

# Total Liberty

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## EDITORIAL

To the casual observer, the Anarchist movement, if movement is the correct description, within these geographical British Isles would appear to be divided, at odds with itself over theory, ideas, action, aims and principles, means and ends. It is hard to dispute that this is indeed often the case. This unfortunate fact is a frequent source of criticism of Anarchists and Anarchism. Yet despite this, and despite the rhetoric, epithets and invective we habitually hurl at each other, there is usually far more that unites us as Anarchists than divides us. Even regarding the troubled question of means and ends. For example, most Anarchists, from the reddest of class warriors to the pinkest of liberals, are active in some small way, in some local project which is a reflection of their personal interpretation of Anarchist ideas. *Every* Anarchist known to the editor of *Total Liberty*, is involved with one or more such projects. These projects include a wide range of activities: local history research, community groups, allotments, housing co-ops, food co-ops, LETS schemes, local magazines, philosophy discussion groups, walking and rambling groups, land access campaigns, to name but a few among the thousands of campaigns, interests and voluntary activities present in most villages, towns and cities. Some years ago when Derbyshire County Council published a local guide to voluntary organisations, there were listed 500 such groups in that county alone.

Now one would be unwise not to be aware of the problems associated with these projects. Anarchists believe in such voluntary organisations, but this area of human life, in recent years, has suffered from a steady reduction of involvement from the wider society. Increasingly many local groups and organisations are kept going by the same few people as volunteers

become harder and harder to find. Many such voluntary organisations are also being drawn into the orbit of the State with offers of funding on the one hand and the impact of Government regulation and control on the other. The Blair Government, like the Thatcher Government before it has consciously sought to use the voluntary sector as a part of the Government's machinery to deliver a wide range of services. This is a dangerous development, and the reason is this:- as Colin Ward has pointed out, the stronger the State, the more widely it spreads its tentacles, the less the amount of energy and space that is left for social experimentation and independent non-State activities by communities, groups and individuals. Yet it is precisely the size and vitality of the section of society that is not controlled by the State which is the surest indicator of any society's health. As more and more of social activity and voluntary organisation is sucked into the control of politicians, the area of free life left to us all is constantly under attack and continually diminishes. This is something, as Anarchists active in voluntary organisations and in community groups, we need to be aware of, and that we should fight against. Government has no money of its own, it is all stolen money, via taxation, and such grants etc are a small proportion of the resources it has extracted from society, and habitually wastes.

Accepting Government help and money for voluntary organisations and local projects, whether it comes as a grant, lottery funding or charitable status, is a development which can only happen at the cost of the loss of the projects' independence, and at the risk of the projects' future. What the government gives it can take away. The strings which come with such government money will result in the subversion of the original intent of the project as set up by its founders

to a different one following the Government's own agenda. A good example of this is the Arts Project in my local town. Originally founded and successfully run to provide community arts activities in the locality, it had accepted money from the Government through the (Government Funded) Regional Arts Board. When this body changed its policies, the local arts organisation found itself pressurised into carrying out work away from its first purposes, and it also nearly collapsed when the funding was withdrawn. Because it takes money from local government it is still at risk of this in the future.

Other examples include a national charity, which was set up by parents of learning disabled people to provide humane and good quality residential care as an alternative to the institutionalised care available in Social Services hostels and NHS establishments and hospitals. This organisation has worked successfully for many years, and it currently has 8 Care Villages around England. However, in recent years the impact of accepting DSS money, and the twin impacts of Social Services overview and Government regulation and interference has increasingly changed the ethos of the project to the distress of many of the parents who originally set up the charity. Increasingly the care and residential services provided are becoming indecipherable from the Social Services and NHS provided version of 'care' which the parents had hoped to avoid for their offspring in the first place. As the old saying goes, he who pays the piper calls the tune.

If we, as Anarchists, seek to build our own society, we need to build our own institutions independent of and separate from the various projects of the State. Until we start to work seriously at this we have no real chance of being seen as anything other than an unrealistic bunch of dreamers.

Jonathan Simcock

# THE TIME IS NOT YET RIPE, BUT IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO WAIT

By Peter Good

A review of *The Tipping Point*,  
by Malcolm Gladwell,  
ABACUS, 2000, £7.99.  
ISBN: 0 349 11346 7.

So far, the searching criticism of the way we Anarchists present ourselves has been fairly bland. For too long our writers, and even the odd reader here and there, have been content to swim with the same old formulas or to tread water alongside long-dead activists. Many writers still cling to the intellectual wreckage of earlier revolutions; continually re-cycling modern events through models that were unique to a very different time and space. Maybe history will repeat itself. But I think not. You can tread water for only so long. Eventually it pulls you under.

Even worse in recent times, is the trend for Anarchists to form alliances with Marxists. Following the joyous collapse of world-wide Socialism, activists turned in on themselves, desperate to put some structure into their impatience with working class reluctance to take to the barricades. It's a hard reality for Marxists to accept. The realisation that 20<sup>th</sup> century Socialism only survived so long because of its labour camps and departments of secret police forced people to reassess the value of *freedom* once more. Tacking *freedom* onto Marxism is a bogus notion. We all know which qualities will be jettisoned once the Workers' Councils and the Peoples' Committees take charge. Just look what happened to Anarchists in Spain or St Petersburg once the Socialists got a first taste of power. The temptation by the confused and the despondent to link up with homeless Marxist abbreviations is a dangerous road to venture down. Sad to say that some Anarchists groups are already riddled with this virus.

Thankfully, the problem of Marxists creeping into our covens is not yet a big

one. They are still small enough to be stamped upon. However, the danger remains, and now is a useful time for us to fundamentally review the way we present ourselves to the world. Long-winded analysis is acceptable in its place but often it is no more the equivalent of workplace administration. An excuse for not getting on with the task in hand. Similarly, the raking over of history is another way of postponing facing up to the present. I propose that the most productive exercise we can embark upon is to begin to take risks with our thinking. To take a break from the invisible eyes of those whose mission in life is to ensure others never stray from the correct ideology. Beware. These are hard men. It's a strange paradox, but these same men, often the most intolerant of authority, can be contemptuous of others who would challenge their dogma.

The first step to take is to expand our skills-bank. There is great value in taking time out to study propaganda, examine the way modern rhetoric works and to keep a critical eye on how advertisers manipulate new ideas. *The Tipping Point*, to me, seems an excellent little book to start with. It's short, it's easy to read and it prompts questions rather than providing answers. That's always a good sign.

Malcolm Gladwell's central question asks what is it that sparks off sudden changes in society? Why do some ideas kick-off social epidemics and others don't? He cites the example of Hush Puppies, a shoe firm on the edge of extinction. Why should these otherwise dull items of shoe wear suddenly become essential fashion items of the young? Why did street crime suddenly plummet in New York? And why should syphilis take on epidemic proportions in Baltimore almost overnight?

From these contagious examples of social behaviours, Gladwell traces compelling patterns. Tellingly, not one

of the swings he investigates was the result of reams of mind-numbing logic or rational analysis. The factor tipping ideas into action was often something minor. Quite small changes led to big effects.

His section on street crime would win sympathy from many Anarchists. Namely, he concludes that the bulk of crime is environmentally driven. Gladwell argues that villains are acutely perceptive individuals who reason they are less likely to be apprehended in settings where prevailing conditions suggest its residents are already intimidated. Thus, broken windows, wrecked cars and mindless graffiti are signposts that villains become acutely attuned to. But where citizens determinedly re-take control of their own environment then the vandalism and petty crime reduces rapidly, tipping over into a more mutually respectful behaviour. The lesson is clear and immediate. By choosing to look at the world differently citizens created a sudden and massive change in their environment.

In every example in this book the motivating factor in radical change is shown to occur rapidly. The events he portrays didn't build gradually. They happened as a result of something outside the normal run of things. The individuals he picks out as being at the forefront of change were the ones most open to new ideas and risk-taking. Such people believe the impossible to be possible. They believe change is feasible in the now and in the future. They prepare themselves for the possibility that sometimes big changes can follow from small events. People can and do radically transform their lives. Often all it takes is something that questions the tired methods of habitual repetition. *The Tipping Point* gives fresh heart to all those who genuinely believe a more just and more imaginative society is possible.



