

anarchist fortnightly Freedom

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STINKING FISH!

This writer has a vested interest in fish: it is an important part of his diet. He also has a vested interest in the oceans that produce the fish. Unlike the farmers who, for better or for worse (mainly the latter), are involved in the chemical and industrial agricultural industry that has taken over in the west, the oceans are only polluted by industrial waste (forget about the salmon farming which is another form of chemical agriculture). Our point is that unlike the different varieties of farmers, and land ownership, theoretically (will a lawyer advise us?) no one owns the seas and the oceans. Yet once again in the case of the European Union, fishing quotas have absorbed the ministers for hours and hours – indeed, at one stage it was reported to have collapsed after the all-night sitting to decide which countries' quota was to be X tons of soles and X tons of herrings, etc.

Needless to say the British government is congratulating itself on having done more than it expected from its European enemies (delete: its European partners). The whole thing is a farce and on this occasion the government's concern was to show Northern Ireland that their quota was to be increased. In other words, fish for government votes from the Ulster Unionists in view of the Major government's minority in the House.

All this is beside the point. What is at stake is the fish population worldwide, not just in the narrow interest of the North Sea. The American journal *Time* recently published an excellent ten-page feature on what was happening to the fish stocks as a result of the growing fleet of worldwide fishing trawlers, some of which are able to bring in 400 tons of fish in one trawl.

INTERNATIONAL DOCKERS 24-HOUR STRIKE CALLED

A worldwide storm is set to break over the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company in just six weeks, with a 24-hour international shut-down of the docks industry now planned for 20th January.

The action will be both a coordinated show of solidarity with locked-out Liverpool dockers and their families, an attack on shipping lines which allow scabs to service their vessels or handle their containers, and a demonstration that dockers throughout the world are taking up the fight against casual labour, deregulation, and privatisation.

At least fifteen different dockers' unions and the International Transport Workers' Federation are stating support for the plan. The International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union on the North American West Coast have taken a lead; last week their International Executive Board moved a 24-hour blockade in all ILWU-organised ports and this decision reflects the huge groundswell within ILWU locals.

Liverpool dockers are also welcoming the new ITF position, which calls on "affiliated organisations to undertake all possible legal trade union strategies to put pressure on the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and on shipping firms carrying cargoes that have been loaded by strike-breakers in Liverpool".

These words will be tested in the North European ports of Antwerp, Rotterdam, Bremerhaven and Hamburg, which hold the key to transatlantic shipping lines ACL, CAST and CanMar, connecting North America with Liverpool and Europe. While Swedish dockers have hit ACL for twelve hours every week since the summer, Danish dockers struck in solidarity with Liverpool in October, Le Havre held up an OOCL vessel for sixteen hours and hosted the recent

international dockers' meeting, and the German OTV union Congress resolved to put industrial pressure on Mersey Docks and shipping lines calling at Liverpool, attempts to engage the Belgian and Dutch ports in solidarity action have yet to bear fruit.

When ACL pulled out from Liverpool for four weeks last summer, Mersey Docks was in a panic. Now, despite their poor share price and increasingly bad press, the company continues to put on a brave face. If ACL, CAST, CanMar, ZIM, Andrew Weir, or Gracechurch were to pull out now, MDHC would be back behind the eight ball. But that can only happen when shipping lines discover they are all in trouble half way round the world after calling in a scab port.

Fifteen months into the lock-out, Mersey Docks thought Liverpool dockers and their families were looking for any way out and would grab the latest offer of 41 ancillary jobs and £25,000 severance in the run-up to Christmas. But in fact, as one rank and file docker put it last week:

"I find I'm getting stronger and more determined to win this, to make sure that we go back. I will admit that I do get disillusioned at times, especially when I go down the picket line and see three ships there. I say to myself, 'is this working, this international set up?' And I think everybody must ask themselves that question."

But when you go round the country and see the commitment that people have for you, you owe it to them as well to win a victory, not only for ourselves but for other trade unionists. In Sweden, the dockers took me down and showed me the ACL coming in, took a note of the time, and took me back the next day and said, 'there is the ACL line there, no work being carried out and it won't start until twelve hours after it docked'.

So I have seen it in operation, and I think it is tremendous that anybody can give that support to somebody in another country, and I only hope that we will be able to return the favour to those people that supported us.

I want to see the scabs out of the port, and I want to see the men back that want to go back, and I want to see the union back in there calling the shots, and let's have decent conditions. That's what I want to see in the port of Liverpool."

And much to our surprise both *The Sunday Telegraph* (22nd December) with "Too many fishermen, too few fish" and *The Independent* (21st December) with "Britain's fishy rule in the quota-hopping scandal" and "Trawlerman's chief sold quota to Dutch" confirm what *Freedom* has been saying throughout the last year.*

It's not a question of scoring points. It's once again the anarchists trying to tell the people of the world that if they don't declare to the world and the governments and not least to the fishermen (and we don't include the real fishermen with their open boats fishing offshore, and not 'hoovering' the sea bottom) that the oceans belong to the people of the world, in another ten years there won't be any fish to speak of.

Unless we the people worldwide positively demonstrate to reduce the fishing fleets worldwide, and their net capacities, who knows what will be left in the oceans in ten years time?

