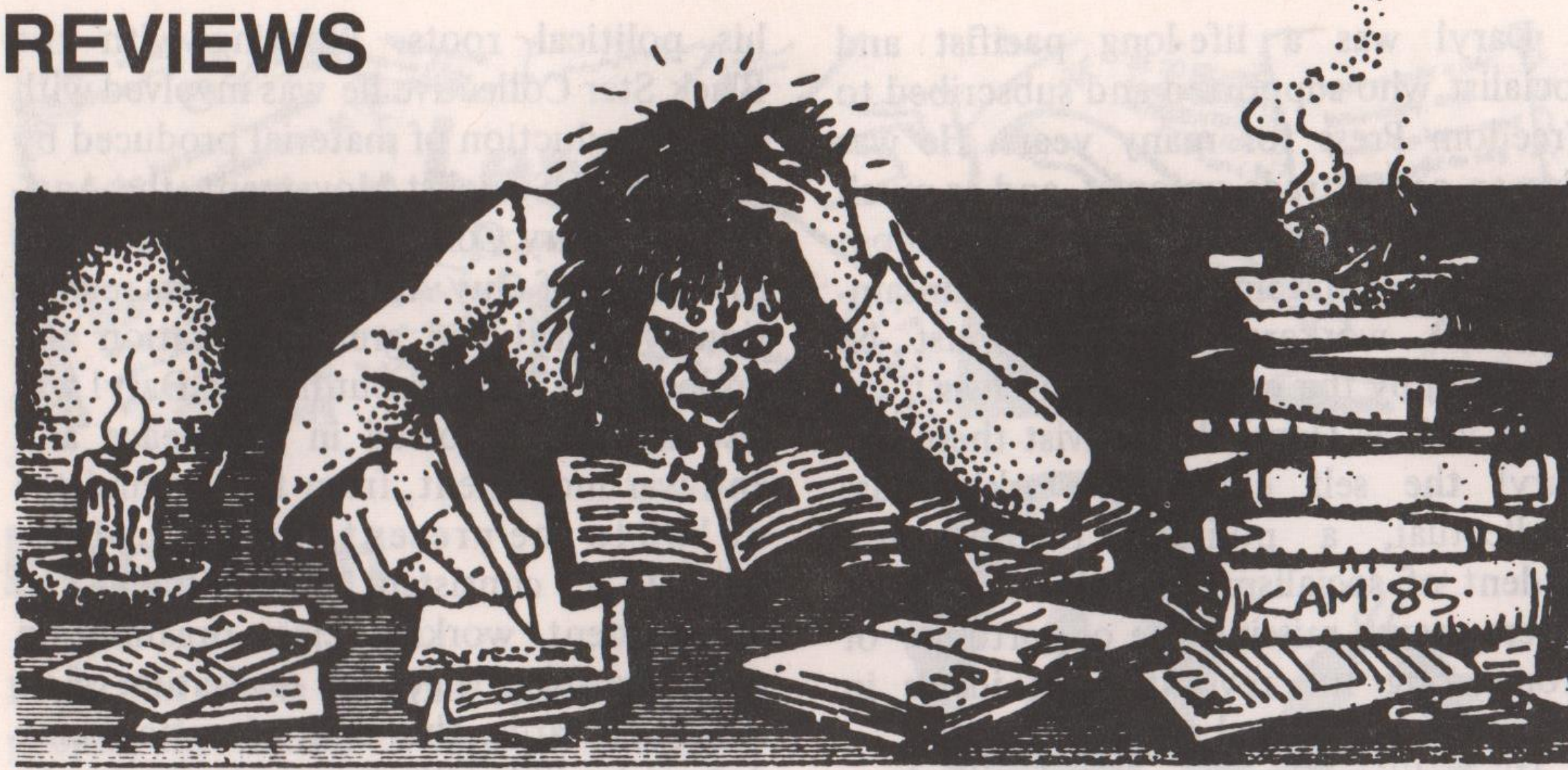
Although he had little contact with *Freedom Press* in recent years, he turned up out of the blue in August 1986, renewed old acquaintances and helped for a couple of months in the bookshop. On the last occasion I met him, he talked of his love of jazz, and cricket (he was almost a County Cricketer), and we discovered a mutual interest in the writings of Bakunin. It is pleasing to be able to record that he had remained an anarchist all his life. Family circumstances took him to Hampshire and I never saw him again. Recently I heard that he had died suddenly, of a heart attack, at his home in London.

