

Total Liberty

A Journal of Evolutionary Anarchism

Volume 3

Number 1

Autumn 2001

£1.00

Editorial

The tide of events since the last edition of *Total Liberty* has seen the Multinational Oil Corporation Esso more or less buy the President and The White House. Tony Blair has secured his re-election on a 59% turn out of the electorate and winning a mere 40% of the votes. In effect he won the support of just 25% of the UK population. These facts have not stopped either of the powerbrokers claiming to have a 'mandate' from the people. Perhaps one of the most important roles this and other Anarchist journals have is to keep repeating the bald fact that the politicians do not have a 'mandate' from the people, we do not consent to be ruled by them or any other exponent of 'statecraft', exploitation and domination. People need to be made aware that there are other voices, of the powerless and the excluded who have the right to share in society. These voices were seen again at Genoa, as they have been on Mayday this year and in Seattle in 1999.

We stand with those other voices, those who walk the other

paths, those who listen to a different drummer. And we support and participate in other ways of doing things. These can be seen in practice on the ground in other alternative institutions: housing co-ops, worker co-ops, credit unions, community businesses, allotment associations, voluntary organisations, self-employment, individual initiatives and the activity of free individuals and communities.

Total Liberty's last issue provoked the biggest response for some time from our readership. In particular Peter Neville's article on Science Fiction received both interest and some criticism. Is it possible, that Science Fiction, can provide the arena for a discussion and consideration of our dreams, our utopias? Or are such debates a distraction from the grim realities we face? How do we stop the all powerful multi-nationals from dominating the world, from denying us a choice in how we live our lives? Globalisation does indeed appear unstoppable. There is indeed a world-wide anti-globalisation movement, but the homogenisation of culture is all but complete. McDonalds have their outlets in nearly every country in

the world. Corporate influence has all but destroyed democracy. What chance for individuals and communities when faced with the power of such a Leviathan?

What effective and ethical strategies are available to us? Members of the *Black Block* may vent their frustration and anger on the visible symbols of the State and Capital where they can, but these ritualised and set-piece examples of violent theatre serve only the interests of the Corporations and the State. The establishment media can distort and use such imagery to confuse and diffuse, to brand opponents as violent mindless thugs. The State can use its dirty tricks and agent provocateurs to trigger such events or to heighten their violence. The visions of burning cars and barricades on the news broadcasts may confirm that there is opposition to globalisation and rampant capitalism, but it is a vision that alienates people rather than attract broad support.

To achieve lasting social change takes a broad, society wide level of support and participation, such as the 9 million people who took direct action on the streets in the non-violent revolt that peacefully

overthrew the East German regime in 1989.

We need to develop another strategy, one which does obtain such support, one which can break out of the ghetto of opposition to win the hearts and minds of ordinary people.

The tactics used at Genoa are likely to provoke a backlash against anti-globalisation protesters in general, and against Anarchists in particular. Attend a public meeting and speak the word Anarchist, write a letter and mention the word Anarchist, and you are branded as a violent

thug before a word more is spoken or written. And where does the logic of such justifications of violence lead? ‘Comrades’ believing themselves to be ‘fighting the class war’ or ‘the revolution’ will be taking up weapons and resorting to terrorism next. This is not the way to a free, more equal and participatory society.

Building an alternative society can still be done, non-violent and peaceful means are still possible, this can begin with a conscious minority, but ultimately such methods must be taken up by

millions of us in order to work, and it will take a long time, but we should not in frustration or anger take up the futile and self-defeating path of violence.

Jonathan Simcock

Contents	
Page 1Editorial
Page 2Charlie Dimmock & Anarchism by Richard Griffin
Page 3Brute Facts Against Cognitive Inertia by Steve Booth
Page 5Count Me Out by Peter Good
Page 6Book Reviews
Page 8My Letter on Radio 4 By Peter Le Mare
Page 9Foot in Mouth by Jean Pollard
Page 10Details of some of our writers Plus letters from our readers
Page 12Subscription Details

Charlie Dimmock and Anarchism

There are few spaces left where we can escape capitalism. We are used to advertising on the television, in newspapers and magazines, but increasingly even public spaces are being colonized. The other day I was travelling to London from Kent. I glanced out of the train’s window as we neared the station. Just before Victoria rail bridge looms Battersea power station. There it was tall, impressive, imposing and, good god! covered on two of its towers by huge tarpaulins advertising Duracell batteries! How long will it be until corporations buy up whole streets and tower blocks as happens in the US and cover their sides with advertising?

The encroachment of capitalism into almost every aspect of social life should be a cause of concern for all anarchists. We no longer make our own food but buy it pre-packaged from the supermarket. Wherever we walk we are bombarded with literally thousands of marketing images extolling us the consume, consume and consume...Capitalism has us by the throat.

High streets throughout the West look identical. There’s an episode of

the Simpsons where Bart walks into his local Mall to get his ear pierced. He goes into the shop and the store keeper tells him he’ll pierce his ear but they need to be quick because in five minutes the store will become a Starbucks! In the time it takes Bart to get his ear pierced the Mall has changed from an eclectic mix of small independent shops to a mono-culture of Starbucks, Gap and McDonalds. Bart has traded the conformity and regularity of his school only to be confronted with the conformity and regularity of the shopping Mall. There is no freedom or escape it seems.

As capitalism seeps into every pore of modern life where can we escape? To the garden, of course!

The garden has long been regarded as a refuge from every day life. Paradise is a Persian word meaning enclosure. In middle ages formal gardens were places for reflection and courtly love. Another place. An escape.

Today gardening is big business. Britons spend an amazing £3 billion on gardening each year. Millions of gardeners spend millions of pounds on plants, fertilisers, decking, water features, sculptures, pots and

occasionally seeds. You can hardly turn the television on without seeing a gardening programme. The BBC’s acquisition of the television rights for the Royal Horticultural Society’s various shows was heralded as if the Beeb had won back the rights to the Ashes. The programmes have been fronted by the corporations gardening superstars – Charlie Dimmock and Alan Tichmarch.