## FACING UP TO THE MONSTER

Perhaps we all start from observing the State, the economic system, political or cultural structures; and feel that these are wrong. We may come at this from a sense of ethical outrage, generalised from many incidents, towards an Anarchist overview about the State / System. It is possible that we start our criticism from the perception that the State is inefficient or ineffective. We may begin from self-interest, from concern about the people around us, or perhaps from aesthetics. What I think we all have in common is a desire to change things for the better. On this much, we agree. We may share a great deal of common ground about our wish for change, even though we probably part ways over the methods of achieving that change, and the details thereof.

Anarchism does not function in a theoretical bubble or a Platonic realm of ideas; it is a practical political philosophy concerned with the here and now, and therefore is tied to the present social conditions and our current political circumstances. We have many abstract political theories, but there is very little detailed, hard nosed factual analysis of what the State / System is, how it works, what it does. The State needs to be studied from an Anarchist position. So here is one firm proposal, that we all apply ourselves to this task, and share the results of our studies among ourselves.

It is necessary to look closely at the anatomy of totalitarianism. It is a common perception that the events of September 11th 2001 mark a 'before' and 'after'; a turning point in the history of the world. This is an Americo-centric perception of course, but there is a

degree of truth in it. From the System's point of view, September 11th changes things. Now the gloves can come off, now capitalism can be unfettered. The Kyoto treaty can be scrapped, polluting industries run full pelt, civil liberties can be abolished wholesale. The Great Crusade against Islam provides a rallying point, similar to the Cold War, for the military-industrial complex. Racist propaganda, hostility to asylum seekers, provides the public with a convenient scapegoat to smokescreen other issues. Let us remember though, that Carlo Giuliani was murdered before September 11th.

When we think about the State/System, our existing categories break down. What we have today goes far beyond concepts such as 'authoritarian', 'totalitarian', and 'fascist'. Hitler or Stalin never had Menwith Hill. The East German Stasi did not have CCTVs on every street corner, every mile of motorway, nor the databases of the Schengen Authority. Dr Goebbels did not have the propaganda forces of CNN, Sky or News International. Himmler or Beria did not have the email interception capacities of the FBI or MI5; 'a black box on every ISP'. We need to develop new terms to get round the locked-in-together, total surveillance, total propaganda manipulation aspects of this networked globalised monster. At this level, September 11th did not mark a turning point, so much as put down a clear marker to indicate and strengthen the track of already existing tendencies.

The French Resistance activist, and Christian political theorist, Jacques Ellul, wrote of this networked character of technique. Half a century ago, he told

how the world of 2000 would be a global concentration camp. There were others like Aldous Huxley and Lewis Mumford. George Orwell wrote of dictatorships numbing the will of people to be free. Perhaps this is the worst aspect of it. Revolt has to be possible, but grows ever more difficult in the face of it all. A large part of the protest or revolutionary movement is ineffective, to the point of ceasing to exist, because they follow irrelevant, useless techniques, or are too busy scrapping among themselves. We need to be a whole lot more together in our approach. We need an objective understanding of the thing we oppose.

When Bush and Blair attack Iraq, I think an important line will be crossed. We have seen their many lies in the past, things like the Kosovo War, or the Lockerbie Trial as expressions of their strutting globalised machismo. All of this has been bad enough. It will be remembered that part of the indictment of the Nazis who were tried and eventually hung at Nuremberg included the charge 'conspiracy to wage aggressive war'. It is obvious to any conscious individual who still retains any capacity of ethical reflection that this is exactly what the Bush regime is doing, and that anyone who joins with it therefore shares in that guilt. The line thus drawn in the sand is clear, comprehensible even to a child, and any who deny this, by that token forfeit their right to be considered moral and conscious.

We do not, as yet, have a commonly agreed term to describe this condition of absolute, pure, enmeshed, tyrannical, authoritarian, totalitarian, genocidal,

total surveillance, wall to wall propaganda, mass-manipulation that we presently find ourselves enslaved under. All existing terminology is wholly inadequate to the task. In my previous writings I termed it 'The Machine'. In a way, it is like a machine, but I recognise my description to be inadequate. It is much more than a State. Borrowing from the Apocalypse, some would term it 'Antichrist'. Others capture small parts of it; the 'New World Order', 'the System' perhaps, 'global government', or other similar terms, many similarly loaded with eschatological theology, mythology, metaphysics, or junk conspiracy theories.

It is necessary, in the strongest possible terms, to show how this absolute totalitarianism is completely unacceptable. I believe that the suppression will deepen. We need to study resistance groups everywhere, from occupied Europe in WW2 through to Solidarity in Poland, or the people in East Timor more recently. The Community Sanction is important; where those who actively participate in the regime are shunned, so that people who collaborate are not spoken to or served in shops. Passive sabotage may

be another method. All the existing methods of protest need to be strengthened. Camouflage is also important - Social Democrats in Nazi Germany were forbidden, and so in one village, the party became a brass band, and carried on paying their weekly subs from 1933-1945, then to re-emerge and continue as a party afterwards. We should also not underestimate the power of ridicule.

One of the characteristics of the Monster, is its propaganda capacity to make its opponents and those outside its considerations to 'disappear'. Here we must think of the starving people in the Third World, AIDS victims in Africa or Asia, just as much as the Jubilee Debt Campaigners in England, or western anti-globalisation protesters. Anarchy always equals chaos, the media will tell you. You won't find the case for Anarchism or the anti globalisation protests in the sanctimonious pages of the Guardian. Have you ever noticed how States in Latin America are always on the 'brink' of collapse, but never go under? (Just one more push folks!) or how many people are pissed off with the political parties and might not vote, or will vote for evil groups like the BNP;

but Anarchism, the answer to the State, is never once favourably mentioned as a live possibility, or explained and talked about in a fair, impartial way. This misrepresentation and exclusion was present prior to September 11th, and is inherently part of their system. Nothing much changed there then.

One of the primary tasks of we revolutionaries is to explain our political alternative to ordinary people in simple language. Our need to develop our emphatic position of absolute refusal of their tyranny grows ever more urgent. We need to continue to show, in practical ways, that our positive alternative is possible, and indeed morally desirable. Our allotments and LETS schemes have never been more important, as are all the ways in which we engage with our communities. We need to put our philosophy across in words and actions.

Stephen Booth

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds.

Bob Marley

## REALITY CHECK

*"The truth is certainly out there ... but it's made not found"*

– 'Adbusters'-magazine,  
July/August 2002

This article is about the real battle that Anarchists need to fight if we want to change the world we live in. It's not about capturing the commanding heights of the economy. As the Russians found, taking control of the steel works, foundries, coal mines and shipyards changed very little. One boss swapped for another. One form of capitalism changed for a different and more inefficient one while modernity rumbled on. The working classes feature little in this article and the storming of Parliament plays no part at all. The German Anarchist Gustav Landauer hit

the nail well and truly on the head when he wrote:

*The State is not something that can be destroyed by revolution but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behavior; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.*

People on the whole have, as Foucault's observed, internalised the idea of the State, becoming in the process their own prison warder. They find it difficult, in fact generally impossible to perceive of an alternative reality, one that does not involve the State. This despite the fact that, as Kropotkin wrote in *Mutual Aid* and Colin Ward in *Anarchy in Action* so much of every day life is made up of non-coercive, cooperative behavior. The play of children, charities, what we get up to behind the bedroom door, creative activities, relationships with friends and

family and so on. Yet the State and all its paraphernalia is seen as natural and real. Immovable, like god once was. Those of us who oppose it, who step out of accepted political, economic and social norms are seen at best as (harmless) eccentrics or at worse as 'others' (enemies, wreckers, militants – the State, of course plays an active part in defining us thus).

Reality is a tricky thing. French postmodernist philosopher Jean Baudrillard has gone as far as to say that there is no reality. In *The Perfect Crime* he writes of a world dominated by (empty) transparency and visibility. Reality – for human animals – is socially constructed. It is what we want it to be. Reality is relative over time and space and between individuals. It's hard to pin down and fix. What's real for you, might not be for me. My father believes in god.

I do not. If we both go to a church service, although the event is the same for us both: the same words are spoken, the same people move in the same way, the building is identical, the meaning; its reality is profoundly different. My father's experience is different to mine, not at the margins but fundamentally.