We intend to publish a fuller tribute to Albert McCarthy in *The Raven*. Anyone who wishes to contribute is invited to write to the editors at *Freedom Press*.

CC



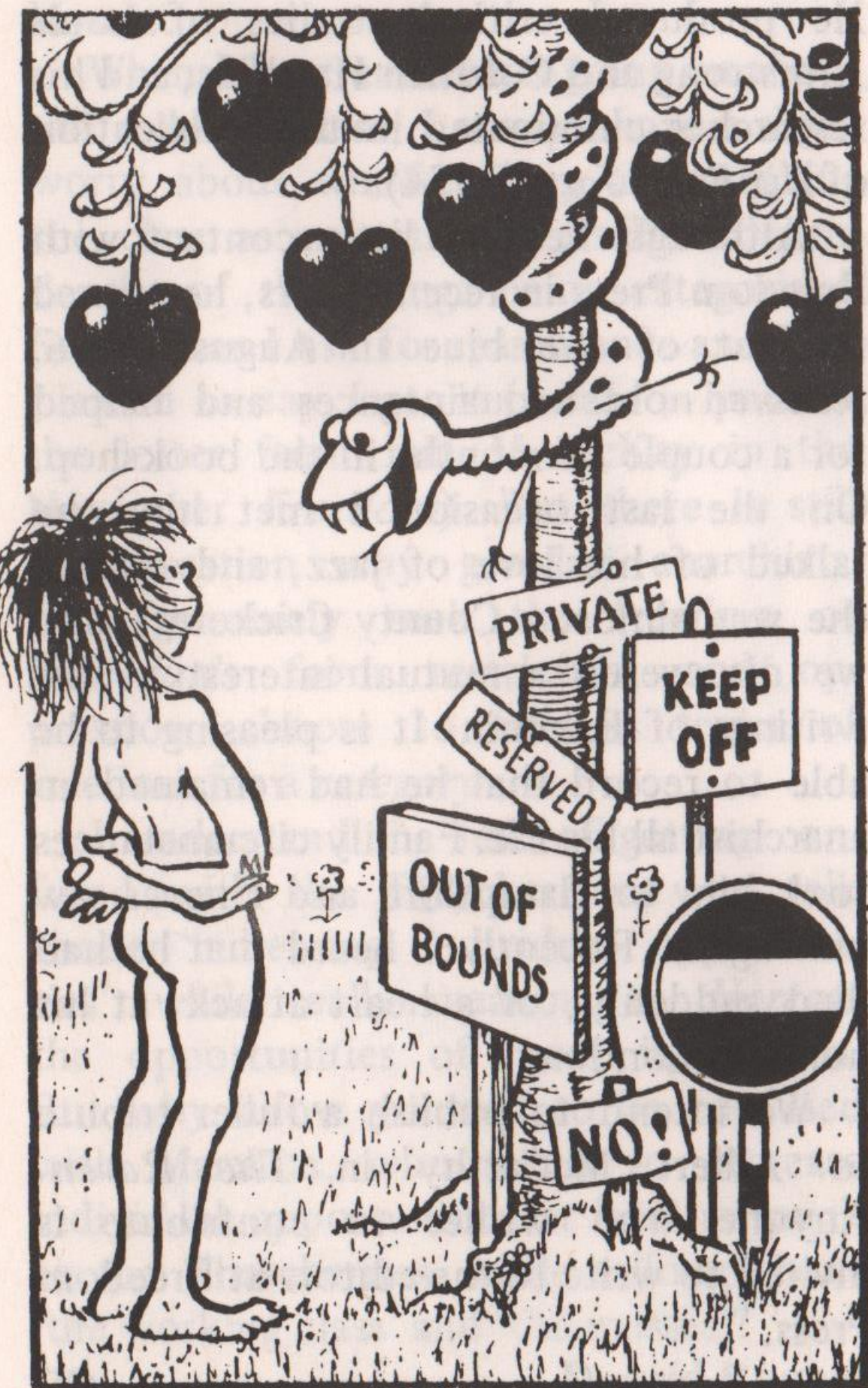
## REVIEWS



**Outrageous Tales from the Old Testament**  
Knockabout, £4.95

KNOCKABOUT publications, which have run into all sorts of trouble with previous comic books, have now taken on the biggest target of all. The Bible — that is, the collected sacred writings of the Jews and then the Christians — has been subjected to all forms of treatment during the past 2,000 years. It could be said that the worst thing to do is to take it seriously, and that the best thing to do is to take it as a ghastly joke or series of horror stories.

This particular attempt to do so follows an old tradition. A century ago the new secularist paper *The Freethinker* reprinted a series of 'Comic Bible Sketches' by the French freethinker who called himself Leo Taxil. As a result the editor, publisher and printer were all imprisoned for blasphemy in 1883. Let us hope that this doesn't happen again — though the *Gay News* case 11 years ago isn't very encouraging — but these strip cartoons are just as funny and offensive, though not as good on the whole.



There are 14 sections, most of which will appeal mainly to comic fans rather than anti-religious fanatics. In too many cases the words are too silly — though it must be added that the original words of the Bible are even sillier — and the drawings too messy. For sheer outrage the prize is taken by Hunt Emerson, who mocked *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the splendid Knockabout edition of 1986, and who now takes literally the frightful laws of Moses in Leviticus chapter 20, ending with the mutual destruction of all the Tribes of Israel for breaking one law or other.

Two sections rise above the general level. Arthur Ranson contributes a witty Creation poem celebrating all the animals except our own species: 'Human behaviour is so rarely humane!' And Donald Rooum contributes an equally witty and elegant version of the Garden of Eden, transplanted into Gandalf's Garden.