Gardening is aspirational. It is not about growing food to survive or creating an original aesthetic space. Aside from a handful of permaculturists and forest gardeners, gardening is not about creating a space in harmony with nature either. Gardening is big bucks. Despite the average garden now being just one tenth of an acre and most gardeners having limited budgets, garden magazines and programmes feature huge landscapes and ambitious designs most of us can only dream of.

Yet despite hopeless odds people try to realise these dreams. Such is the power of capitalism. Tiny terrace house front gardens are piled full of pebbles, back gardens are carpeted over not with plants, as the Victorians

would have done, but with hard landscaping. Indigenous plants are spurned for this year's exotics and fashionable plants. One year hostas might be in, the next grasses. As with any capitalist industry it is vital that consumers keep buying. Water features spring up like confetti.

There is a lie that gardening is anything other than a leisure pursuit. Politics is almost always the unanswered question in garden writing and particularly in garden history. Today though, issues of land ownership, wealth distribution and land use are as relevant as they were to Gerald Winstanley and his Diggers three hundred and fifty years ago, when they occupied St George's Hill proclaiming that all land should be held in common, and that every man and woman had the right to grow their own food. But as fewer people grow their own food the link between what people eat and the soil is lost. Little thought is given to how crops are

grown, how much people were paid to grow and pick them or the impact of the crops on the local environment.

Now this is the crucial point - as people lose touch they are sucked further into capitalism. If you have to buy your runner-beans at the supermarket who get them from Kenya but cannot grow your own how could you possibly imagine a world that isn't capitalist? How can you possibly imagine taking control and responsibility for your own life?

Gardening matters. Real gardening - growing your own food, making your own compost, collecting and drying plant seeds is a positive political act (life style anarchism to borrow Murrey Bookchin's phrase). Any one doing these things is opting out of the capitalist system.

Direct Action magazine back in 1998 claimed that life style anarchism (whether growing your own food or going vegan) "will never bring down capitalism". Increasingly the anarchist

movement in Britain seems to be dividing more and more into two camps - an in your face black hooded masked up anarchism seen on Mayday 2001 and a quieter anarchism engaging with everyday life. The first type of anarchism will (at best) dismiss the second (at worse be hostile to it). DA described vegans as having 'no thought out ideas, being self obsessed, short sighted and judgemental'. This type of anarchism certainly does not worry about gardening. My suspicion is though that real, lasting social change is likely to come from gardeners rather than class warriors. A good first step would be to ensure we do all we can to preserve our gardens and allotments from capitalism and create escapes and alternatives to consumer culture. God knows we need them.

Richard Griffin

BRUTE FACTS AGAINST COGNITIVE INERTIA

Why excessive theorising is counter-productive

We have had a bellyful of theories. We all know what is happening. We all know what we want. The only thing we are not sure about is how to get there. We need a concrete programme of practical activity.

THE TRICK IS TO CHANGE IT...

What is political theory, and what is it for? We do not stand in isolation, but face the present economic, cultural, social situation standing on top of the interpretations and insights of the past. From our own experience, we have fundamental ideas about politics; for example our wish to abolish the state, our support of action which weakens the state, our passionate concern for the environment, or for animals. Political theory could seek to examine and reflect on, and even strengthen our understanding of these fundamentals. Where it does this, political theory is useful.

REALITY AND ILLUSION

On the one hand we have the harsh reality of the totalitarian state as it intrudes on our lives. We have the facts of pollution in our rivers, in our food, or in the air we breathe. There are the facts about global warming. We have naked global capitalism, third world debt, exploitation, oppression; all the propaganda, lies and cover-ups ongoing in the media. We have all this.

THIS COMPETING CACOPHONY .

On the other hand, we have the various competing schools of political theory: there is Marxism, which looks at the means of production, using dialectics, and its own particular terminology, talking of alienation, bourgeoisie and proletariat, base and superstructure. There is the 'Deep Ecology' of Arne Naess, which simpers through the salons and genteel drawing rooms of Europe. There is the Situationism of Guy Debord and Raoul

Vaneigem, with its insights about the Spectacle, urban environment, and games. We find Bookchinism, or Primitivism, Socialism, Trotskyism, Social Ecology, traditional anarchism, Workerism, Syndicalism, and post-modernism. We've had it up to here with all the -isms.

TWO WOMEN TALKING ON A STREET CORNER

There is the reality of the decay we see all around us, and then there is this whole swathe of theory. Somewhere between the two, are the people themselves - motorists on roads, customers in McDonalds, people watching TV, travelling on railways or buses, holidaymakers waiting in the strike-hit airport departure lounges, bankers, bureaucrats, policemen, binmen, vivisectors, business executives, nurses, media people, shoppers, ravers, politicians, homeless people. How does all the political

theory connect with the old lady on the No 92 bus?

PLAYGROUND GANGS

All of the various schools may have some grain of truth behind their systemising. To arrive at this, we have to study them. Afterwards, we have to look at their function within the protest movement. Doing this, we see how they are not primarily used as tools or as a spur to further action, rather that they compete with each other, and demand the subordination of our minds to their tenets. So, part of the function of a theory is to define the members of each particular ideological gang, and exclude the non-believers as infidels. There is also a one-upmanship attached to each faction, an implicit over-view that 'our' theory is better, more correct, than yours. The schools are in ideological competition with each other, both for members and for prestige.

SEEK NOBODIES

'You are seeking followers? You want to multiply yourself by ten, by a hundred? - Seek noughts!'

Nietzsche. Twilight of the Idols

There is another aspect of political theory which needs examining, and that is the leadership principle. Political theories are often thrones being built up, and there at the centre, at the top, is some thinker, who demands followers (why does the name Murray Bookchin come to mind here?) The theory serves to lay up some pretentious edifice. There are other kinds of evasion, (Newwidge e.g.) which instead of aspiring to scientific rationality or a deeper objectivity, put over an implausible post-modern pseudo-spirituality, and here the theorist becomes a guru. Because reality is too hard to deal with, people seek refuge in mythology. In this respect, political theories, just like the cults, are vehicles for some theorist's ego, and are implicitly hierarchical. Thankfully, some people, especially anarchists, are quite good at debunking these idols.