Baudrillard has also pointed to the corrosive effect that technology is having on reality. I commute to London every weekday. At the end of my journey depending on whether we have arrived on time or late, I hear one of two announcements. Both are uttered by the same female voice. If we are on time the voice tells us that she hopes we enjoyed our journey and that she looks forward to us travelling again. But 'she' isn't real. 'She' is computer generated. 'She' has absolutely no feelings whatsoever towards us. Where's the reality here? If the train is late, by the way, 'she' laments this fact, regrets it and hopes we are not too inconvenienced. In truth she really could not give a shit! How confusing!

It is not too hard to think of how truth can be warped, bent, twisted, turned on its head. Ask people about Britain in the Second World War. What you will get is what Angus Calder has called in his book of the same name *The Myth of the Blitz*. A view of a united, harmonious country, plucky and resolute, standing firm and alone behind Churchill and the Royal family. The truth as dissected by Calder was, of course, different. The 'reality' most people have thought of Britain in the War is based on films and British wartime propaganda of the Finest Hour type. Never mind the crime and government incompetence. Never mind Churchill's unpopularity. Never mind that air raid shelters were built in leafy, affluent and safe north London but not in the East End. Reality has been fixed by media.

We shouldn't get too superior about this. Society as a whole can collectively agree that something becomes something it isn't. Money is the classic example here. Cash, cards, internet banking, bonds, shares; in themselves they have little or not intrinsic value. We can only use them to purchase items because as a society we have agreed that they can be used as a means of exchange. We all collude in this delusion. If we agreed leaves were a form of currency then they would be! It's all a con trick.

The TV programme Big Brother attracted millions of viewers. Jade, Alex, PJ, Kate and the rest became real to people. They talked about them. Let them into their lives. Voted to evict them (a small case of playing god). They read about them. They watched them. They may not know the names of people living a couple of doors down from them, but these strangers living in a virtual reality became for a while real, or actually as Baudrillard would say 'hyper-real'. Such reality is disempowering – you do not need to invest in actual human relationships because you can have them “virtually” via the TV or email.

Modern revolutions have failed I believe because they did not challenge the prevailing conception of reality. They were in fact not revolutionary at all. Communism didn't overthrow capitalism and its social and cultural flipside modernity, it simply ran it differently. The same could be said of right wing revolutions. Left or right it is not that nothing changes; just not enough.



Revolutions that historically have succeeded did so in contrast because they created a new reality/myth. Bourgeois revolutions like the French, American or English revolutions succeeded because they replaced one reality (belief in god, monarchy, feudalism) with another (belief in progress, capital and private property).

Classical Anarchism fell into the same trap here that Marxism did. Anarcho-syndicalists are a good example. Rudolf Rocker accepted lock stock and barrel a Marxist analysis of work. He wrote of the “every day conflicts between labour and capital” in *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, ignoring the harder reality that every day work is more typified by cooperation than conflict. While rejecting the State Rocker reached the same conclusion as Marxists about the basis of a better

society when he wrote “the solidaric collaboration of the workers in every branch of production ... would take over the *existing* social capital in each community” (emphasis added). Rocker at heart, like many Classical Anarchists was not advocating a truly new world, just a different way of running the *existing* one. How, though, do you change the way people think and behave if you base the future on the present when that present is capitalist?

So this is the real battle. The battle of perception and reality. It is about creating new relationships, not mimicking existing ones.

What is encouraging is that today so many Anarchists (and others) are taking this battle on. Classical Anarchism struggles with it because the battle focuses on consumption, not production. Subverting advertising. Exposing the truth behind the label. Creating radical design and graphics. Challenging, what *Adbusters* calls, the mental environment. In the same way we pollute the physical environment; our mental, visible environment is also polluted by advertising / Information / CCTV. This is a long way from the class struggle.

Many Anarchists have recognised for a long time the need to create new ways of being: libertarian education, non coercive parenting, food co-ops, credit unions, communes and squats; activities frequently sneered at by classical Anarchists but in fact much more revolutionary than going on a demo or rioting, simply because they present a new way of thinking, a new way of doing. Little pockets of non capitalist activity existing in the capitalist world in the same way the Italian fourteenth century city States were capitalist in a world dominated by agrarian feudalism. The future lay with the city State, of course.

There is no such thing as reality, only the truth we choose implicitly or explicitly to believe in. As Anarchists we want to bring about a world without States and laws, based on mutual aid and cooperation like much of our every day lives are. To change the world we don't need revolutions, we need something much more radical: to challenge the way people think. There is nothing real about the State or capitalism. Let's imagine them away!

Richard Griffin

# YOUTH WITHOUT RISK

The “what's the problem with youth today?” debate is difficult to engage without Golden Age recollections creeping in. But we have to set our ideas against something, and comparisons with then and now are part of the process. Perhaps I should indicate that I was born in 1960?

Me and my peers were part of stable families, I have no memory of kids being treated badly, or going without in any serious way. I can't remember any one with divorced parents until I was fourteen. I know now we were privileged in many respects.

I was wrapped up in sport. Living and breathing rugby, cross-country running, and athletics. Shooting and fishing were once part of this tapestry (what can I say?)

These are some of the other activities I remember engaging in; making dens in the middle of cereal crops. Being chased by the farmer and his dog. Adventure playgrounds that happened to be building sites, the play involving some destruction, and a lot of risk. Being chased by a variety of builders and guards with dogs was an occupational hazard. Raiding orchards and being chased by irate men. Adventure hikes miles from home. Search parties out looking for time oblivious gangs. We climbed, we scrambled, we built, and we trashed. Occasionally we paid the price of being caught.

These activities were not criminalised though, our behaviour was dealt with by a range of adults, some known to us some not. But there wasn't media hysteria, adults weren't afraid to engage kids, the immediate threat wasn't a call to the police.

Children I have contact with today are regularly taken to an organised activity, and brought back. Many just don't go anywhere or experience much on their own, many appear to be virtual prisoners in their small gardens and houses.

I remember well being rebuked for allowing my daughter to play out of sight with her mates by anxious parents. I remember the look of disbelief on parents' faces when my daughter and her gang were allowed up onto the Downs

to play. With the huge disadvantage of city life not pressing on us the lack of freedom of local children was frighteningly curtailed.

What it's like for a city kid is beyond my comprehension. My view is though, that the element of independent, unorganised adventure is very often missing from children's lives. This removes vital experience of crisis, problem solving, danger, and risk taking from peoples' earlier years. This leaves the same people totally unprepared for access to unorganised, unprotected activity later in life. Perhaps it also builds up frustration at the curtailment of activity, which is focused on the oppressors (parents) later on?

The marketing men and the continuous cycle of new, improved, bigger, better products, also have a part to play, in creating a permanent air of need for these things, wrapped up with the frustration of not being able to have these things. Clothes are perhaps the best example of things not worth dying for being marketed into becoming such a desirable product that they are worth dying for.

In a world drenched with information, perhaps it is too much to expect parents to allow their children to play with fire and learn from the burn? Perhaps it's too much to expect parents to accept that their children should be allowed to take some risks, and then deal with the consequences if their child is the one to get hurt?

I have no experience of run down estates, and city life, my views may be inappropriate for those settings. How can you allow your child to take risks if on your doorstep, other children are likely to look upon you as an enemy, your children as easy marks, and are prepared to use force readily? What practical Anarchist answers can we offer?

For a short while I ran an evening indoor soccer game at a local school gym. Whilst it was set up via my work to be offered to refugees, I was able to allow it to evolve, and we had disaffected, and excluded local youths drifting in until they formed fifty percent

of the group. I ran with the occasionally drunk or glued up player, I managed the fighting without excluding, I coped with a mass brawl, the risks were taken. It could have ended in disaster, but didn't. Was I right in allowing the risk? How would've things turned out if someone had got badly hurt? When I moved on the session folded, nobody else would allow the risk.

Did it do any good? I don't know. I bumped in to one of the players and reminded him of the stand off one evening, him with a baseball bat and a refugee armed with two bricks, me in the middle, we laughed about it, we passed the time of day, he had a couple of refugee mates with him.