Understandably the British government congratulates itself on the token increases it has managed to get from the EU for some species. This is all rubbish (in spite of more rubbish about satellite control of the boats as to what they are catching). We could believe that the thousands of fishing boats that trawl the seas could be monitored if there was an inspector on every boat and that every inspector was a saint, but in the capitalist world not only are there not enough inspectors but neither are there enough saints.

Of course we are cynical. Not only the capitalist system but also the fishermen themselves provide all the facts and data one

Up to now the usual British hypocrisy was that the foreigners were cheating and fishing in British waters and then selling the fish in Spain ... these patriots are the very people who have sold their quotas to the Spaniards and the Dutch.

needs. *The Independent* (21st December) devotes three-quarters of a page to "Britain's fishy role in the quota-hopping scandal". Nothing new for *Freedom*, where we have been pointing out that the 'scandal' of 'quota-hopping' involving the Spaniards (and the Dutch incidentally) is that British (yes) fishermen have found it profitable to sell their quotas to the Spaniards and anybody who wanted to increase their quotas. In fact the Dutch have also acquired a large percentage of the British quota. Up to now the usual British hypocrisy was that the foreigners were cheating and fishing in British waters and then selling the fish in Spain ... and so we were deprived of a part of the British quota. These patriots are the very people who have sold their quotas to the Spaniards and the Dutch. In which case, why shouldn't the Spaniards and the Dutch sell their catch where it is most profitable? *Freedom* has been saying this all along, but wait, here's the last straw.

According to *The Sunday Telegraph*'s (22nd December) whole-page headline: "Trawlermen's chief 'sold quota to Dutch'". We quote verbatim:

"A company owned by a leader of Britain's most militant trawlermen's organisation is believed to



photograph by Vernon Richards
Fish auction on the Costa Brava

have sold fishing rights to a 'quota-hopping' Dutch firm.

Documents passed to *The Sunday Telegraph* show a draft agreement for the owners of the Scottish trawler Honeybourne to sell 50 tons of its plaice quota to a Netherlands-based company.

George Wiseman, who at the time was the joint owner of the vessel, is a director of the Fishermen's Association Ltd (FAL) and a prominent member of the Save Britain's Fish campaign. Both groups are fiercely opposed to quota-hopping where foreign trawlers buy up the right to take Britain's share of Europe's dwindling fish stocks.

Last week Mr Wiseman confirmed that his company had transferred portions of its fishing quotas to 'British-registered vessels' among a 34-strong group in the Grimsby-based North Sea Producers' Organisation. He said: 'I know what people are saying about me selling out to a Dutchman. I'm not prepared to say such-and-such a vessel is a quota-hopper because that could land me in court. This is a private matter – what I do with my money is my own business.' But John Williams, the secretary of the producers' organisation, said: 'At least half our members are what people would call quota-hoppers'.

He added: 'They may be registered in this country but they are foreign-owned and they land their catch usually in the Netherlands or Belgium. The market in quotas began because fish is a more valuable commodity on the Continent than it is at home. It is just a question of business.'

As an example of British hypocrisy, can you beat it?

* 'The Fish 'Crisis': Don't Blame the Fish ... nor the Spaniards' (13th January 1996); 'Cheating Fishermen? No, not the Spaniards this time' (10th February 1996); 'Chips Galore ... But what about the Fish' (20th July); 'The Fishing Scandal is Here' (19th October 1996)

"To argue against any breach of liberty from the ill use that may be made of it is to argue against liberty itself, since all is capable of being abused."
Lord Lytton

**The Flickering Flame:
Liverpool Dockers on film
page 2**

LABOUR: ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS

For years and years Hackney, one of the most impoverished boroughs in London, has been ruled by Labour. At various times the governing group has come out with Left noises, but the reality has been somewhat different. There has been a consistent attack from the Labour council on the large squatting community in Hackney, all sorts of corruption scandals have been exposed, and the council has regularly implemented cuts demanded by central government as well as enthusiastically implementing the poll tax and hounding those who refused to end/or could not pay.

Now the full extent of how far the local state is prepared to go, no matter who is governing, is revealed. Hackney is planning on bringing in a series of cuts over the next few years to the staggering amount of £22 million. Translated into how this will affect the area means that more than 300 jobs to go, worsening conditions, lower pay for council workers and charges for vulnerable people who use social services provided by the council and who can ill afford to pay them.

For cleaning and catering staff this means a loss of between £40-50 per week for those who are already low paid. Free school meals and pensioner's meals will be cut. As for libraries, well, already seven out of fourteen have closed and further massive cuts are on the way.

In Parks and Gardens, the workforce of 42 will be reduced to sixteen with four supervisors.

In Refuse and Street Cleaning workers will lose sick pay and industrial injury pay, as well as five days annual leave. The working week will go up from 35 hours to 39 with no extra pay.

There will be a two-year pay freeze, monthly pay instead of weekly, with no change-over

Hackney Anarchist Communist - Legal bulletin of the ACF - Number 2 Winter 96 Free or donation

Resistance

So this is what they have been planning - Wages Slashed! Services Smashed!

We have been stuffed! The rate of inflation is 10% but wages are 5% down. The only thing that has happened is a bunch of cheating crooks in the Tory government have taken the money out of the pockets of the working class.