One problem is, of course, that few people know the bible any more, but this book will certainly help more people learn about the Old Testament. Then Knockabout can turn to the even more outrageous tales in the New Testament ...

NW

### Watchmen

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons  
Titan Books, 384 pages, £9.95

*Watchmen* began as a twelve-part comic series, originally published by DC Comics. The practice of almost immediate book publication is becoming standard for series aimed at an 'adult' readership. In many cases the label is as pretentious as the material. This is better.

Alan Moore has been mentioned before in *Freedom*. He wrote *V for Vendetta*, a cryptic and enigmatic story about anarchic revolt, fascism and state power. Rumours about a book collection of *V* keep cropping up, only to disappear. Since then he has become a superstar within the genre. Dave Gibbons also developed through the largely derivative British

comics world to US stardom. It is always odd to watch people you used to have a drink with become heroes. They seem to be bearing up well.

Moore's strength has always been his characterisation and realism, if the word isn't too ridiculous in this context. He can write about a costumed clown or a shambling swamp monster so that they are acceptable. Together with his artists, he can pace the stories so that you want to understand their drives and motives. He uses recurrent themes and underlying currents to an artistic level that, by the standards of the medium, is breathtaking. I wouldn't go along with the opinion that he is a four-colour Shakespeare, but he'll do.

The premise of this series is that costumed crime fighters really did emerge in 1930s America. A sorry lot they were, playing out their fantasies, ranging from do-gooder to fascist vigilante. Eventually using the time-honoured device of a nuclear laboratory accident, one with real super-powers appears. The state now has the monopoly of power and the play-acting amateurs are banned. The USA has the ultimate deterrent and dominates the world, wins in Vietnam and so on. This background is shown through interwoven flashbacks, sometimes confusingly. In the present, it seems that the USSR is pushing for a nuclear showdown. America's avenger is missing. Some of the old crowd dig out their costumes ...