I DO NOT THINK THEREFORE I AM NOT

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) wrote of four idols of the mind - idols of the

tribe, common beliefs held by the group of people we belong to; idols of the den or cave, private delusions held by each person individually; idols of the market place, which come about through imprecise communication during our social activity and interaction; and idols of the theatre. [Novum Organum, 1620] Political theories may embody all of these, but especially the latter. There are various confusions; e.g. belief in 'intellectual osmosis', that by dropping the right sort of names - Marx, Lewis Mumford, Zerzan, George Bradford, Hakim Bey etc etc the text automatically becomes more profound. A second kind of confusion is Faddism - this belief, this looking for one single thing, a single factor or action which will suddenly, instantly and magically put everything right at one stroke. Land



reform will transform everything, or a return to Athenian Democracy, New England style town meetings, or let's all go back to the stone age. Faddist delusions range from the vaguely plausible ('the redistribution of wealth') to the outright dotty ('eat nothing but peanuts' or 'all the world's problems are caused by the world leaders being disguised alien reptiles'). A third kind of confusion is *Citation*. It is the belief in the sheer volume of footnotes as a marker of depth and ideological acumen. At the same time, have you noticed how there has been a staggering decline in the capacity to exercise independent judgement? Here we see panic, a seeking refuge in the herd, a whole 'safety in numbers' mentality. What do you think?

PRACTICAL

How do we get from where we are now, to where we want to go? Some sort of map is needed, but it has to be one based on how things really are, and not some projected distortion of imaginary castles in the air, or an egotistical fantasy cooked up by some arm chair theorist.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF THEORY

What is the basis for political theory? Think about the components. Does it start from a description of how things are, an account of political and social processes? Does it criticise these, perhaps using ethics or aesthetics or a standard of efficiency? So what do we have? Social facts, economic facts, empirical investigations, information on health matters, pollution data, crowd psychology. There may be investigations into such things as bureaucracies, traditions and prejudice. Moving on from this, we will get moral thinking - it is wrong to exploit, wrong to pollute, wrong to perform experiments on animals. We may have aesthetic judgements. All of this has essentially the same grounding for all the theories, because the facts are the same, though each theory will select and rank the facts differently.

METAPHYSICS

So where do theories diverge? In so far as they depend on the facts, each theory grows out of the same factual background, but then we get a whole raft of metaphysical speculations, assumptions, special terminology, a system, and again and yet again, those castles in the air come into view. It is this metaphysical overlay which makes each theory different. This is their weakest point, the place where they most need to be attacked.

DISPLACEMENT ACTIVITY

Political theory at its best and most basic level could be a tool to help us arrive at an overview of the situation, and be used as a guide to effective action. This is something very difficult though, because it involves a close study of reality. What motives do people have? How do we break their vested interests? How can our collective behaviour be changed? Political theories at their worst (as we

often find them), are obstacles to understanding. Rather than giving us a clear view of how things are, they obscure. Theory is a form of displacement activity. They lead to a kind of cognitive inertia. 'I think too much, therefore do not act...' Theories like 'Deep Ecology' are worthy objects for university study, and for government research grants, because

they are irrelevant and no serious threat to the status quo.

DUMP THAT BAGGAGE

Who is more likely to change things for the better? Some theorist in a college, who writes long obtuse academic papers which are read by a few people, and understood by even fewer, or a student, who knows very

little of political theory but who sees the poster of the tortured dogs, joins the SHAC campaign, and goes on protests at Huntingdon?

Steve Booth

COUNT ME OUT!

I had been worried about this year's census long before the big day arrived. In years past I had simply scribbled in joke material and returned it, content my irreverence was protest enough. But I worried about this latest census. Who were these people who wanted to pry into my life and ask questions they have no business to ask in the first place? Did I really want the state to play such a big role in my life?

My concerns were heightened by the apparent ease in which people are now willing to surrender detailed information about themselves. Flying back from holiday I watched a stewardess hand out leaflets giving passengers the chance to win a thousand free air miles. All you had to do was complete the form. The document was filled with columns of little boxes asking everything from the amount you earned, the newspapers you read, to what kind of school you sent the kids to. I was saddened by how many of my fellow passengers dutifully completed the form.

Another thing upsetting me was the message sweeping around the radical village that everyone should enter "Jedi Warrior" or "Woden Worshipper" in the slot asking for spiritual beliefs. Here was perfect example of Foucault's "sites of resistance" - a permitted space in which the authorities allow its citizens to express their protest. Of course, the government gives not a jot about our spiritual beliefs. So long as it can line you up into columns it cares nothing that the ancient gods and goddesses are being mocked.

So when the census day came and a harassed young woman offered me the form I refused to accept it. "As an Anarchist" I said. "I have a duty to refuse." She reminded me that it was a legal obligation to complete the form and I refused again. She entered a big "R" in her book and we wished each other a good morning. You will note that I conducted myself throughout this encounter with civility towards the young lady. Someone over in Huddersfield had set the dogs on an enumerator and was (rightly) prosecuted for it. When she had gone I felt rather proud of myself. I put on my coat, strolled over to the pub and bought myself a pint.

The state employed 70,000 enumerators to gather in this information at a cost of over £255m. It's an exercise in a bureaucracy telling us that numbers and measurements have finally come to replace human values and common sense. Any statistician will explain that if you are willing to accept a deviation of a 2% plus or minus, a far more accurate survey can be obtained by interrogating several thousand paid volunteers. And at say £30 a throw it would be nice work if you could get it.

At the start of a new century we are well into a system of government where data and numbers count for everything. Hospitals are now overpopulated with administrators. To succeed in medical career nowadays you need skills more associated with the boardroom than the bedside. And schools are suddenly all about results, league tables and class sizes. Both

institutions have discovered that you cannot measure creativity or charisma so it gets forgotten and even ridiculed.

One morning I discovered a blank census form had been posted through my letterbox. I carefully unfolded it and have used it to line the bottom of the drawer where I keep my underpants. The same harassed enumerator called a week later. Again I politely refused to co-operate in this major invasion of my privacy.