Sod Restraint! Union bosses (just the Labour Party) are incapable of fighting the bosses for us. There is nothing to gain by negotiations or restraint. Fight or lose - that is the choice. This attack is part of the boss class attack on work.

Strike tactics need to be backed up with other action these days. We are not alone. Europe has resisted all across Europe. France was attacked by angry strikers. Hundreds of thousands marched in Barcelona against public action wage freezes. Strikers are breaking out across Germany. The action group farmers are blocking the roads. The left (Socialist Worker and left) are not what we need to fight. The only thing that has happened is a bunch of cheating crooks in the Tory government have taken the money out of the pockets of the working class.

Remember the Labour Party is running this show for the boss class and most union officials are Labour Party hacks.

For other working class action: **Harvey Soley Group** (Community and Trade Union activists based up in Tottenham) Box 2474 London N16 **Golden Rules Centre** Hackney based Trade Union and Community activists network active in many campaigns to protect working class people. (For use of the name Resistance at conferences to ACF using the name and we hope not too confusing) 356 Gernance Road E5 0181 533 7111 **Anarchist Black Cross** (Financial support group) for more information write to ABC 121 Roston Road E6 3L 0181 274 9555

Hackney Anarchist Communist Federation has called for these ideas to be implemented in a leaflet, and two issues of a free local news-sheet, *Hackney Anarchist Communist Resistance*, which seem to go down really well (copies available from ACF, c/o 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1, enclosing an sae).

period, which will bring hardship to many, as well as further job losses.

In Social Services there will be job losses, charges for community care service, cuts in homecare, use of unskilled agency workers which will place the old and infirm at risk. The council will no longer pay telephone rental charges for the disabled and chronically ill. The Oakland Nursing Home for the elderly will close, as well as the Marie Lloyd and Kingshold elderly day centres and the Greenwood Road Mental Health Hostel. The two other mental health centres will be merged, meaning less places available.

To aggravate this situation, in a borough chronically hit by poverty and unemployment, the East London and City Health Authority has announced cuts that will affect the most vulnerable in Hackney.

All of this represents a massive onslaught on working class people. There has been, naturally enough, anger at these vicious cuts. The councillors have shown utter contempt for Hackney council workers and residents in their attitudes and pronouncements. At the large rally attended by between 300-400 people in the last week of November, there was much anger expressed in chants and some of the speeches given on the steps of Hackney Town Hall, with incendiary speeches and the advocating of direct action and sabotage. The local union bosses were just able to contain this anger, appealing for calm and a reasoned approach when some were talking about

storming the council meeting that was taking place. At the next demonstration and rally on 2nd December there was an auxiliary police force - yep, a line of local union officials as the first line of defence around the Town Hall, behind which the official forces of the state stood, pleased at 'this little help from their friends'. This was repeated on 17th December when, after the one-day strike that day supported by many council workers, the union forces of law and order were further strengthened and the council narrowed the wide entrance to the Town Hall by erecting scaffolding around the main doorway.

Some of the good things that emerged at the rallies were the speeches where it was stated time and time again that whoever was elected to the council, they would impose cuts. There were calls for dumping the politicians.

Following the unions and the Leftist organisations is doomed to failure. All their politics are based on the ideas of leadership (good/bad leaders), on representation and mediation. They impose themselves as brokers between the working class and the employers, as well as sabotaging struggles.

The anarchist answer is collective decision making, mass meetings, mandated delegates subject to instant recall by the meetings, and direct action - action unmediated by union bosses or Leftist politicians. Action that means we move from a position of defence to one of attack.

What Hackney Labour is doing in Hackney is exactly what Labour will do if it comes to power in 1997. We must be prepared to fight, whoever wins the election.

Hackney Anarchist Communist Federation

— THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS' DISPUTE —

THE FLICKERING FLAME

"They're sat in their homes like gangsters' molls or fictional Mafia wives" said Sue Mitchell, the wife of a Liverpool docker and active in the 'Women on the Waterfront' dockers' support group, of the wives of the directors of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. This was on one of those rare occasions when the media machine has given any publicity to nearly 500 Liverpool dockers who have been fighting for their rights during the past fifteen months. Now reduced to penury, with life savings gone, many are facing house repossession, but apart from the very occasional column inch in a broadsheet

Ronnie Scott

There have been long obituaries of Ronnie Scott, the London jazz club owner, who died recently. It is pertinent to mention that in the '60s Ronnie allowed us to use *without charge* his Gerrard Street premises for a congress of the Anarchist Federation of Britain, which he attended himself in the company of Spike Milligan.

This was a rather run-down place and of course not at all comparable to the architectural masterpiece in Frith Street where all the jazz sounds are relayed to the ears in perfect acoustic. But it was a typically generous gesture from Ronnie for which we are still grateful. To quote Philip Sansom: "Ronnie Scott had an encyclopaedic mind as far as jazz was concerned. From a snatch of music he was able to tell who the musician was. Ronnie was also a brilliant raconteur."

Philip remembers him enthusing to his audience about the quality of the food. "Eat as much as you like. Our kitchen is the best in Soho." Then he would add, looking at his evening-dressed Hooray-Henry audience and add *sotto voce* "Fifty thousand flies cannot be wrong."