I think anyone who tries to engage youth needs to be prepared to have their sand castle kicked over again and again, needs to be able to keep going on very small returns, needs to remove themselves from the scene for long breaks to avoid becoming jaded or cynical.

One challenge to this sort of activity is doing it without the insane demands of a politically correct, overprotective, stultifying bureaucracy, stopping you at every turn. I am not talking about reasonable checks on people who may have contact with youngsters, or a fair assessment of risk. I am talking about activities being strait jacketed out of existence, or made so lame that no one is going to turn up for it.

I also believe that as long as youth can remain fairly anonymous in their area they can act without concern for consequences. If they lived in an area where the members of the community knew each other and engaged in community activity that anonymity can be diluted. It's much harder to operate negatively in those circumstances.

These sorts of community perhaps operate best when on a smaller scale; local schools, local shops, local opportunities. “Local things for local people”. Perhaps the League of Gentlemen T.V. series has more to it than might meet the eye?

Richard Bendall

# SCIENCE, THEORY AND IDEOLOGY IN ANARCHISM

By Peter Neville

Recent writers on 'Anarchism' have suggested that there has recently been a failure to address what they call 'theory' and therefore there must be something lacking in contemporary writings. I find such suggestions to be puzzling because the exponents of what they call 'theory' are not talking about 'theory' but 'ideology' and passing this off as theory. Let us start with a few definitions.

The term 'ideology' was first defined in 1795 by a French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1755-1836) meaning the science of ideas "to clarify and improve the public mind" (Scruton 1982) but it rapidly came to mean "false or mistaken notions, especially in social and political contents" (Mann 1983). The term was taken up by Marx and is used in two ways: "Any systematic and universally applicable theory of man in society, and to derive therefrom a programme of political action" (Scruton). Secondly denoting "any set of ideas and values which has the social function of consolidating a particular economic order, and which is explained by that fact alone, and not by its inherent truth or reasonableness" (Scruton). So 'ideology' naturalises the status quo and wins support for the ruling ideas and economic structures so it has three major functions: "to legitimate, mystify and to console" (Scruton).

So in Marx and Engels "The German Ideology" ideology "denotes an essentially wrong apprehension of reality, and is virtually interchangeable with the expression of false consciousness...ways of thinking about the world and explanations of behaviour which are radically defective in that they fail to take account of fundamental material circumstances and constraints" (Mann 1983). But Marx and Engels use it more towards denoting the transformation of real experience into the realm of ideas without implying the transformation has distorted or misrepresented the experience.

So here we have a pejorative use of the term, especially when used by commentators of left and right with an implication that the ideas are impracticable and have no foundation

in reality. At the same time the social sciences use the term to define fundamental conceptions of natural or psychological or social reality. Marxist writers (such as Althusser) see ideological positions as a function of class position whereas for Weberians it comes from status identity. Karl Mannheim, using the term rather differently, suggested ideologies justify the status quo, utopian ideas justify social change (Anarchists please note).

Modern Marxists have suggested that it is because of the maintenance of ideology which has, in Western societies, led to the failure to develop a revolutionary working class - see here the work of the Frankfurt School of 'Critical Theory', Gramsci's concept of 'Hegemony' and Althusser's 'Ideological State Apparatus'.

One of the major criticisms of ideology is the failure of sociologists and political scientists to discover whether this is based upon empirical research evidence. Let me explain. A theory is a "body of law-like generalisations linked to one another, which can be used to explain empirical phenomena." (Mann) But the term *theory*, especially in the social sciences can be used more loosely to mean a set of assumptions or concepts or an abstract enquiry distinguished from empirical research. The main difference is, who is doing it?

Natural scientists have worked out procedures largely because rocks, plants and animals cannot answer back. For social scientists it can be more difficult. Social scientists can try to use the same methods as the natural scientists but unfortunately the respondents have minds of their own and in addition it may be notoriously difficult using some kinds of research methods capable of being used by natural scientists such as laboratory methods and experimentation. But how do natural scientists go about their own vocation?

Firstly one observes happenings in the world which leads to random fact gathering. This leads to a guess as to what is happening: an hypothesis. Then predictions are made about what might happen if the hypothesis is true. One tests the validity of the hypothesis by

searching for the predicted event under controlled conditions. If the hypothesis stands up then this may be called a theory. Other researchers then try and replicate the research process to ensure accuracy and objectivity. In this sense the word science can be defined as: "the systematic, objective study of empirical phenomena and the resultant body of knowledge" (Gould and Kolb 1964, quoted by Trowler). The natural sciences include astronomy, chemistry, biology, physics, geology, zoology and medicine, etc.

So science is a search for general laws applicable for all time and in every place. It requires controlled conditions to eliminate bias, may involve quantification but enables us to better understand the world we live in. The problem in the social sciences, and in the discussion of Anarchist ideas, is controlled conditions may not exist. So when Anarchists discuss or claim to be discussing theory they may be discussing ideology.

Karl Popper introduces the further idea of falsifiability saying unless a theory is set up in such a way that it can be tested it is not a valid theory, but not all scientists go that far. But let us not confuse ideology with theory.

There is nothing wrong with people theorising, that is to say expressing an idea. Many so-called Anarchist theorists have done this but theorising about something does not mean one is discussing a specific theory, one may just be discussing an ideology such as for instance 'class struggle', a notion often used by some Anarchists about which there is no empirical evidence to support its existence. Sometimes I feel many advocates of this concept go beyond ideology and are really discussing a religious faith. Unless you wish Anarchism to be seen as a secular religion such an idea is totally unanarchist. Your comments please?

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Editors Note. Sadly this will be the final article in Total Liberty by Peter Neville, as he died on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August. For obituary notices see page 14.

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## KROPOTKIN REVISITED

When I first came to live in Belper in 1988, the town was still, to superficial appearances at least, a small market, mill and manufacturing town. A town whose architecture and way of life would have been quite at home further north in the Lancashire or Yorkshire Pennines, but which was exiled here, as it were, beside the last small hills of the Peak District. Just south of Belper the landscape gives way to the flat 'Midland Plain' which runs mostly uninterrupted all the way to London.

Other older traditions have come and gone from the river valley where Belper lies. The name of the river '*Derwent*' derives from the Welsh words for white oak, and the name of the ridge-like hill above the town, the '*Chevin*', is an anglicised form of the Welsh word '*Cefn*' meaning back or ridge. The very word '*Belper*' comes from the Norman French words for beautiful park, dating from the time when local land was given by William the Conqueror to one of his henchmen. Ruling elites, peoples, languages, traditions and lifestyles have changed before, and are changing still.

Yet when I first came to Belper, I was not sensitive enough to the changes which were happening around me. Had Kropotkin, the author of the influential 19<sup>th</sup> century Anarchist work '*Fields, Factories and Workshops*' seen Belper at anytime between 1840 and 1988, he would have pointed to the mix of factories, housing, allotments and local agriculture. He would have been pleased to see people able to walk to and from their jobs in local factories, to buy their food and clothes from local shops and the weekly market. But I expect he would have been aware of the changes, of the decline of first the nail-making

workshops, still run as family businesses in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and of the later decline of the iron founding companies. He would have been aware of the competition developing in the textile trades also.

Belper in 1988 still had a weekly market on the '*triangle*'. It had a range of well established manufacturing businesses: Courtaulds, Thorntons, Gloworm, English Sewing, Jaeger Knitwear, Silkolene. These firms produced textiles, chocolates and confectionery, gas central heating systems, stockings and underwear, knitwear, and refined oils (including some oils used in Concord). Yet in the 15 years since 1988 nearly all of these firms have either closed, retracted in size, or have been taken over by foreign owners. Hundreds of local jobs have gone. Many local corner shops near the factories have closed as the lunch time trade of selling cobs, sandwiches etc vanished overnight. The town's tall East Mill chimney, symbolic of the textile manufacturing era, was demolished in 1990 after that winter's gales had rendered it unsafe.