Comics aren't to everybody's taste. If you do enjoy them, this is excellent. I'd recommend it anyway. Give it a try. The price seems off-putting, but it is the going rate.

DP

### Introduction to 'My Disillusionment in Russia'

by Emma Goldman  
Phoenix, 20p.

IN 1986 the new Phoenix Press published a reprint of *The Russian Tragedy*, a collection of three pamphlets which were originally produced by Alexander Berkman in 1922 and which were first published together in 1976. Now follow two pamphlets from the same background.

Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were of course in Russia together during 1920 and 1921. Goldman wrote her book on Russia in 1922. It was published in the United States in two volumes, because of an editorial error — *My Disillusionment in Russia* (1923) and *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* (1924) — and then in a single volume in Britain — *My Disillusionment in Russia* (1925) — the latter being reprinted in the United States in 1970. The

present pamphlet reproduces most of the original preface to the first volume of the American edition, which also appeared in the British edition.



### The 'Anti-Climax'

by Alexander Berkman  
Phoenix, 45p.

Berkman wrote his book on Russia in 1923. It was published as *The Bolshevik Myth* in the United States (1925) and Britain (1926), and was reprinted in the United States in 1974. This time the editorial error was the omission of the last chapter because the publisher thought it was an 'anti-climax'. Berkman therefore published himself as a pamphlet called *The 'Anti-Climax'* (1925), which has often been reprinted. The present pamphlet reproduces nearly all the text without Berkman's preface.

Both pamphlets have new anonymous introductions, and *The 'Anti-Climax'* has some extra material about the Anarchist Communist Federation. The texts have been reset with minor alterations, rather than reproduced from the original, and the pamphlets are well produced. It is always good to have such writings kept available, and these editions are nice and cheap, but some of the editorial decisions do seem a bit questionable.

MH

### Oscar Wilde

by Richard Ellmann  
Hamish Hamilton, £15

### Rebecca West

by Victoria Glendinning  
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.95

HERE ARE recent biographies of two outsize but very different personalities who have little in common except non-English backgrounds and some connection with the anarchist movement.

Oscar Wilde, the author of some fine poems, essays and stories, and of a few great plays, but above all of his own image, posed as a frivolous person until his destruction as a public homosexual in 1895, but he was actually a serious person who is worth taking seriously. Richard Ellmann, the author of rich biographies of Yeats and Joyce, who died just before this last book was published — leaving many minor errors and omissions

which he would surely have corrected — notes among all the many details which fill 600 pages some of Wilde's rather desultory but by no means insignificant encounters with left-wing politics.

Wilde came from an Anglo-Irish family with strong nationalist sympathies, and he supported the Irish Nationalist leader Parnell (whose disgrace in 1890 following a sexual scandal foreshadowed his own). He also supported the Russian Populists, and wrote a bad melodrama about them — *Vers, or The Nihilist* (1881). He later identified himself often as a socialist and sometimes as an anarchist. In 1886 he was one of the few intellectuals in this country willing to sign a petition for the Chicago Martyrs organised by Bernard Shaw. In 1888 he attended some meetings of the Fabian Society. In 1889 he wrote a favourable review of Edward Carpenter's *Chants of Labour*. In 1891 he wrote *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, interpreting 'socialism' in the most libertarian possible sense and expressing his interpretation in entertaining and elegant language. In 1894, only a few months before his fall, he told a press interviewer: 'I think I am rather more than a Socialist. I am something of an Anarchist, I believe — but, of course, the dynamite policy is very absurd indeed.' He was a great admirer of William Morris and Kropotkin, and more than just a sentimental or aesthetic fellow-traveller with their ideas.



Ellmann accepts Wilde's tendencies towards anarchism, but doesn't go any further into the subject, and hasn't noticed the anarchist response — such as Edward Carpenter's brave articles on his case in *Freedom* and the anarchist editions and translations of *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. It would be wrong to take this side of Wilde too seriously, but it was genuine enough, and it did produce some wise and witty remarks and one brilliant essay.