Let us hope Ronnie gets a decent burial.

John Retz

and John Pilger's article in *The Guardian Weekend Magazine* on 23rd November there has been a news blackout. But then on the 18th December BBC2 showed a 30-minute film *The Flickering Flame* made by Ken Loach, the director of *Land and Freedom*, which gave a moving account of this struggle for justice, mainly by leaving the dockers and their wives to tell the story for themselves.

FROM CASUALISATION AND BACK

What it was like to work on the docks in the early days was described by dockers now retired and the story then taken up by those in their forties and fifties. In the 1930s and up to 1967 dock work was organised in a system worse in some ways than slavery. Dockers stood in pens and were hired by the day or half day, when there was work, by a tap on the shoulder from a supervisor. If your face didn't fit you didn't work. The National Dock and Harbour Scheme, established in 1947, gave some protection from the barbarities of casualisation, but it was not until 1967 after an

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all out strike that it was finally abolished. The withdrawal of this protection in 1989 by the government provoked a national strike, but in the face of weak union support this gradually collapsed in port after port. Finally Ron Todd, the then General Secretary of the TGWU, at a meeting persuaded even the Liverpool dockers to give in, with promises from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and Norman Fowler (then Secretary of State for Employment) that there would be no return to casualisation. Did they keep their word? They side-stepped the promise by setting up new

semi-independent stevedore companies, not party to the agreement and so casualisation was back. Then between 1989 and '91 with the introduction of containerisation the work force was reduced by two thirds. In 1993 new contracts were imposed in the container terminal - work 114 hours in three weeks with shifts of up to twelve hours for lower wages and no overtime. Casualisation was indeed back but it was now called flexible working.

STRIKE OR LOCK-OUT?

On 25th September 1995 a group of workers for Torside, one of the new Stevedore companies, was asked to work overtime so that a ship could sail that night. This was no problem except that the company also announced that the standard two hour overtime block would now be one hour. When five of the shift went to see the boss about this they were summarily sacked, as were the other eighteen on the shift when they refused to work until their colleagues were reinstated. All the other dockers were then sacked for refusing to cross the picket line. An attempt to divide the men failed when an offer of 200 new contracts of £4 an hour with initially no holiday or sick pay was unanimously refused. Meanwhile the work is being done by untrained casual labour for low pay and with no protection.

UNION SUPPORT?

Sometimes it seems the men have had to fight two bosses, with the employer in league with the union bureaucracy. In March '96 Bill Morris General Secretary of the TGWU promised the dockers, many of whom had paid their union dues for decades, they would not be allowed to starve, but by August they were told that the TGWU could not do much because of government legislation. In the words of Bill Morris: "The strike in Liverpool docks is unofficial and still continuing. In these circumstances it would be inappropriate for me to be officially involved". Another name for this Hall of Shame is Jack Dempsey who, as TGWU Liverpool Docks Officer of the union, is directly responsible for the dockers. He was told early on, according to Bernard Bradley, boss of Torside, that to stop the strike the five men

originally sacked could be reinstated, but for no known reason, according to the BBC film, he failed to pass on this information to anyone. If he had done so the men would have returned to work. Dempsey did not agree to be interviewed. In one sense this was a dispute that need never have happened, in another it was inevitable in one form or another, for there is a hidden agenda to destroy the dockers' culture, power and solidarity. Parallels with the miners' strike are obvious. The union bosses may have no shame, but there is perhaps a little fear in their hearts, a fear that their power is declining because they are losing the support of their members.

SOLIDARITY AND SUCCESSES

The dockers had to find out the hard way who their friends were. Most of their support has come from dockers overseas who recognised that economically the world is one and if Liverpool is defeated they will be next. There have been expressions of solidarity by direct action of various kinds and financial support from at least 22 countries, well detailed in the film. About the time the film was shown a new 'ultimate closing offer' was made of up to forty jobs with the alternative of a £28,000 severance payment. But this dispute is not about money and at a mass meeting of dockers on 20th December this offer was unanimously rejected. There is also news of an intended international stoppage in support of the dockers on 20th January.

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

The film ends with the anniversary National Day of Action last 30th September when thousands gathered in the streets of Liverpool for a mass picket to demonstrate their solidarity and support. Just two quibbles about the film, Ken - so the dockers were joined by environmental groups on this day of action - was it only environmentalists? And was it just a coincidence that the main picture of the demonstration was crowded with SWP placards? But never mind. If you missed it, find someone who videoed it, see it and get your friends to see it, for it is unlikely to be shown again even on a minority channel like BBC2.

HS

— NEGOTIATING THE DOLE QUEUE —

FOOD FOR FECKLESS FOLK

Last month, in a letter to *The Independent*, Mr Paul Ashton of Eastbourne wrote: "It is not levels of Income Support that need to be addressed by the poverty lobby but the mis-allocation of these resources on non-essentials like tobacco, alcohol and the purchase of lottery tickets".

Mr Ashton tells us that: "For a single person, social security benefit of £50 a week on top of housing expenses is sufficient to buy food and other essentials ... Similarly a couple with two children should be able to manage on £119 of Income Support plus housing costs without children or parents going without meals."