Kropotkin's '*Anarchist*' vision had looked forward from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a better time. He saw the potential to develop new small scale sources of power, using electricity to enable a resurgence of local production using small power tools in community based factories and workshops. He advocated the adoption of new agricultural methods, such as the market gardening techniques practised in the Channel Isles to this day, to enable efficient '*local*' food production by and for the '*local community*'. His ideal community and society was a mix of fields, factories and workshops, a mix of mental and physical labour, with adequate life enhancing leisure and

education, a society with the power decentralised back to communities and individuals and not in the hands of central government or corporations. But history has a habit of proving such visionaries wrong. And Kropotkin's vision was wrong, at least as far as his prediction of a social revolution, which he had hoped would enable such a social experiment to be tried. Capital and the State have not been overthrown, Capital and the State have gone global. They are busy destroying the very local economies, local political organisations and voluntary organisations in society which would form the basis for the type of society envisaged by Kropotkin. But he was not wrong in advocating a vision of a better life, where people could participate in the life and the decisions of their communities. Where they could decide issues themselves, work and live locally, not be stunted in mind by lack of education, by alienation and powerlessness, or stunted in body by poverty.

In Belper the closures of so many factories since 1988 has resulted in people having to commute miles to work in cities such as Derby and Nottingham or the other surrounding towns. Work patterns have changed. There are far more service industries and far less manufacturing. Hours are longer, and for many the pay is less. There are also many long term unemployed, young and old. The effects of '*individual*' poverty and alienation can frequently be seen. And drug and other substance abuses are increasing. Yet despite such problems Belper is still growing in terms of population and as a whole is not poor. New housing estates have sprung up on the former factory sites and also on fields at the edge of town. The

population has grown to over 17,000. In truth the town has essentially changed its role from *manufacturing* to being a *dormitory town* for people wishing to move out of the crime and poverty ridden inner city areas of Derby and Nottingham and to live near the pleasant countryside of Derbyshire.

The weekly market which used to occur on the triangle closed a few years after we arrived. An unsuccessful attempt was made to revive it every Thursday with the help of the town council. However, shops in the town centre are still closing. And there is a trend seeing charity shops and estate agents replace the useful local shops such as clothes shops, greengrocers and butchers as they close. An edge of town supermarket has opened and is contributing to this change. So now not only do people have to work miles away, but also their food is brought in from miles away.

The town council has few answers to such problems. It has tried to encourage *tourism* and has started a successful monthly *farmers market*. Culturally it has subsidised music and arts events, but these seem to appeal only to a minority of people. It is not too surprising. The town council has been run by the both Labour and Tory parties. They don't want real social change and they lack a wider vision. However, if events such as

the anti-globalisation protests at Seattle, Gothenburg and Genoa, and the successful popular retail boycotts of genetically modified foodstuffs mean anything, they mean people do want change. People want more control over not only what they eat, but over their lives and communities also. None of the mainstream political parties reflect this. None of them seem to realise that the relevance of the vision of the Greens, Libertarian Socialists and Anarchists is that it is a vision of a richer, more satisfying, more intensely lived life. The political and economic elites, be they Labour, Liberals, Conservatives, Social Democrats, or the Globalised Corporations can deliver only a bland, impoverished society. Everything the same in every city; powerlessness, alienation, crime, poverty, polluted communities and polluted food. The elites and the rich may seek to isolate themselves from the consequences of their actions behind high security fences, protected by CCTV in their privatised and *gated* communities. The political leaders even, protected in *gated conferences* such as at Genoa; however, ordinary people are less than satisfied and an opposition is stirring, even here in Belper.

Since August 2000 in Crich and the Derwent Valley a local coalition of people has protested against *Rolls Royce*

dumping low level nuclear waste from their Derby factory in a quarry at Crich. In August 2000 a demonstration, a hundred strong, including people from Crich and the surrounding area, and also people from Belper, marched down the A6 from Crich to Derby, stopping in each village and town en route. During the protest's time in Belper, the Belper community choir called *Rough Truffles*, sang a medley of protest songs. Then we marched along the A6 stopping the traffic. People in the cars opened their windows to take the leaflets. Local opposition has begun and continues. *Local* opposition from *local* people to a *global company* which is damaging the quality of people's lives and polluting the very water running through the valley in which we live and which we and the people living in Derby have to drink. We need more of such local protests, multiplied across the world to begin the development of the kind of society envisaged by Kropotkin and the other 19<sup>th</sup> century Socialists and Anarchists, a society where people, both as individuals and in communities are able to live sustainable, fulfilling and free lives.

Jonathan Simcock

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## Why write a Green Dictionary?

I wrote the *Green Dictionary* for several reasons. It was an excellent opportunity to spread and extend green and Anarchist ideas. The media were having an 'interested in green things' phase. I found an interested publisher, running at that time on Robert Maxwell's printers' pension fund money (I like to think I put some of it to good use), and to write your own dictionary has a strong ego appeal. And writing was a part of my organic farming phase. As an Anarchist who cannot avoid involvement with the 'normal' world, I like to think of myself as a virus in that system. Any opportunity to change it should be taken.

At that time (1990) two things were pre-occupying me. The organic movement was not moving, indeed it

was refusing to move, and the greens in general were being rather wet (remember David Icke?) Anarchists? Largely stuck in the comfy historical-politico rut as usual. The *Green Dictionary* project was, I hoped, both a personal outlet and a means of indicating ways and possibilities forward. It was also an opportunity to try to link up various concepts, to create wholes. Holism was also rising in the general consciousness, but nobody understood what it really meant. I had got as far as understanding that it was about the relationship between things. Certainly there was much synergy in the six months work involved.

Since then, unfortunately, there has been little fundamental change. The earnest people who believed they could

go on living exactly as they had always aspired to, adjusted to the needs of the planet by recycling bottles and paper. Meanwhile, at arms length, the fascist gardening of the planet to supply their needs continued at an increasing rate. We have entered a phase now where the problems are growing faster than the answers. And people know this, they just refuse to face it.

I was at a local 'current affairs' debate recently, in a minority of one as usual. The argument against my concerns was that more people had a better life now than at any time before, and all this talk of change and Anarchism would just upset things for no good reason. A picture of a burning candle came into my mind. As it got near the end, the bowl of the candle stick filled with

molten wax. The flame gradually burned brighter and brighter until it was brilliant. Then it suddenly went out, extinguished by its own excess.

I do not know where we are in candle power today, but I am certain that our traditional and very reasonable actions to convert individuals to Anarchism and/or green concerns is not by itself a viable tactic. It will simply not be fast enough to avoid the winner of the race amongst catastrophes queuing for the first place. Of course we have to continue trying to convert individuals to our view of Anarchist evolution. But evolution can be about more than this. It has three major modes; stasis, where slow changes may happen such as that we are achieving; sink, where a species may fail and disappear; and shift, where a relatively sudden change occurs. It is the shift mode I believe we should focus on.

The conditions for a human evolutionary change are gathering. Pressure of numbers, neoteny, and a successor active in the wings. I believe Rupert Sheldrake was right in his suppositions about communication fields working in life forms other than ones which we recognise. These may be

a means if we can focus Anarchistic beliefs into the wider world. The task before us is novel. If we are to both achieve our objectives of freedom and save enough of the human species for it to continue, we have to create an act of consciously directed evolution. Ideally by achieving a global mind-shift.

Anarchy, and all it implies in practice, is the key, the first step in conscious evolution. If we fail the scenario is one often rehearsed in science fiction; institutional clones GM engineered for their lives inside terra-formed domes, where the institutional forms extend their life into unknown futures. Outside the sinking remnant of humanity wastes away. Unbelievable? What are the options then?

Anti-globalisation may seem like a good target for protest. But it is just a symptom, not of capitalism as the arch-enemy, that is simply the life blood. Anarchists have always opposed the institution of government. A good start. But the real enemy is all institutions, all those extra-human structures that outlive us. We have to learn two things. First how to de-structure institutions, and second how to live without them. At present they control all our vital

needs. If we achieve this, humanity will stand on its own feet and be free at last.

Colin Johnson

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## Biographical Note

Colin Johnson: Born 1939, Clacton, Essex, enjoyed the end of WW2. Left school for beach full time. Usual jobs, fair grounds to consultant, engineering, design, management, now philosophy. Author of many books, co with partner Arabella Melville. Rebel without pause - Anarchism via Aldermaston march and in C'ttee of 100, then workers' co-operatives via Rowen Engineering, 'Factory for Peace,' Glasgow. Next stop, sexual liberation, High Court obscene publications circus for 'Libertine,' won trial, lost to Mafia, bankrupt. Pastures new, organic farming, belatedly to University, MA in Philosophy, more writing, like this in Total Liberty. Check Google: Arabella Melville too many Colin Johnsons.