Rebecca West is a much smaller figure, and the main thing demonstrated by this biography is that she doesn't really deserve one (though we are told that a longer one is also on the way). Victoria Glendinning,

the author of several biographies of twentieth-century women of letters, gives an efficient account of the career of Cicely Fairfield, who adopted the name of one of Ibsen's heroines. She began well, as a very striking young feminist journalist, and she produced a few good works of criticism, but she was really rather a bore for the last 50 years of her life, and she will probably soon be forgotten. Nevertheless, she and this book can claim some interest.

Her father, Charles Fairfield, who abandoned his family when she was only eight, was an Anglo-Irish journalist who was active in the Liberty and Property Defence League and followed the form of right-wing individualism later known as libertarianism. She grew up to be a suffragist and a socialist, writing for *The Freewoman* and the *New Freewoman* (before it adopted philosophical anarchism and became *The Egoist*), and joining the Fabian Society (where she met H. G. Wells, with whom she had a famous affair and a son). But after the First World War she moved steadily to the right, and ended as an extreme conservative.

On the way, however, she was briefly involved with the anarchists, being closely associated with Emma Goldman when she lived in this country in the mid-1920s. For a time she was her main British supporter in the campaign to publicise the truth about the Russian Revolution, organising meetings and writing articles (and the introduction to the British edition of *My Disillusionment in Russia*). Glendinning describes this episode briefly and inaccurately (making poor use of the papers in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam). Her only interesting information is that some of the relatively favourable press publicity given to Emma Goldman was obtained by Rebecca West putting pressure on some of her lovers, including Lord Beaverbrook, the owner of the *Daily Express*. Glendinning described Rebecca West's appearance in the American film *Reds* in 1981, but says nothing about her relationship with the anarchists in between — not mentioning, for example, her membership of the Solidaridad Antifascista Internacional, the organisation formed as a front by Emma Goldman during the Spanish Civil War, or her increasingly tenuous connections with individual anarchists after the Second World War.

Like Oscar Wilde, Rebecca West had limited talents; but unlike him, she didn't know her limitations; also unlike him, she took herself more seriously as she grew older and is now hard to take seriously at all. Wilde, however, seems more attractive now than for a century, and is still well worth reading and reading about — and remembering as one of the best fellow-travellers we ever had.

NW





Rudolf Rocker (right) with two group comrades, Lief and Zhdowski, in 1912.  
from *East End Jewish Radicals* by William J Fishman.

**The Crucible of Socialism**  
edited by Louis Patsouras  
Humanities Press (Atlantic Highlands, NJ)

ANARCHISM may be rather out of fashion, but it is still making appearances in academic books. This symposium contains eleven chapters on particular examples of the three main streams of socialism — anarchism, Marxism and democratic socialism (in that order) — together with one chapter on anti-socialism. The editor, an American academic who has produced three similar books, provides an introduction describing the three streams and summarising the chapters.

Taking them in reverse order, Boris Blick describes French liberal views of socialism in the 1890s. Before that Louis Patsouras discusses Léon Blum and Jack Ray Thomas describes the influence of Salvador Allende on his moderate predecessor in the Chilean socialist movement, Marmaduke Grove. Before that Martin E. Berger writes on Engels' military ideas, Morris Slavin on the rise and fall of Trotsky, Stephen Cohen on Bukharin's relevance to Euro-Communism, and Jack Ray Thomas on Castro's career.

The anarchist section is not only the first but also the longest in the book, but

it is very disappointing. James G. Chastain gives a brief summary of Bakunin's career, Louis Patsouras gives a long account of Jean Grave's life and work, William O. Reichert discusses nineteenth-century mutualism in the United States, William J. Fishman gives a rather romantic account of the Jewish anarchist movement in East London, and Terry M. Perlin gives a brief summary of Emma Goldman's career.

The chapters by Chastain, Fishman and Perlman add nothing to easily available material — in Fishman's case, his own book *East End Jewish Radicals* (1975). Chastain's contribution is particularly pointless, his treatment of facts being careless (there are twelve references in one page to 'Nachayev') and his comments often being meaningless ('Bakunin combined old and new. Inheritor of the federalist and anti-statist tradition of the aristocracy . . . the spokesman for aristocratic socialism . . . a representative of the naive professional revolutionary whose quarrel with Marxism makes him a major figure . . .' etc.). Reichert's material will be unfamiliar to most British readers, and makes one wish for a similar study of the early libertarians in this country.