I have been naturally keen to observe the progress of the census here in Bradford. Over the years it would seem that bureaucracy has failed to notice how much society has changed. But you don't need a census to tell you that. There are many whose lives bear little relationship to games of mathematical and statistical techniques. Some enumerators encountered problems touring the local estates. They were not at all keen to "assist" homeowners fill in the form. Knocking on doors of an evening attracted all sorts of comments. Despite the welfare state's great educational experiment there remain legions of adults who have difficulty reading the back of a Weetabix packet. This explains why hundreds of thousands of census forms have not been collected.

From all the information held about us it wouldn't take a government department too long to build an accurate profile of any individual it chooses to do so. Such innocent items as supermarket loyalty cards contain enough information to say whether you are cautious, spontaneous, lead a busy

life, and the level of your income. Britain now has more CCTVs than any other country in the world and if you drive from Plymouth to Aberdeen your vehicle can be shadowed all the way. Remember also that every time you use your mobile those who run the service know your location. The state has the ability to bug your telephone, click onto your emails, monitor how much you have in the bank and keep check on your mortgage repayments.

And the tired argument justifying the need to gather so much data is always “the innocent have nothing to fear”. This is nonsense. And it’s nonsense on stilts. The argument presumes that government interests are always

neutral and driven by the values of justice and confidentiality. Listen to those arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Some were startled to discover their interrogators have such levels of knowledge as the colour of the wallpaper in their friend’s front room.

The present drive to accumulate data and to measure everything is a mass self-deception. It probably benefits the employment rates of bureaucrats more than it serves the interests of the ordinary Joe. Watch how the state rewards people with hard measuring skills: Data processors, auditors, administrators, CCTV operators. Nice work if you can get it. Yet this same process comes to downgrade those who

work with imagination and intuition. The determination of Global capitalism and the state to measure everything, coupled to the growing call to criminalise refuseniks, will gradually reduce us all to automatons. We should refuse and we should protest of how the state is creeping insidiously into our lives. We have a right to be left uncounted and not surrender our privacy easily. And if they come knocking on my door again I will refuse to collude in their nonsense. I can do little else. Others have done much more than that as the price we have to pay to maintain personal freedom.

Peter Good.

Book Reviews



UNCOMMON SENSE by Gregory Sams.

Many anarchists seem blithely unaware of the need to integrate contemporary thought into libertarian theory. Of course, there are the Post-modernists and writers like Murray Bookchin have attempted to relate libertarian thought to ecology. However, I do not find their results totally satisfying. The Post-moderns confuse anarchism with nihilism and the social ecologists tend

to reduce anarchism to a branch of ecology. Gregory Sams does not make these errors. He takes the latest in scientific thinking, Chaos Theory, and relates, but does not reduce, anarchism to it. His approach is also ecological without falling into the reductionist trap.

Chaos Theory can be understood as the contemporary concept of the underlying law of the universe. This theory sees that existence in all its vast complexity tends to self-organize into functioning systems. What appears as chaotic is actually organized, and the appearance of chaos is due to our ignorance and an ideologically-bred need to see things as directed from a

centre or ruled by a boss or master plan. In one sense only, there is a “master plan”, but it is the ability to self-organize. Sams declares, “central command is not the natural state.”

Thus, it comes as no surprise that the author sees Determinist- reductionistic thinking as the foundation stone of statism. Chaos Theory shows that both determinism and statism are impossible fantasies. The world is far too complex to be comprehended by say, economic determinism. Society is too multi-faceted to be controlled by a state bureaucracy. Furthermore, “the hand of the State destroys that which it seeks to improve.” By taking over areas of life that were formerly the

preserve of voluntary action, (by trying to control the 'chaos') the state destroys mutualism, solidarity and communal life – ie, our self-organising capacity.

The state is no eco-system, but a kind of parasite. "State structures usually have no mechanism that adjusts their size to the needs of the occasion. So they overgrow if enough money is available. It would seem to be a natural desire of most forms of organisation to grow and prosper. If not enough money is available after society has been taxed to its limit, the state can and does print more to cover budget overrun, thus providing the basic fuel of inflation... Total taxation on the wealth society creates in any given year ranges from 40-60% in most developed countries, and has done nothing but grow since the start of this century... For the several centuries prior to World War 1 this total taxation was closer to the 10% mark."

As the state takes over more and more areas of our life, our ability to opt out becomes impossible. Opting out – say squatting on government land, becomes illegal. Our range of alternatives narrows and complexity is limited. "In the state's doomed efforts to guarantee us all decent and proper housing they have legislated out of existence any viable options between 'approved' housing and a cardboard box on the streets. This is the very real void in our housing stock. Simple shelters and modest dwellings are neither difficult nor expensive to put together - they are just illegal. "

Given Chaos Theory, Sams does not suggest any plan of action. There can be no new way to "run the world", for the world is too complex to run, He does make a few suggestions however. One of these is the Bare Seat Party. People run in general elections as a kind of "none of the above" candidate. If elected, they refuse to sit in Congress or Parliament. As more and more people see the hopelessness of governmental action, the system dissolves. Another suggestion is Fluffy Action, non-violent actions which screw up the system without creating hostility or harming anyone. Sams sees the need to replace government services, where these are needed, by

non-governmental forms. He is a bit of an anarcho-capitalist, which shouldn't bother anyone but sectarians. Traditional libertarians can keep the overall concept, needing only to substitute his private companies with mutual aid societies and worker co-ops.

Larry Gambone

Amazon.co.uk stock UNCOMMON SENSE... It is reasonably priced at £6.99 and the paper edition runs to 185 pages. The Chaos Works website where the book may be downloaded for free is at : <http://www.xaos.demon.co.uk>.

**All-American Anarchist:
Joseph Labadie and the
Labour Movement.
Wayne State University
Press ISBN 0-8143-2707-9**



This biography has been written by Labadie's granddaughter Carlotta Anderson and published in hardback by Wayne State University Press in 1998. It covers Labadie's life from his early years, when he spent much time with Pottawatomi Indians in the Michigan woods, through his youth as a socialist and an itinerant printer travelling the towns of middle America, to his maturity as a well known Anarchist, writer, poet journalist and writer.