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# THE WORM IN THE SOCIALIST APPLE

In Britain the chief propagandists for State-Socialism and social engineering were the Fabians and certain non-Fabian authoritarian Socialists such as H. M. Hyndman and Robert Blatchford. As well as statism, they also shared certain other unsavory attitudes, in a mixture favoured some years later by a certain demagogue with a funny moustache. First let's hear from the Fabians, the Webbs, Shaw and Wells. Beatrice Webb on the Jews: "the love of profit as distinct from other forms of money-earning is the strongest impelling motive of the Jewish race." They also lacked "social morality" (published in 1888 in *The Nineteenth Century* magazine.) Beatrice and Sidney Webb in *Industrial Democracy*, wrote that the Jews were "a constant influence for degradation." George Bernard Shaw, outdid them in anti-Semitism, calling Jews "the real enemy, the invader from

the East, the Druze, the ruffian, the oriental parasite..." (*Morning Post* 13th December 1925). H.G. Wells in *The Outline of History*: "The Jews looked for a special saviour, a messiah, who was to redeem mankind by the agreeable process of restoring the fabulous glories of David and Solomon, and bringing the whole world at last under the benevolent but firm Jewish heel."

Robert Blatchford, through his newspaper *THE CLARION*, was one of the chief propagandists for Socialism in Britain prior to the First World War. "It is obvious from Blatchford's writings that his military training had conditioned him to attempt to apply the solutions of war to the problems of peace. A parallel between a military society and a Socialist one has been drawn before, and Blatchford's approach was to be echoed by the nationalist movements which blossomed all over Europe in the 1920s

and 30s." (*Nationalism, Racialism and Early British Socialism* by Richard Lawson). In the *CLARION* he railed about the dangers of the immigration of the "poor unshorn and unsavory children of the Ghetto...and their increase (is) appalling", their habits were "unclean", and "their presence is often a menace and an injury to the English working classes." (Quoted by Edmund Silberner in "British Socialism and the Jews," *Historia Judaica*, XIV 1952, pp40-41).

H. M. Hyndman was for many years the "Mr. Socialism" of England. (Although detested by both Engels and William Morris). He was also a rank anti-Semite, militarist and all-round authoritarian. "The influence of the Jews at the present time is more noticeable than ever ... They are at the head of European capitalists ... In politics many

Jews are in the front rank. The press in more than one European capital is almost wholly in their hands. The Rothschilds are but the leading name among a whole series of capitalists ...the Jews are thus beyond dispute the leaders of the plutocracy of Europe ... another section of the same race form the leaders of that revolutionary propaganda which is making way against that very capitalist class represented by their own fellow Jews." (January 1881 *The Nineteenth Century*, "The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch.") Hyndman called the Boer War "the Jews' War", a result of the "Jewish International" ( H. M. Hyndman and *British Socialism* by Chushichi Tsuzuki Oxford University Press, 1961, p.128). In 1917 he complained about Jean Longuet of the French Socialists (Marx's grandson and anti-war, later anti-Bolshevik Socialist) "Of late the Jewish blood in him had

been manifesting itself chiefly in love for intrigue" (Ibid. p244).

Hyndman also favoured British re-armament, Britain's entry into WW1 and opposed Irish Home Rule cheering on "the bold front shown by the Ulstermen" (Ibid. p189) when they armed to oppose the Catholic majority. In 1916 Hyndman split with the British Socialist Party forming the National Socialist Party. (!!!) "Amongst its leading personalities was the patriotic Adolphe Smith, who collaborated with the authoress Nesta Webster in her once famous exposé of that peculiar alliance between capitalism, bolshevism and German imperialism", (Lawson). Nesta Webster was the crackpot responsible for the Illuminati and anti-Masonic fantasies still favoured by many crypto-nazis.

In fairness it should be pointed out that many early Socialists (such as

Proudhon, Marx and Bakunin) all had racial and anti-Semitic prejudices. But these were the prejudices of their era, were not "political" (Engels called anti-Semitism "the Socialism of fools" and were not mixed with other proto-nazi aspects - such as statism, centralism, eugenics, social engineering, social Darwinism, nationalism, imperialism and militarism, hostility toward democracy etc., in which the Fabians so obviously revelled. The early Socialists were still close to their classical liberal roots and thus were suspicious about giving the State too much power. Based upon information in "Nationalism, Racialism and Early British Socialism" by Richard Lawson (who seemed to approve of the racism, nationalism and militarism of the Fabians, Blatchford and Hyndman).

Larry Gambone

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## Anarchism Without Hyphens

### Bad Press Broadside 2

There is only one kind of Anarchist: Not two. Just one. An Anarchist, the only kind, as defined by the long tradition and literature of the position itself, is a person in opposition to authority imposed through the hierarchical power of the State. The only expansion of this that seems to me reasonable is to say that an Anarchist stands in opposition to any imposed authority. An Anarchist is a voluntarist.

Now, beyond that, Anarchists also are people and, as such, contain the billion-faceted varieties of human reference. Some are Anarchists who march, voluntarily, to the Cross of Christ. Some are Anarchists who flock, voluntarily, to the communes of beloved, inspirational father figures. Some are Anarchists who seek to establish the syndics of voluntary industrial production. Some are Anarchists who voluntarily seek to establish the rural production of the kibbutzim. Some are Anarchists who, voluntarily, seek to disestablish everything including their own association with other people; the hermits. Some are Anarchists who will deal, voluntarily, only in gold, will never

co-operate, and swirl their capes. Some are Anarchists who, voluntarily, worship the sun and its energy, build domes, eat only vegetables, and play the dulcimer. Some are Anarchists who worship the power of algorithms, play strange games, and infiltrate strange temples. Some are Anarchists who see only the stars. Some are Anarchists who see only the mud.

They spring from a single seed, no matter the flowering of their ideas. The seed is liberty. And that is all it is. It is not a Socialist seed. It is not a capitalist seed. It is not a mystical seed. It is not a determinist seed: it is simply a statement. We can be free. After that it's all choice and chance.

Anarchism, liberty, does not tell you a thing about how free people will behave or what arrangements they will make. It simply says the people have the capacity to make the arrangements.

Anarchism is not normative. It does not say how to be free. It says only that freedom, liberty, can exist.

Recently, in a libertarian journal, I read the statement that libertarianism is an ideological movement. It may well be. In a concept of freedom it, they, you, or we, anyone, has the liberty to engage in

ideology or anything else that does not coerce others denying their liberty. But Anarchism is not an ideological movement. It is an ideological statement. It says that all people have a capacity for liberty. It says that all Anarchists want liberty. And then it is silent. After the pause of that silence, Anarchists then mount the stages of their own communities and history and proclaim their, not Anarchism's, ideologies - they say how they, how they as Anarchists, will make arrangements, describe events, celebrate life, work.

Anarchism is the hammer-idea, smashing the chains. Liberty is what results and, in liberty, everything else is up to people and their ideologies. It is not up to *THE* ideology. Anarchism says, in effect, there is no such upper case, dominating ideology. It says that people who live in liberty make their own histories and their own deals with and within it.

A person who describes a world in which everyone must or should behave in a single way, marching to a single drummer is simply not an Anarchist. A person who says that they prefer this way, even wishing that all would prefer

that way, but who then says that all must decide, may certainly be an Anarchist. Probably is.

Liberty is liberty. Anarchism is Anarchism. Neither is Swiss cheese or anything else. They are not property. They are not copyrighted. They are old, available ideas, part of human culture. They may be hyphenated but they are not in fact hyphenated. They exist on their own. People add hyphens, and supplemental ideologies.

Liberty, finally, is not a box into which people are to be forced. Liberty is a space in which people may live. It does not tell you how they will live. It says, eternally, only that we can.