Patsouras' contribution — 140 pages long — dominates the book. It is based on his doctoral thesis of 1966, a version of

which has been published in the United States as *Jean Grave and French Anarchism* (1978). Grave, who was an important figure in the French movement for half a century from the 1880s, is so little known in the English-speaking world that any material about him is welcome, but Patsouras tells us more than we could ever want to know, not so much about Grave as about all sorts of peripheral subjects, so that much of his detailed information is irrelevant, while much of his relevant information is incomplete or inaccurate.

In the end it is hard to know what or whom this book is for. So far as the anarchist material is concerned, better treatments of all the topics appear elsewhere, so no one should waste any time or money on this particular collection.

MH

### ANARCHIST BOOK FAIR

THE Anarchist Bookfair has become one of the most successful examples of anarchist co-operation, and the Eighth Annual Bookfair held at Conway Hall was no exception. It was conservatively estimated that between two and three thousand people passed through the hall on the day. Stallholders reported an increase in the number of anarchist books sold and there was certainly more anarchist material on display than in previous years, reflecting the upturn in anarchist publishing.

The organisers (the New Anarchist Review Group of anarchist distributors) more than covered our costs. The hall cost £175 to hire for the day, the posters and leaflets cost £110 and we had an additional £20 postage costs. In total our income from the stalls and the food was £355 so we were able to pay £50 deposit on the Hall for the next year's Bookfair.

The Ninth Anarchist Bookfair will be held on Saturday October 8th 1988. This is earlier in the year than before, because in the past the end of November was our earliest date available at the Conway Hall. It has been suggested that publishers launch their new books and pamphlets on that date.

One of the problems of this year's Bookfair was that some stallholders who sell a lot of material were very cramped for space. To solve this problem we are asking for a bigger deposit from stallholders. We want £5 for a half table and £10 for a full table. We still only want 10% of your takings altogether, but the deposit will be non-returnable and that way we hope to stop people who sell absolutely nothing taking over a whole table.

Next year's Anarchist Bookfair will be bigger, with even more stalls and even more anarchists. Hope to see you there.

NAR

**This Land is Our Land: the struggle for Britain's countryside**  
Marion Shoard  
Paladin £5.95

LOOKING out of the front page of the *Observer* supplement of 25 October, on Privatisation, is the smug and overfed face of Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson, reminding one very much of Orwell's Animal Farm. The heading was 'Closing the great divide'. The divide has never been so great and getting wider. I wonder whether that photograph was taken after or before the stock market collapse, as the phoney money comes fluttering to the ground when the great privatisation programme introduced by William the Conqueror comes home to roost. The world as real capital is eroded and phoney money fuels its continued devastation.

The devastation of the hurricane has made more thorough the devastation already wreaked by the private owners of land here with the soil capital of East Anglia disappearing into the sea and that of the South downs into the adjacent towns.

As Marion Shoard points out in the preface:

The most fundamental resource of human beings everywhere has always been the land itself. Land is the source not only of the food we eat and the minerals from which we build our shelters and shape our implements, but of the space we occupy as well. When it has provided for our needs it accommodates our pleasures.

As she points out, in spite of the fact that Britain is a highly urbanised and industrialised society 80% of the land surface is countryside and owned and controlled by a tiny group. Now the consequence of leaving the control of a major human resource in the hands of a few interested parties is not only having an effect here but proving to be a global disaster.

The British system of landowning spread with British settlers, and where the original inhabitants did not have this system they were either exterminated (as in Tasmania) or other forms of oppression enforced by their superior military resources and other means of acquiring power. In many areas usufruct was the main element of land use and a cooperative attitude to land use, and often ideas of ownership unthinkable. The advance of military technology submerged the more equitable ways of land tenure. Military technology not only altered the structure of land tenure but also placed a

burden on land fertility in that much disappeared into the mouths of horses and soldiers, and the hierarchies they propped up.