Anderson's account starts with his involvement in the Knights of Labour. Labadie was deeply moved by the

poverty and suffering he saw around him in the industrialising America of the 1860s and 1870s. This was a motivating factor in his joining the Knights of Labour. The Knights of Labour were initially a quasi-secret workers organisation dedicated to achieving improvements in working peoples conditions through self-education. As it shed its early quasi-mystical and mason like rituals and broadened its appeal as a campaigning and Unionising organisation in the 1880s its membership numbers mushroomed and it came to the forefront of the 8 hours day campaign. Anderson's biography takes us through Labadie's involvement with this campaign, his 'conversion' from Socialism to Anarchism, his links with myriad small circulation Socialist and Anarchist Journals in the social movements centred on Chicago. Labadie was a friend and comrade with many persons who were of great importance to the social movements and workers movements of the era. People such as the 'Greenback' movement theorist & organiser Henry George, early American Federation of Labour leader Samuel Gompers, Benjamin Tucker, editor and publisher of Liberty, and many others.

Although Labadie evolved from a Socialist position to an Individualist Anarchist viewpoint, he maintained his links with the labour movement throughout this period and was active in the 8 hours day campaign, in the defence of the Haymarket Martyrs and other issues. The era also saw many experiments in communal living and co-operative labour exchanges in Chicago described and brought to life in Anderson's book. Arguably Labadie made his greatest journalistic contribution to anarchism as a writer for Benjamin Tucker with his column 'Cranky-Notions' in Tucker's journal *Liberty*. However, Labadie made an even bigger contribution to the history of the American Anarchist, Trade Union and Socialist movements by his dedicated collection of every journal, pamphlet, poster, book, piece of ephemera connected to the movement that he came across. Carefully stored and preserved by his wife Sophie, these became the basis of the renowned Labadie Collection at Ann Arbor

University. Look in the footnotes of many a work of history covering the period of the late nineteenth and early 20th century and there will be references to Labadie's collection. Many of the best portrait photos of figures such as Tucker, Emma Goldman and Kropotkin are held in the Labadie collection.

Anderson's book gives a fascinating glimpse of his home life and personality and covers also the life of his son Lawrence Labadie, who was influential on Mildred Loomis and the Homesteader movement, which was part of the early green and Environmental movements. Both Joseph Labadie and Lawrence Labadie

were printers producing their own pamphlets using letterpress machines.

There is far more in the book than can be related in a short review. Anderson's book is well researched, wide ranging, deeply interesting and a good addition to any Anarchist's library.

Jonathan Simcock

MY LETTER ON RADIO 4

Peter M Le Mare



Some of you may have heard two sentences of my letter on PM at 5.00pm on Radio 4 on Monday 18 June 2001. As these were quoted out of context and may have made little sense, you might be interested in the whole e-mail letter that I sent and which they did not even put in full on their website. Here it is with the quoted words in italics:

Dear PM on Radio 4

Mr Blair, do you seriously think that all of us are fooled that there are hundreds of highly organised 'anarchists' who can afford to travel from Seattle to London, Prague to Gothenberg, and anywhere an economic or political summit is held throughout the world: you are the ones with private jets, hotel rooms, and highly paid entourages?

Do you really think that we are fooled by your protestations against violence, with one fist bristling with Trident Missiles, NATO tanks, missiles, scatter bombs, and the other with Police batons, tear gas and even guns, to impose your self righteous authority on us, whether in the streets of Gothenburg or against the children

in Iraq, or the ordinary people of Ex-Yugoslavia?

The surprising and heartening thing is that all over the world thousands, and thousands of people, are protesting against your undemocratic elective dictatorships wherever you gather. Democracy was defined by Lincoln as rule "of the people, by the people, for the people" not of 25% of the counted choice-less and confused electorate, or in the case of Bush, the minority of the electorate that were not discounted because they were black or poor or were not fooled by deliberately confusing ballot sheets. Also we are not apathetic; we are the politicised vast majority that reject your silly elections and know that us, the people can organise and manage our affairs truly democratically and without power politics.

When are you going to stop burying your head in the sand or is it take your head out of the clouds and listen to us? We are the people who don't want to be controlled, from your so-called Missile Defence space stations, all for profits of Global Capitalism: profits now, the end of the world tomorrow!

I, having tried to be a pacifist all my life, can with 'hand on heart', really

say that violence and war cannot solve problems but am not surprised that a few frustrated persons smash a few windows and trash that epitome of bad taste, exploitative capitalism and environment destroyer, - McDonalds. I am with the really democratic "Anarchist Circus" "The Bread and Roses Circus" "The Peace and Freedom Circus" "The Love and Life Circus". Mr Blair, you have become a monster, and it is possible that you don't even know it!

Yours extremely peacefully

Peter M Le Mare

St Just, Penzance, Cornwall.

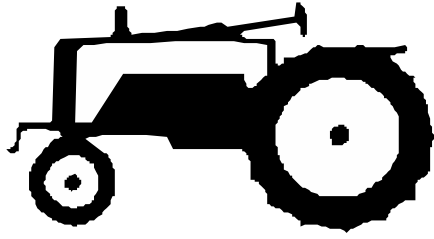
e-mail: pete@plumpeace.co.uk

website www.plumpeace.co.uk

QUOTE....UNQUOTE

"I feel myself that neither Communism nor Individualism, if it became the sole economic form, would realise freedom, which always demands a choice of ways, a plurality of possibilities..."

Max Nettlau.



FOOT IN MOUTH

Summer is here and the countryside basks in a heatwave. But nowhere in the fields or on the hills can be seen two of the more populous species of northern England: the walker or sheep. The former find themselves locked out of a landscape which many seek as a bolthole from the grind of surviving in a chaotic culture. And the sheep? Well, they find a bolt into the brain - a messy, ugly death with some animals taking up to 7 minutes to die or having pot shots taken at them as they run amok.