**Bad Press**

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## **Plague of the Law Locusts**

**W**e are overwhelmed with a locust-like plague of laws and regulations. There are literally hundreds of thousands of them, forming a black cloud over society. Areas of our lives held sacrosanct for centuries, areas off-limits to tyrants and dictators, are fodder for this pestilence. Consider the following: In many North American municipalities the following activities are now illegal; hanging out washing, owning a pickup truck, yard or garage sales, working out of your house, keeping a pet chicken, having more than two cats. School bake sales have been shut down by inspectors, Christmas carolers arrested, it is illegal to sell home-made jam, and some places you cannot even camp on your own property. There is the "Zero Tolerance" idiocy where schools expel students for making finger guns or having a one inch pen knife. The individual is dragged down and devoured by this hideous cloud of crawling, nibbling regulations.

There are so many of these law locusts you cannot recognize them as individuals. It is impossible to keep track of them all. Who in their right mind would even think that some of these regulations would come to exist in the first place? What this plague does is turn everyone into a criminal. One of the purposes behind criminalisation of

normal behavior is control. When everyone is a criminal, everyone is vulnerable and can be gotten at. Laws are always enforced selectively and most are made vague enough to allow this. As but one example, a book shop or gathering place deemed undesirable by the authorities can be closed under the pretext of fire or health regulations. A business deemed harmless but indulging in the same "infractions", on the other hand, is ignored. But regulation cannot be reduced just to a rational (but authoritarian) desire to control behavior. Some of these laws and regulations (like Zero Tolerance) seem to be the result of minds that are completely unhinged.

Ironically, when a real problem does exist, all these laws are useless. As an example, a friend of mine had a problem with a neighbor who had filled his house with garbage and was attracting rats and mice. The mice invaded my friend's house by the hundreds. He called the city, the health inspector and several other agencies to have something done about it, but to no avail. It took two years before the government sent in exterminators and forced the neighbor to clean up his mess.

Many regulations are rationalised away by the supposed need to protect the children. But one of the major reasons children need protection today is that the greater, voluntary protection of living in a community no longer exists. One of the reasons community no longer exists is that it has been eaten away by law locusts. Destruction of voluntarism by regulations increases alienation which undermines community. Furthermore, municipal by-laws segregated work, home and consumption into three separate and often distant geographical areas. Neighborhoods and towns built before the arrival of the Plague, as you still can see in the old parts of cities, integrated the three aspects and thus maintained a sense of community.

The plague is a fact contrary to the received wisdom of the day, by which society has become overly individualistic. Here exists a deliberate confusion of narcissism with individualism. The individualist desires a situation of maximum liberty and a minimum of coercion, while the narcissist is content with a maximum of consumer goods to satisfy every little childish whim and a minimum of voluntary social restraints such as

manners and consideration for others. We have a situation in which you can fill your house with pornography (not that I am for re-criminalising it) and yet get busted for hanging your shirt on a line.

Let's exterminate the locusts! We can't do much about the WTO and other mega-problems, but we can do something at the local level. (whatever happened to "think globally, act locally"?) How about mass civil disobedience; masses of people hanging out washing, holding "illegal" yard sales, camp-ins, and armies of "illegal" carol singers? Let's work to abolish all laws except those pertaining to coercive acts such as theft, fraud, assault and murder. Let's quarantine society against this evil plague ever arising again by suggesting that any new laws require a three-quarters majority of all citizens before they are passed.

Larry Gambone

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## **Book Review**

**ABOUT ANARCHISM** by  
**Nicolas Walter** Freedom Press  
**London £3.50**  
**ISBN 0-900384-90-5**

**I**'ve had Anarchist tendencies all my life and been openly Anarchist and active as such for nearly twenty years but the re-printing of this book has both taught me a bit, given me some food for thought and challenged my ideas.

The introduction to the original May '69 edition is one of the best bits of Anarchist writing I've seen, combining conviction with humility and can be paraphrased as 'this isn't perfect, I don't have all the answers and if you think I do I've failed'. While the introduction to this new edition includes details of the author's life and activity as an Anarchist

which for obvious reasons could not be printed in the original.

There are four sections: What Anarchists Believe, How Anarchists Differ, What Anarchists Want and What Anarchists Do, which covers as much ground as many larger and 'more authoritative' volumes on the subject of Anarchism. Clearly things have moved on since the original version was published over thirty years ago with the rise of new technologies, environmental concerns and increasing globalization and anti globalization combining with the fall of State Socialism in Eastern Europe to make some of this book appear dated, but the door is left open to anyone to build on the work and develop new ideas and approaches; indeed this is encouraged.

The section on 'What Anarchists Believe' has both the origins of Anarchism and the main Anarchist challenge to various forms of power relationships such as the State, capitalism religion and militarism.

Next comes a review of the major strands of Anarchism where the differences between different Anarchist ideas are examined and explained along with the similarities they possess with a conclusion which is ahead of it's time bearing similarities to chaos theory or recent debates in anthropology about how a person has different identities depending on what part of their life you look at. The 'What Anarchists Want' section starts with the individual and expands outwards to society, work etc. in a progression that many Anarchists I know have followed. This makes good sense as it could well be said that what Anarchists want is ever increasing freedom.

The last section on What Anarchists Do covers everything from thinking and talking to organising and various forms of action, although given the size of this book, not in great detail, but then again it doesn't have to as it isn't a check list of 'if someone is doing this then they are an Anarchist' but more an attempt to give an idea of the scope of activities that Anarchists get involved with.

If you want a reasonably priced introduction to Anarchism which is non sectarian and small enough to fit in the back pocket of most pairs of jeans then this is definitely a book for you.

Rory Bowskill

## Obituary Notice



### Peter Neville

I first met Peter when I moved to Birmingham in 1967. He was the contact/secretary for the Midlands Committee of 100, (the direct action group of the anti nuclear movement whose most prominent member and spokesman was Bertrand Russell). I had been a member of the West of England C 100, but there in the Midlands they had a 'gratis' office in the Cheney metal fasteners factory. He became a fairly frequent visitor to my house and we were both involved in those exciting days when so many of us were setting up many 'alternative' organizations and groups; The Peace Centre; The Arts Lab and Alternative Film Theatre; alternative magazines and newsletters; the growth of many peace and libertarian groups – CND and consensus run Peace Centre, and many others. He was also involved in many of our demonstrations for peace issues, anti racism, anti-apartheid, and anti authoritarian issues. We also enjoyed ourselves with great parties, often at my place. It wasn't till later when he had gone to London to lecture in sociology, that I fully appreciated that he was just as committed an Anarchist as I was and he has consistently kept that 'faith' until now. He was also later a strong supporter of the Anarchist Federation of Britain Internal Bulletin, which was, after he left Birmingham, produced usually at my place.

I had little direct contact with him for many years, and only heard of him intermittently, but for the last few years I had again re-established a close friendship, staying with him on my frequent visits to London to attend

CND Council, the Anarchist Bookfair and many demonstrations; when I returned from my disastrous attempt at sailing from New Zealand to Fiji and my near drowning in the South Pacific, he again put me up and lent me money. When visiting London I often was able to go to the Friday night London Anarchist Forum, which he diligently arranged for many years (and even often paid for the room!). He wrote many an article and many a letter on libertarian ideas and he was greatly interested in science fiction, particularly its relation to libertarian thought.

There were many people who have had their disagreements with him (I have always said that I probably disagree with every other Anarchist – that is an essential part of libertarian thought). However, most of those people, I think, have respected that he played an important role and was a tireless supporter and promoter of Anarchism, even though, for all his life, he suffered from diabetes and associated illnesses, particularly in recent years, for which he made very little complaint, even to close friends. The movement, if we may call it that, not only will miss him, it will be the poorer for his death.

Peter M Le Mare

I cannot pin-point exactly the date Peter and I started co-operating on various Anarchist projects, but it was during mid 1997. Like many other readers, subscribers and contributors to Freedom I had long been aware of his frequent letters and occasional articles in that journal. Peter certainly had a long history in the Anarchist movement, not just in London but in other cities where he lived such as Birmingham and in both CND and the Anarchist Federation of Great Britain during the 1960s. He was also for many years the mainstay of the London Anarchist Forum, which he regularly attended and for which he regularly sent out publicity across Britain.