Moreover, Mr Ashton's moral prudence is matched by his flair for household management to rival Mrs Beeton or Eliza Acton. Alert to all the possibilities of modern life, his letter informs us: "Nutritious food is available cheaply in supermarkets. On Monday we had three friends round for dinner; the cost of our meal of garlic and herb chicken pieces, brussels, carrots and roast potatoes followed by apple pie and cream came to less than £1.50 per head".

It is reasonable to surmise that a fair chunk of the British middle classes, and most of those in work, would prefer to accept Paul Ashton's account.

STAYING ALIVE ON STATE BENEFITS

In the 1930s the *News of the World* reported on a man who spent less than four shillings (20p) a week on food for his family. The diet included three wholemeal loaves, dripping, onions, carrots, cheese, broken biscuits, dates, oranges and a tin of evaporated milk. At that time some were suggesting that workers and the unemployed would do better chewing raw carrots, and that the very poor could camp out in tents in our municipal parks.

The ingenuity of the British better-off classes, when it comes to telling the poor how to survive, is bloody marvellous.

One wonders why they don't recommend the jobless and the poor follow the example of the

French villagers in the past and go out to gather wild fruit and herbs from the hedgerows. In his book *The Identity of France*, Fernand Braudel records: "In Escandorgue, a narrow plateau of volcanic rock south of Larzac ... the villagers could gather hazel-nuts, sloes, wild cherries, beechmast, rowan berries, strawberries, mushrooms, wild honey and any number of herbs for the cooking pot - dandelion, latcheron à la broco, ensaladeta fina, bezegue, bourrut, repouchou, lengua de buou, asparagus, salsify, wild leeks."

Those who have read Harold Sculthorpe's *Freedom to Roam* will realise that in densely populated England this kind of suggestion will be resisted by the landlords and farming interests. The urban poor would strip the countryside in no time, and breaches of property and land law would be bound to follow. Monsieur Braudel hints at other possible civic transgressions: "there was always hunting or poaching: the local traditional recipe for hare was to roast it on a spit 'made of hazel-wood, basted with bacon fat melted in a lambdau, a perforated tin funnel, well heated ... served with a sauce containing the animal's blood and chopped liver, and plenty of garlic'."

There is always room for ingenuity and imagination in cooking and acquiring food, whether it be got from hedgerows or supermarkets, as Mr Ashton suggests, but there are limits. The army of poor in the North West of England, the most densely populated part of Europe after Holland, would not be able to survive long on their receding Green Belt areas. Much of this 'free food' on the roadsides is probably contaminated or otherwise polluted.

Supermarket food, particularly vegetables, can be expensive because food failing to reach some cosmetic standard, like banana-shaped cucumbers, are often thrown away. Waste is an important part of modern systems of distribution for which supermarkets are to blame because they dominate food marketing and place restrictions on producers, such as the rejection of banana-shaped cucumbers,

which push up prices for the consumer who can't get to fresh vegetable markets in the town centres.

FROM OATS TO CHICKEN GIBLETS

The advice Mr Ashton and others are giving to the poor today is the same as that given to the poor by their betters in all times of crisis. Orwell commented on a "disgusting public wrangle about the minimum sum on which a human being could keep alive" in 1937. In 1795, when a labourer's wages weren't enough "to provide even a bare and comfortless existence" (see the Hammond's studies) the rich had a remedy. Their remedy was that a judicious change of diet would enable the labourer to face the fall of wages with equanimity.

Paul Ashton recommends that the hard-up go and rummage in supermarkets for 'cheap' and 'nutritious' food. Others would have us go glean the countryside. Perhaps some anarchists would have us rent an allotment.

To the rich in the late eighteenth century, just as to the wealthy of today, the solution seemed to lie in the 'simple life'. Robinson Crusoe was their ideal, and as Mr and Mrs Hammond say: "an infinite vista of kitchen reform beckoned to their ingenious imaginations, and many of them began to persuade themselves that the miseries of the poor arose less from the scantiness of their incomes than from their own improvidence and unthriftiness."

The whole ethos of the rich of those times was that the poor should change their habits and adapt their appetites. The wealthy would set an example by cutting off pastry in the worst days "and restricting their servants to a quatern loaf a week each". One answer seemed to be to get oatmeal, formerly fed to horses, down the throats of the poor. "If no horses except post horses and perhaps cavalry horses were allowed oats, there would be plenty for the poor" (see Wilberforce's speech, Parliamentary Register).

Mr Ashton's late twentieth century diet for the poor includes 'chicken pieces'. What is a 'chicken piece' when it's at home? Which is rather like asking the philosophical question

of what is a heap and do five grains of sand constitute a 'heap'?

A chicken piece could be something called a 'chicken goujon' which a Tesco's spokesman tells me is slices of chicken priced at £1.59 a pound. Or it could mean coagulated bits of chicken blown off the bone to form chicken burgers. Or I saw four chicken thighs at about £1.50 and weighing under a pound.

Of course, there are other kinds of chicken pieces which Spaniards exiled in Paris would economise on. There is the head, the neck, the feet and the giblets. The Parisians would throw these items away or give them to the cat, but the resourceful Spaniard would use the feet and head in soup, while the giblets could form a stew with tomatoes. Thus the Spaniard might get food free from the French butchers; food which the French would only feed to their pets.