This then, is the world of Foot and Mouth Disease. Or rather, it isn't. This is the world of government and its capitalist cohorts. Because it is not the horror of foot and mouth which stalks the land, but the shambles of government, its whole panoply laid bare in its brutal and chaotic handling of an animal disease which is no worse than humans having a common cold. And for what? Nothing more than profit.

In my area, the handling of the disease has been appalling. Rumours abound that the government has killed all the animals not because they were diseased or near to it, but because the EU wanted the country to cut back on 40 per cent of its sheep production.

Farmers may not merit much sympathy for their commercial ventures, when the animals they farm would be killed shortly anyway but there have been many stories of how government has ridden roughshod over them, bringing in its military arm to force their compliance. Not for the soldiers the bivouac lifestyle: they've been staying in the best hotels in the area. The local press has reported how its photographers have been threatened with legal action by the army, only to be disabused when they raised it with the Police. The army has allegedly asked some farmers to sign the Official

Secrets Act with no reason being given. The press have been particularly muted in their reports, given that this epidemic is the most devastating and prolonged issue to have hit rural Britain in hundreds of years. But then, if the press is alleged to be the communicating wing of government, it's not really surprising.

However, there have been many local farmers who, whilst running a business, have attempted to do so in as humane a way as possible. For those who are meat eaters, the very least that should be called for is that the animal you eat has had a decent life before having a quick and painless death. Unfortunately, successive government policies, tied in with money again, has meant the closure of small local abattoirs and so the wretched animals have often a long way to travel before being slaughtered in ways which, if actively seen on TV, would probably turn the stomachs of many.

MAFF, now having changed its name to DEFRA (meet the new boss, same as the old boss), launched into the countryside making the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse look like seaside donkey riders. They appeared in their white outfits like some alien force bent on destruction. Tales of the wrong farms being targeted, of children hiding their pet lambs in their wardrobes only to have the "officials" come and search for them and the destruction of so many healthy, gentle and peaceful animals: 95 per cent of all those killed have not had the disease. The stench of carcasses left to rot for days after killing or the acrid smoke of the funeral pyres has been horrendous. It is one of the most obscene animal holocausts of modern times. They haven't even used local expertise, instead shipping in foreign, inexperienced vets with little or no knowledge of the farming methods and

landscape of the area. One vet I met was a Belgian who had been drafted in from Singapore where she had treated cats and dogs. Chasing sheep around a field on a warm day with the aim of taking their temperature as a measure of one of the factors of the disease did not sound especially logical to me. She couldn't catch them and decided as they were running around, they didn't have one of the other symptoms - limping - so must be OK!

The personal cost to families who have farmed for centuries or the small rural business is still being counted. Suicides amongst farmers have increased. The government has resisted its own procedures by refusing to hold a public inquiry which, even with the gloss on such showpieces, is likely in this case to show the shambles of government in all its glory. It has consistently ignored the call for vaccination, which would apparently have brought the disease under more humane control in a shorter period, ignoring the people who are the acknowledged experts on the subject. Instead, it has turned to its government lackeys who, to use the animal terminology, have been running round like headless chickens. Obviously they have to keep the masses sweet, so the appealing calf splashed all over the papers and subsequently "saved" by Blair hits the sentimental note of the masses and generates good publicity for a "caring" government..

The financial cost (let alone the emotional one) has been huge - billions of pounds wasted. Even the cleansing of farms has been a financial disaster. Recently quoted figures show that cleansing organised by central government cost £104,000, yet in Scotland where local government has been organising the clean-up, each farm cost £30,000. In the Netherlands, it has cost just £570 per

farm. So even in their own financial terms, the government has not provided value for money. The gullible taxpayer does not seem to understand that it is their money which is being wasted, for which many have worked extremely hard. On top of this, the charity lobby sets to work, asking people to fund government incompetence even more! Add to that the carpetbaggers, moving in to mop up on devastated local business and buying them up cheap (a local pub and restaurant recently sold, at a huge loss, for the price of a house), the corruption where farmers have been offered infected animals to allow them to claim compensation and the illustration of the grotesque nature of government is there for all the see. At least, all those who are prepared to see beyond its tabloid illusions.

And yet out of all of this, there is some slight room for optimism. As Colin Ward has said, anarchism is the seed below the surface waiting to emerge, then perhaps in these crisis, some stirring in the soil can be identified. In many of the rural communities as the frightful and compulsive machine of government has moved in, people who would not otherwise challenge the powers who control their lives have shown, if not anarchism, some of its flavour. Otherwise Tory-voting rural people have been prepared to challenge and refuse access to the government machine and have not been overawed by the presence of its military arm. Stories abound of people refusing to allow government officials on to farms, challenging orders to destroy livestock, refusing to sign Official Secrets forms, ensuring that animals are treated as humanely as possible. Local people have banded together in a kind of mutual aid approach to helping each other. A number of petitions have been organised, the local MP has been harangued at local meetings (nothing he could do, he said, it wasn't his government!), there have been some scuffles with the contractors and the army.

In due course many of the dissenters will revert to a Middle England way of life, paying taxes, believing everything the Daily Mail prints, voting etc., but many have expressed their

disappointment and disgust at the way the government has handled the crisis. Letters in the local press ask what is the point of government if it cannot be trusted to handle what is a relatively simple issue and how it has failed the people. The perception of government in this area will never be the same again. For anarchists, the gratifying point to be gleaned is that when the government seeks to target one group of otherwise model citizens, instead of crushing them, they slip through the fingers of the machine to turn and challenge. It's not revolution, but it perhaps illustrates Colin Ward's point.

Anarchists have always known that capitalism and government have no conscience. To describe living, sentient creatures in reports and the press as "products" is like referring to your Granny as the family's Futures Annuity Stock. When all of Life is seen as nothing more than a means to make money – a dead, pointless exercise – then the human being has indeed been corrupted beyond any level of decent feeling it may once have had. As Albert Schweitzer said "Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth". The handling of foot and mouth is all part of the wider ecological issue illustrated by the G8 events where governments languish in obscene splendour (some countries having 900 delegates at such bashes) whilst those they discuss – the Third World countries – live in grinding poverty, their own rural landscapes ravaged and plundered by the policies and practices of such governments, bent on putting more millions in the hands of the rapacious few. As Gandhi said, "There is enough in the world to satisfy everyone's need, but not everyone's greed".