Peter wrote about aspects of his experience of working with the Anarchist Federation of Great Britain in the first edition of Total Liberty. Peter also worked with me in helping to set up the loose organisation known as the Anarchist Information Network (A.I.N.) with its inaugural meeting at Conway Hall in September 1997. He also provided much support to *Total*

*Liberty*, being a subscriber, writing articles and letters, and in addition distributing the magazine on a regular basis at meetings of the London Anarchist Forum. Peter also provided regular help with TL's bookstall at the annual London Anarchist Bookfair, and as recently as April this year, drove up to Derbyshire to help out with the Belper Green Fair, where he staffed the Anarchist bookstall for the day.

Peter was not a narrow individual, he had broad tastes and he had many other interests than Anarchism. I recall staying at his flat in West London and being amazed by the wall to wall bookcases crammed with thousands of books and journals in each room, even in the bedrooms, and was also impressed by Peter's enthusiasm for classical music. He also had a keen interest in History and Archaeology and could write knowledgeably about his own area of expertise, sociology. Peter also had a keen sense of humour, which occasional showed through in his articles. It is fitting therefore that his last written contribution to *Total Liberty* featured in this issue is a sociological piece on *Science, Theory and Ideology*. Peter Neville died on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> August and will be sorely missed. He is survived by his mother Mrs Mary Neville who lives in Morecambe.

Jonathan Simcock

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## BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND POLITICS

“What an individual ‘thinks of himself’ - not simply the hidden economic laws... that ostensibly guide ‘history’ has a very profound effect on how he or she acts as a social being, and deeply influences the course of social development, Marx to the contrary notwithstanding.” Murray Bookchin, *Urbanization Without Cities*, p. 186

Our ideas about the British Empire have been overly influenced by Marxism. Up until now that is. Historians (\*) are beginning to ask the question “What exactly did the imperialists think they were doing?” An examination of government documents, letters, journals

and newspaper articles of the Age of Empire gives a better understanding of the thinking and actions of the British ruling classes than merely imputing economic or racial motives. What they desired, and partly succeeded in doing, was to reproduce in the colonies and dominions the sort of society they believed existed in Britain. This was a society ruled by a landed aristocracy which based its ideology upon a tradition of hierarchy, authority and paternalism; a world view profoundly anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic and anti-modern. (Of course, the imperialists were happy to use such fine fruit of modernity like gun boats and bombing planes.) That such ideology was partly fantasy does not detract from its importance as a motivating factor.

This essentially “Burkean-conservative” ideology had influence until well into the Twentieth Century and had an important effect upon both Britain and its “possessions.” At home, it meant the dominance of the Tory Party and a popular conservatism based upon paternalism and the pageantry of Empire. In the dominions, the founding principles of government and society were the Burkean ones of “peace, order and good government” and not the dangerously egalitarian American concept, “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” In the colonies it meant the imposition of allegedly traditional rulers such as emirs, princes and grand chiefs in opposition to the emerging European-educated native middle classes and the decentralizing traditions of tribal peoples.

One of the causes of the demise of British liberalism (\*\*\*) now becomes apparent. Contrary to Marxist theology, British liberalism never became hegemonic. The Marxist belief that liberalism declined as a result of capitalism's need for protected imperial markets is little more than economic reductionism, and overlooks the fundamental weakness of British liberalism. Liberals may have abolished the Corn Laws, extended the franchise and other reforms. They may have held power under Gladstone on a number of occasions. But these successes did not mean liberal values were dominant in the society, most particularly the ruling classes. “Bourgeois ideology”, if liberalism can be reduced to a Marxist cliché, which is highly doubtful, never triumphed in Britain.

What was dominant was a modified Toryism, the chief architect of which was the renegade liberal, Benjamin Disraeli. Queen Victoria's favorite PM helped create a popular conservatism, one based upon paternalistic reforms, a propaganda of jingoistic imperial nationalism with the colonies hyped as providing a glorious future for poor Britons, under-employed professionals and failed sons of the aristocracy. Along with this, came imperial pageants and a vast increase in titles, honours, medals and all manner of medieval frou-frou. The love of status and hierarchy was re-enforced and the populace was encouraged to admire and emulate its rulers.

Why should the success or failure of British liberalism matter to Anarchists? There seems to be a relationship between the strength of liberalism and the strength of libertarian and populist movements in a country. Liberalism had hegemony in the USA and to a lesser extent in France. Both countries had mass libertarian, or at least anti-governmental movements, from the 19th century and right up to today. This has not been the situation in either Britain or its former dominions. You have to go back to the days of Chartism and Robert Owen (also the high point of British liberalism), to find a mass libertarian-oriented radicalism. After the Chartists, came conservative trade unionism and in the early 20th century the organized working class became incorporated into the statist Labour Party. A syndicalist tendency existed, but this declined after the First World War. In Canada and Australia, One Big Union syndicalists took control of the trade union movement, but for only a brief period, and labour soon adopted State Socialism. Populist movements were strong in Western Canada, but never threatened the Federal Government the way their American counterparts did. A country with popular retrograde tendencies means a much harder struggle for libertarians than one where reaction has been pushed to the political margins.

Within recent years in Canada, there has been much talk of “a decline of deference” (I understand similar comments have been made about Britain) Forty years ago most people admired and trusted the authorities; not so today. Canadians demand greater individual liberty and generally distrust

government and those in authority. "We are becoming selfish individualists like the Americans" whine the Tories of both left and right. The reason we were deferential to begin with was the Burkean conservative ideology of Empire. That it took until the 1980's to shed this deference shows the burden such history placed upon us.

We can gain an insight into the triumph of authoritarian reformism through a Burkean-conservative interpretation of 19th and early 20th century British and colonial history. As before mentioned, imperial conservatives were never in principle opposed to reform. The desirable reforms were paternalistic - those not undermining the hierarchical structure of authority relations. To the ruling classes, bureaucratic State reformism was a safe alternative to either liberal laissez-faire

or working class mutualism and syndicalism, both of which threatened to undermine the sacred order. People have often wondered about the fondness shown by the British upper classes for Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin in the 1930's. These dictators epitomized those hierarchical, elitist and anti-democratic tendencies, the ideological heart of the imperial conservatives and their effete Oxbridge offspring

We should not deny the importance of tradition and the extent to which ideology can alter or modify economic and social conditions. It would be wise for Anarchists in societies with a liberal tradition to build upon this rather than import ideas and examples from other cultures. For societies heretofore dominated by a highly authoritarian past, it is necessary to point out there is never just one tradition. Authority gives rise to

revolt. If the tradition of authority is older than the tradition of rebellion it is only by minutes! This alternative, libertarian tradition can be used to counter the authoritarian tradition.

(\*) See David Cannadine's *ORNAMENTALISM - How The British Saw Their Empire*, Oxford, 2001.

(\*\*) By liberalism I mean the classical liberalism of Charles Edward Fox, Richard Cobden, John Bright and William Gladstone - limited government, individual liberty and free trade - not modern or "progressive" liberalism which is a type of right-wing social democracy.

Larry Gambone

## LETTERS

Oxford

Dear Total Liberty

Anarchism may "not posit any particular economic system" (your credo), but in advocating property, cutting taxes, it's got itself an economic policy. If it cuts (indirect) taxes, it cuts the cost of living and therefore labour costs. This makes labour intensive systems, like organic farming, economically viable, undercutting agro-chemicals. By reducing the cost of living, it enables small craftsmen, such as Dennis Gould's letterpress (Vol 3. No.2 Letters), to survive because they need less turnover to make a living, undercutting advanced technology.

Cutting taxes will produce a regression of technology. For example in America: 'Swingline has been able to abandon the expensive machinery it ran in Queens (in New York) and replace it with long lines of Mexicans putting staplers together by hand' (The Guardian). Cutting taxes means they can afford fewer soldiers to drive Mexican peasants off their land and into the factories.

Notice that ALL technology regresses. You can't pick and choose.

Best wishes  
Richard Hunt.

London

Dear TL

Thanks for sending me a copy of Total Liberty. I'm not so much a didacto philosophical Anarchist as a libertarian class struggle communist but what the hell.

Anyway it is good to see you use some of my cartoons (TL Spring/Summer page 9), nice surprise to see them printed in quality ink. Here's a couple of little picture books for you, anti-copyright for non-commercial purposes.

Bye for now  
Paul

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