But I mustn't give Mr Ashton and his rich friends too many ideas. Otherwise the eighteenth century oats, which were forced down the gullets of the poor labourers, will be replaced by chicken giblets to be foisted on the feckless benefit claimants of the late twentieth century.

SURVIVAL COSTS

To Mr Ashton and his Eastbourne friends a meal costing £1.50 a head may seem cheap, but on the dole in Lancashire we wouldn't see it like that. Someone on benefits would have to think more than twice before inviting three friends round for dinner as he does. One needs at least three square meals a day and it would be unthinkable that they should cost anything like £1.50 for someone on a dole giro.

The Eastbourne set seem to ignore the problem of replacement costs for the long-term unemployed: what happens when the kettle or washer burns out, or clothes wear out, or bulbs blow, or the soles fall off shoes, or any of the on-going maintenance and repair costs involved in running a modern household?

These issues are not addressed by Mr Ashton, or indeed by those in power, because people get by somehow or other. But the basis of the Budget at the end of last year is that it was administered on the backs of the very poor in the hopeful calculation that somehow savings could be made by counteracting fraud among benefit claimants.

The result is likely to be more fraud, more crime, and ultimately social disorder.

Mack the Knife

BLAIR AND THE DEVIL'S MUSIC

Most of the broadsheet cultural experts failed to notice the really significant aspect of Tony Blair's *Desert Island Discs* - his choice of a track by blues legend Robert Johnson. Robert Johnson, after all was supposed to have sold his soul to the Devil in return for becoming the leading figure in his field. One would think that any politician would be wary of those sort of resonances.

His choice of a track is even more interesting. *Crossroads Blues* can be read as a straight political parable. The crossroads is an obvious metaphor for the forthcoming election. The song starts with a man who has already sold his soul appealing to God for assistance:

"Went to the crossroads, fell down on my knees / Asked the Lord above 'Won't you help me please'."

This is quite obviously a reference to Blair's recent invocation of religious help. God is apparently reluctant to help this turncoat so the protagonist tries to get away:

"Went to the crossroads, tried to flag a ride / Ain't nobody seemed to know me, ev'rybody pass me by."

This is a reference to Blair's attempt to swing the election by adopting Tory policies and the lack of interest that results.

"You can run you can run, tell my good friend Willie Brown / Standing at the crossroads, believe I'm sinking down."

Clearly this appeal refers to the decline in Blair's personal support in the polls.

As for Johnson himself, Blair's spin doctors really should have noticed that the singer was eventually murdered for being economical with the truth. Not a good omen I would have thought.

John



RICH AND POOR

"Laws for the rich, and chains for the poor"
(P.J. Proudhon's definition of government)

We have acquired many new readers and subscribers in the past few months and we expect that this trend will continue in the coming year. There has never been a greater need for the anarchist voice to be heard.

Modern anarchism as a political movement has been around for about a hundred years. At the time of the last century it was difficult to distinguish the anarchist from the communist or socialist. The 'success' of the communists and the 'socialists' was entirely due to their authoritarian approach and enforcement of their ideas. The collective leadership. By the time Nikita Khrushchev squealed on Stalin in February 1956 (in however respectful tones) the game was up. It took eighty years for the system to collapse, for ideas of equality and liberty cannot be enforced.

That anarchist methods of persuasion have not yet succeeded does not mean that they eventually will not succeed. But the early socialist thinkers thought anarchism can only come about in economically advanced societies.

H.D. Thoreau, surely one of the most respected anarchists of living history, thought otherwise. Emerson described him as follows: "He chose to be rich by making his wants few."

Enforcement of ideas, on paper at least commendable, brought about the dictatorship not of the proletariat but that of the party and the executive.

As the dictatorial regimes collapsed, the stories emerged of the cult systems and the brutal methods of torture and doctrinaire enforcement. Now the party bosses have changed their spots and are running a system which in many respects is worse than that which existed in the early days of unchecked industrial exploitation. It does not take long for whole communities to become impoverished. Starvation and civil war have spread from the Urals to the Balkans.

The obvious solution, of course, is a society based on mutual aid – in other words, anarchism – but such a system cannot be enforced. We are now strong enough to be able to resist adequately the excesses of draconian government, but it will take something of a quantum leap for society to learn self-regulation.

The anarchist press, by its very existence and perseverance, will do its best to keep the idea alive.

As we are moving into yet another political election period we must consider our views very carefully. We have no recourse to broadcasts or television from which the 'electorate' take their opinions. Short of an electricity strike at the end of April, the result is a foregone conclusion and we will not be surprised if a government will be elected.

We are confident that none of our readers will cooperate in this farce thought up by the rich to annoy the poor every five years or so.

John Rety

WHAT THE POOR HAVE TO PUT UP WITH

David Owens from South Wales died of a heart attack after being told he was fit for light work by a Department of Social Security doctor.

He had been off work on a disability allowance for three years with heart problems, and the death occurred shortly after the DSS doctor sent him back to work.

Tom Best from the Incapacity Action Campaign says "many people could find themselves in a Catch 22 situation in which they were judged to be fit for light work, but unfit to qualify for the Job Seeker's Allowance".