Where and when foot and mouth disease will end is not known. But for many rural people, their perception of government and its machinery will never be the same again.

Jean Robinson



BRIEF LIVES

Contributors to this issue of Total Liberty were asked if they wished to submit brief biographies. Their replies are printed below.

Steve Booth

Coming to anarchism via 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists', the Thatcher 80s and poll tax, Steve Booth became co-editor of 'Green Anarchist'. Through 1995-1997, 50 police raids plus and 3 month show trial saw Saxon Wood, Noel Molland and Steve jailed as 'The Gandalf 3', then released after international outcry. Presently editor of Green Anarchist, Steve is taking the magazine towards community-based politics.

Larry Gambone

Raised in back woods British Columbia. Joined New Left while at university and first encountered anarchism through the IWW. Was part of 70's "counter-culture" and helped organize Canadian anarchist movement. Presently work as a cleaner in a hospital. Interests include social history, anthropology, philosophy, Fortean and gardening.

Peter Good.

Sometime soldier, oil rig worker, author and trade union leader. Currently member of the editorial board of avant garde Anarchist magazine The Cunningham Amendment. Has crossed the Sahara six times.

Jonathan Simcock

Came to Anarchism via rationalism and humanism in the mid 1970s. Active in student Anarchist circles in the early 1980s. An occasional contributor to *Freedom* and *The Raven*, and now editor and publisher of Total Liberty, also Secretary / Chair of the Anarchist Information Network. On a local level was one of the founder members of Belper LETS and Belper Food Co-op, and is a regular organiser and walker with *Red Rambles*. Works in social housing and is an amateur musician.

LETTERS

Dear Total Liberty

I recently bought a copy of Total Liberty v2/4 as it featured an article entitled "Science Fiction as Social Criticism". Having read the item I can only hope that nobody actually takes Peter Neville's piece as representative of anarchist thinking in this area or even remotely accurate or up-to-date. To put it bluntly Peter spends more time banging on about his favourite

bugbears than he does addressing the subject under consideration. He also shows a total ignorance of post - 1970 SF which, contrary to his assertion that “we do not have any SF writers in our ranks”, has many authors either writing from an explicitly anarchist position or using anarchist themes.

I am amazed, for example that rather than discuss Ursula LeGuin’s “The Dispossessed”, a well-regarded and widely discussed book with an explicit anarchist theme, Peter instead takes umbrage over an totally unrelated issue (feminism) and ignores the anarchist subject matter completely. Again he mentions New Worlds, but fails to have noticed that it was edited for many years by an explicitly anarchist SF writer Michael Moorcock. Neither does Peter bother to mention the recurring character of Nestor Makhno who appears in many of Moorcock’s books, the anarchic society portrayed in the Dancers at the End of Time series and the general anarchist slant to his writings that continues to this day (in for example King of the City - a novel of London since the war.)

Other anarchist writers Peter has missed out on totally include Bruce Sterling - his Islands in the Net is an excellent SF novel with explicit anarchist themes; Norman Spinrad, who said of his ‘Child of Fortune’ ...“it’s another anarchist novel, because there’s no government (All right, so I’m an anarchist - but I’m a syndicalist. You have to have organised anarchy, because otherwise it doesn’t work”.) How can Peter talk of SF without even mentioning Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea’s Illuminatus trilogy with its variety of anarchists and themes?

Among contemporary British SF writers, one would have to mention Ken Macleod and Iain M. Banks. Ken’s books are SF written by someone who obviously knows the contemporary radical (including anarchist) scene and has used elements for his futuristic visions. There’s now five in the series, including “The Stone Canal” which even mentions Freedom bookshop in Angel Alley (p.87)! Iain M. Banks has set his “Culture” series in an anarcho-socialist future and again is widely regarded as some of the best of the British crop of SF writers. One should also mention Alan Moore,

whose graphic novel V for vendetta has an explicit anarchist theme.

Other current writers who write from an anarchist perspective (or who have done) include Lewis Shiner, John Shirley, Rudy Rucker, Marge Piercy, Judith Merril, Harry Harrison and soon and so on. For an excellent anthology do read the semiotext(e) SF anthology recently reprinted by AK Press or perhaps try the Mirror Shades Cyberpunk anthology.

Anyway, you should get the picture. There is much good SF that is of interest to anarchists. It’s just a shame that Peter Neville wasted so much space in your wee zine talking about himself and his problems (nothing new there) and failed to do his homework and find out about what he was supposed to be writing about.

Richard Alexander

Dear Total Liberty

I’m not sure whether to be flattered or embarrassed by Peter Neville’s resuscitation of a piece I wrote forty years ago. I’m certainly embarrassed by its language and many of the generalisations I made, although references crop up often enough for me to realise I must have got a certain amount right.

It is difficult however to reconcile Neville’s general approval of my piece with his defence of Heinlein. I was one of those describing the Heinlein of Starship Troopers as fascist “in the sense that Sparta was fascist” i.e. militaristic, authoritarian and imperialist with a low opinion of different cultures. I may well have been totally wrong here, it was all a long time ago, but it does no service to anyone to pretend those references are not there.

However leaving such quibbles aside the real problem is that it was written forty years ago. Science fiction has changed out of all recognition since then. The “New Wave” with its emphasis on violence and literary impressionism has been and gone. Science fiction has become an academic study and is now discussed in university departments as part of the discourse on the crisis of modern literature. Those areas still accessible to a general audience no longer offer the moral view the genre did in its anti-

McCarthy, anti-totalitarian days. The belief in progress, or at least hope for the future, seems to have died along with the Kennedys.