William of Normandy took control of the land and the Saxon peasants lost their land never to regain it for many of those who now own it are direct descendants of the military associates of William. When arrested at Greenham Common in 1962 I pointed out to the magistrate that the law was based on robbery with violence, and that a piece of the remaining Common land is now controlled by a modern version of the Conqueror's war lords.

The history of landownership, common lands and the resilience with which the landowning class maintained their power even to this day make interesting and easy reading. It is not often that a 550 page book can retain the interest, which is a tribute to Marion Shoard's research and writing.

Referring to the situation of land ownership today the idea that the ownership of land has been wiped out by death duties is widely held, but as she points out the reality is rather different. Under the Thatcher government more land is coming under private ownership.

A lot of the committees set up to govern land use are not elected but come from the very class that has a vested interest in the private ownership and use of land.

Nearly a third of the land surface is owned by titled families and though the individuals are not immortal the tribe very nearly is, and has resisted all attempts to dislodge it. The initial report of the Royal Commission on Income and wealth in Britain showed that the richest one per cent of Britain's population owned 52% of the land. The next wealthiest 2 to 5 per cent of the population owned a further 22% of the land. Thatcher has abolished the Commission.

Shoard points out the stranglehold on land ownership, which is a finite resource, gives the owner immense power. A lot of the wealth of the industrial revolution found its way into the pockets of the already rich as those activities took place on the land they owned and leased. There are four principal means of generating wealth from land: mineral extraction, building, farming and forestry. Two of those activities enjoy a protection that many of Britain's other economic activities do not. In fact landowners have benefitted from the dramatic rise in the value of building land. When the landowner profits from the royalties of abstraction of minerals, he also profits from the filling up of the hole or turning it into a water sports centre. Thus he profits always from the activities of the wider community.

The most influential person who carried on a campaign against this privatisation of the wealth of the com-

munity was Henry George, who said that the ability of landowners to rent land for other uses inflicts damage on society as a whole. One of his disciples, Fred Harrison of Land and Liberty, wrote a book in 1981 called *The Power in the Land: An Inquiry into Unemployment, the Profits Crisis and Land Speculation*. Harrison interestingly is a supporter of Capitalism but says it cannot operate efficiently if it is based on a group of people shielded from competition. Mr Harrison advocates 100% tax on the annual rental value of all land. During the war the cost plus system guaranteed industry a profit, so often the bigger the costs the bigger the profits. The workers gained little of the gravy; in fact they were taxed and some of the money repaid after the war when their money had depreciated. In agriculture it became a real gravy train after the war for big farmers. The price review was controlled by the farmers and landowners in conjunction with the government as was the wages review board who made sure that very little landed in the pockets of those who did the work. The farmers had grants to increase production and are now being offered grants to reverse the depredations of their activities on the same countryside. While the government proposes to implement an iniquitous Poll Tax it does not propose to institute any sort of land value tax. The feeble attempt of the post war Labour government to do anything like it was of course destroyed by the vast resources the landowning group was able to deploy.

High input farming has made many wealthy, but impoverished the soil and made the products costly. Mechanisation has driven people off the land and industry here no longer makes the machinery so, while engineering skill has been lost, the multiplicity of skills of the farm worker has also disappeared.

In many countries there is a restriction on the ownership of land but in this country there is a complete stranglehold. The collectivisation of land in Russia produced famines, and Stalin's achievement of industrialisation produced conditions not dissimilar to those that appeared among the working population in our own industrialisation. The peasants who made the revolution to be able to till their land without supporting a parasitic landowning aristocracy, found themselves supporting a land-controlling bureaucracy that was in many ways more onerous.

Marion Shoard obviously does not see any likelihood of reverses in the attitude to land ownership, particularly as the land owners have become so powerful. Perhaps the environmental pressures and the cost of dealing with them may make the docile British public look a little deeper into the unjust and damaging system we have inherited.

Alan Albon