Bolton Unemployed Workers Centre reports that "a married man, with four children, lost his JSA for daring to ask for £200 weekly wage – equivalent to all his entitlement whilst unemployed. There is every possibility now of his marriage breaking down" (see *Action for Health and Welfare*, November 1996).

Salford Unemployed Centre reports that a claimant signing on in Salford was given a job application at his Job Centre and told to apply. When he asked "What's the wage?" he was told "That doesn't matter, you have to apply!"

Bolton UWC reports that "a student, aged 18, after completing two years study, needs to complete his education with a part-time course at another college ... His father is on Incapacity Benefit.

The JSA officer told him to give up the course or lose entitlement to benefit, because time spent studying meant that he was not free to start work" (see *Action for Health and Welfare*, November 1996).

Manchester Against the JSA: One member of the Anti-JSA group reported that earlier this year, following the IRA bombing of central Manchester, he had been recruited at Moss Side Job Centre to do a job clearing up inside the Arndale Shopping Centre. A team was assembled in a room at the Moss Side dole, and sent to work on tidying the worst of the bomb damage. They were kept on for a couple of weeks and then sacked. They were short-changed on their pay.

The Moss Side dole denied any responsibility for what happened, though they had given the firm Employment Service facilities to organise the recruitment.

It is suspected that the firm hired these workers to work in appalling conditions after the bomb blast because union workers would have refused on health and safety grounds.

Broken glass and asbestos were but two of the problems. Our member reported itching and irritation on his skin.

Details from the JSA Employment Service Manual:

To comply with the Job Seeker's Agreement the following will be required of you:

- To have a haircut once a fortnight.
- To be smartly dressed
- Apply for three jobs a week.
- Buy a newspaper every day.
- Go to the Job Centre twice a week.

HOW THE RICH SUFFER

A former finance director of Goldcrest, Donald Anderson, was convicted recently of trying to pervert the course of justice by creating false documents to cover up £19 million of bogus profits with a view to influencing share prices.

In 1994 at the first Brent Walker trial Wilfred Aquilina, Brent Walker's former finance director, was convicted of supplying false information to accountants. Mr Aquilina was fined £25,000 and given an 18-month suspended sentence. John Quested, the former managing director, pleaded guilty to misleading the Serious Fraud Office. He was given a nine-month suspended sentence and fined £30,000.

Two directors of the firm that administered Queens Moat Houses, share register were sentenced last week to 120 hours of community service after being convicted of insider dealing in the company's shares.

Insider dealing convictions, etc:

1995: Brian Ridge fined £1,300 plus costs for dealing in London Scottish and Park Ford Co.

1994: Ian Morrissey and Loreli Staines each fined £1,500 for dealing in Aaronson Bros.

1993: No convictions.

1992: David Grey received six months suspended for two years and was fined £5,000 with £500 costs, trading in Pleasurama. Three other people's convictions in the same case were overturned on appeal in 1994.

1991: Fred Stebbing fined £5,000 with £500 costs, and Peter Sewell £24,000 with £5,000 costs, for trading in Camotech.

Ivor Goodman received eighteen months prison with nine months suspended and was disqualified for ten years as a director, for trading in Unigroup shares.

— ABOVE THE PARAPETS —

FREE SPEECH FOR NAZIS

For libertarians – whether civil libertarians or libertarian socialists – freedom of speech has always been a critically important but rather uncomfortable principle. If freedom of speech means anything, it must mean freedom for views you disagree with, views you oppose strenuously, and even for views you find utterly repugnant. It must also mean protecting the speech of those who are themselves opposed to free speech. All uncomfortable but necessary defences of freedom.

The discomfort that can accrue from standing up for freedom of speech is no doubt one of the reasons why there are so very few principled libertarians. A case in point arose last August. Christopher Brand, an Edinburgh University psychology lecturer, had had his book – *The g-Factor* – withdrawn from publication by the publishers after a storm of protest greeted a newspaper interview with Brand. In his book, Brand had linked race and intelligence. In the interview he stated that black people were less intelligent than whites, and that single mothers should be "encouraged to breed with higher IQ males to escape the poverty trap".

Last August, two anti-racist writers, Marek Kohn and Kenan Malik (the authors of *The Race Gallery* and *The Meaning of Race* respectively) condemned the decision to withdraw publication of the book, describing it (correctly, in my view) as censorship, and called for *The g-Factor* to be published. They tried to organise a debate with Brand on the issues raised in his book at Edinburgh's Internet cafe, Cyberia, but the meeting was cancelled after threats from some anti-racists. The Anti-Nazi League, while not condoning violence, claimed responsibility for the cancellation of the meeting. A spokesperson said: "We have successfully managed to deny Chris Brand a platform for his sexist and racist views and put another nail in the coffin in his attempts to find another publisher for his book."

Acting from the best of motives, no doubt, a very large section of the anti-racist and anti-sexist movements have moved in this direction, towards censorship. While I understand the emotional basis for pro-censorship attitudes, I remain firmly opposed to the use of censorship, even against racists or fascists. The authoritarian impulse – and authoritarianism is inherent in censorship – is in this case unprincipled, counter-productive, and even dangerous. The cultural basis is being laid for an intrusive State charged with defining the Truth and punishing deviancy. It is obvious in advance whose freedom of expression is going to suffer under such a regime.