The retreat from reason, temporarily given pause by the Manson case and the onset of hippie old age, has, in the hands of Post Modernist apologists made subjectivism a fetish. It’s provided an appalling weapon for male supremacist groups, the jack booted wing of feminism, racism of all colours, and a new and murderous nationalism. Both the social and the hard sciences have the same philosophical problems, and tomes discussing “The End of Science” now appear regularly. Mischievous iconoclasm in the hands of people like Feyerabend is given serious discussion in scientific and philosophical journals. Philosophers play their word games and the impression gradually spreads that any objective knowledge is impossible and even to attempt it is futile. Everything is just another story.

One goes back to Galileo “and yet, it moves” for reassurance. And forward again to Sheldon Glashow, developer of electroweak theory, who acidly remarked that “germs are discerned and killed - not imagined and unimagined.”

Most of the sci-fi writers Peter Neville recommends would earn my endorsement as well. However readers should look carefully at the date. They represent a particular period in science fiction and are a reflection in many cases of the minority libertarian currents of their time. They also put an emphasis on story telling. The New Wave had no time for that the last time I looked.

One final word of warning. Donald Room has said that the Anarchy piece was bitterly attacked by Michael Moorcock, a distinguished science fiction writer himself and the man who turned New Worlds into a vehicle for the New Wave. The general tenor of the piece seems to have been that the stories I discuss could not have been anarchist oriented because Moorcock defined anarchism differently to me. I’ve never seen this article but it is certainly true that the New Wave writers were almost as good as left wing splinter groups at back biting. The science fiction of the forties and

early fifties had a great deal of libertarian content. But, to convert a phrase, the present is another country and, alas the future is not what it was.

John Pilgrim

Dear Editor,

It is depressing indeed to see self-declared anarchists like John Griffin (TL, Autumn 2000) not only misrepresenting my attempt in *Towards An Inclusive Democracy* to renew libertarian thought on economics and to revive the discussion of a liberatory project but, even when caught doing so, coming back and asserting --without a shred of evidence-- that I have not properly answered his criticisms and that he stands by them. This fact alone would leave no doubt that his misrepresentation of the book, far from being accidental or due to a mistaken reading, was in fact a deliberate distortion of it by a 'pragmatic' anarchist (readers can decide for themselves by reading the exchange in its entirety if they visit the Democracy & Nature' website situated at: www.geocities.com/democracy_nature in which the complete exchange is hosted). This of course does not mean that I think there exists "some conspiracy against my work" as JG would want the readers of Total Liberty to believe. The misrepresentation of ideas doesn't have to be part of some "dark" conspiracy: the mere will to silence any serious liberatory project, that doesn't add up to pragmatic "anarchism", is enough.

But what is entertaining is that whereas JG admits that he rejects my proposals because they are 'far removed from established practice', at the same time he protests about my 'grotesque portrayal of (his) views as being comparable with those of the Labour Left'. However, my comparison of his pragmatic 'anarchism' to the Labour Left (as it used to be) is not related to the issue of a transitional strategy, which obviously has to take the existing system for granted--on this we agree. My comparison is based on the fact that JG also rejects my proposal (based on the dominant tradition in the anarchist movement since the time of Bakunin) for a future society founded on a stateless, marketless, moneyless

economy, on the grounds that, as he puts it, 'psycho-social tendencies like power seeking and greed, are surely not going to be "engineered" out of existence by monkeying around with the currency.' I assume that anarchist readers would find it very hard indeed to see what the difference is between a 'pragmatic' anarchism which takes the system of the market and money economy for granted and, for instance, what Tony Benn has always preached!

As for my supposed 'muddled thinking concerning the nature of the market' it is obvious that JG is unable to understand that today's market economy is in fact the inevitable outcome of the evolution of a system that was established two hundred years ago, and that markets and money are inseparable characteristics of this system (the pre-capitalist markets existing before the emergence of this system have nothing to do with the present market economy --see for instance Polanyi) and not options that we may adopt in a libertarian society. Furthermore, unable to see that the book offers a new method of economic regulation (for a sophisticated contemporary economy) based on economic democracy, he proposes to keep the markets and money, ignoring their dynamic towards the concentration of economic power. The reason for this is, as he puts it, that 'they have been working effectively for centuries'--minus (one may add) the starvation of almost half the Earth's population and the present ecological destruction!

Finally, as regards my 'confusion' of Castoriadis' Workers' Councils with his adoption of a real market, Castoriadis implicitly assumed a real market in this work (see my exchange with David Ames Curtis (D&N, Vol. 5 No. 1. March 1999) and he explicitly made this clear in a later work (Radical Philosophy, Vol. 56 Autumn 1990). As far as JG's attempt to degrade my book by talking about its 'unpopularity', I wonder where he got his information because, according to my information, the book was not only successful in the Anglo-Saxon world and has also been published in Italian and Greek and translated into Spanish (as I mentioned in my previous reply to him), but it is currently being translated into German,

while a French version of it is due to be published by Seuil of Paris --all of them during 2001 (I hope that my defence against JG's unsubstantiated claims will not give him the idea to come back blaming me for "advertising" my book!)

Yours

Takis Fotopoulos

Advertisement

**TCA: The Cunningham
Amendment (formerly
Anarchism Lancastrium)
Journal of the**

East Pennine Anarcrisps
*Dedicated to revolutionary acts
of joy and irreverence in a world
increasingly weighed down by
sterile bureaucracies.*

Available for 80p (cash or
stamps only) inc. P&P from
1005 Huddersfield Road,
Bradford BD12-8LP

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for *Total Liberty* are available at £8.00 per 4 issues. (£5.00 for low-income). Total Liberty currently appears twice a year, but aspires to appear on a quarterly basis. Total Liberty is a non-profit making venture.

Send Cash, Stamps or Postal Orders only to Total Liberty, Box EMAB, 88 Abbey Street, Derby DE22 3SQ Details are also available on the TL website which is at: <http://www.ecn.org/freedom/totlib/index.html> email: ain@ziplip.com

Quote....unquote

The more laws and restrictions there are,
The poorer people become.
The sharper men's weapons,
The more trouble in the land.
The more ingenious and clever men are,
The more strange things happen.
The more rules and regulations,
The more robbers and thieves.

Lao Tzu 600 B.C. Chinese philosopher