But freedom of speech should not be defended for reasons of self interest. Underlying the censorship campaign against Brand, and against others is a totalitarian attitude that the dictators of the 1930s would have found congenial: 'bad' speech must not

be heard, must not be written, must not be spoken. This is a principle that a civilized society cannot tolerate.

The arguments for free speech were first set out in the European Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, and ought not to need rehearsing now. John Stuart Mill put the matter concisely when he said that society ought not to interfere with "the inward domain of consciousness" as this was solely the concern of individuals, and society therefore should grant the individual "liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological."

Mill then added: "The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle, since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people; but, being almost of as much importance as the liberty of thought itself, and resting in great part on the same reasons, is practically inseparable from it." In other words, freedom of expression is an integral part of freedom of the mind, and ought not to be tampered with by social groups or institutions.

Marek Kohn and Kenan Malik deserve applause for standing up for free speech as well as for the rights of women and black people. It is vital to defend the principle of free speech, even for racists, fascists and other bigots. Their influence will best be overcome by counter-speech, not by censorship. Their support base in society will best be eroded by confident open movement building, not by granting repressive powers to the State or to other social institutions. Without free speech for Nazis, no real free speech for any of us.

Milan Rai

DONATIONS

December 1996

Freedom Fortnightly Fighting Fund

Falmouth, RW, £2; St Leonards, CP, £5; Newport, TP, £6; Colchester, TO, £15; Wolverhampton, JL, £3; Chelmsford, EA, £5; Saltbourne, TE, £6; Romford, MB, £6; Corby, GP, £2; Valparaiso USA, LO, £25; Leicester, JZE, £2; London, EW, £3; Lewes, BM, £15; New York, PC, £26; London, SR, £1; Pwllheli, MJ, £10; London, NP, £3; Hebden Bridge, HS, £50; Stirling, AD, £2; Yarmouth, FNF, £11; Telford, GB, £3; Bolton, DP, £6; Bath, JB, £6.

Total = £217.00

1996 total = £1,167.00

Freedom Press Overheads Fund

Cambridge, AG, £6; St Leonards, CP, £5; Argyll, GS, £36; Bideford, JE, £8; Windsor, Canada, FA, £10; Wolverhampton, JL, £3; London, PW, £3; Bristol, AFC, £24; London, MB, £6; Pwllheli, MJ, £6; London, NP, £3; Gloucester, TA, £5; Hebden Bridge, HS, £50; Stirling, AD, £2; Telford, GB, £3; Japan, ML, £10.

Total = £181.00

1996 total = £1,083.00

Raven Deficit Fund

Norway, FR, £3; St Leonards, CP, £5; Colchester, TO, £11; Valparaiso USA, LO, £25; Lewes, BM, £11; Alicante, JH, £4; Hebden Bridge, HS, £50; Stirling, AD, £2; London, DLL, £10.

Total = £121.00

1996 total = £808.00

[Note: The December list was closed on 18th December. Any donations received thereafter have been entered in January 1997 – Freedom Press]

Northern Worker

1990: John Henry Lukins fined £750 with £432 costs and Peter Lukins fined £500 with £290 costs, trading in Pittard Garner shares.

Malcolm Gooding received 120 hours community service with £500 costs, trading in Hawtal Whiting.

1989: Nicholas Rushbrooke fined £2,000 with £750 costs, trading in Piccadilly Radio.

Keith Robinson fined £1,000 with £500 costs, trading in Mercantile House Holdings.

John Hales fined £15,000 with £1,000 costs, trading in Minet Holdings.

And so it goes on, one trivial sentence following another. "Paltry penalties" says the 'Comment' column in *The Independent*, and "only one jailing in a decade". It seems that a lot of professional insider dealers get away with it every year because they are too smart for the investigators of the DTI. Only the occasional dabblers get caught.

I wonder if the DTI tells them to get their hair cut once a fortnight?

For obvious reasons, anarchists have always been interested in alternatives to the state's currency as a medium of exchange for goods and services. Hence Proudhon's preoccupation with his People's Bank which would enable members to exchange the products of their labour "by means of labour-value cheques, in isolation from the conventional economic complex", and hence Josiah Warren's 'Time Store' in Cincinnati, where goods were exchanged on the basis of the time used in making and supplying them.

Kropotkin, the eternal optimist, side-stepped them all with the concept that 'all is for all' and envisaged us all producing, growing and harvesting for everyone without any equivalent being made available to all of us. Plenty of us, having met a great many free-loaders in our time, are cynical about this, not only because we are suspicious of those who exploit us but because we hate the guilty feelings of indebtedness to people who chance not to have any needs for the limited range of things or services that we can reciprocate with.

Actual currency isn't necessarily tied up with whatever territorial governments impose on us. Anybody returning from the former Soviet Union or from Latin America will confirm that it is more useful to have US dollars in your pocket than the local currency. Similarly, there are plenty of nation-states in North Africa or the Near East where it is better to ignore the coinage or notes issued by the local state and instead use what is known as the Maria-Theresa dollar, a coin obsolete in the Austro-Hungarian empire of the past but commercially produced with a standard silver content to this day.

Maybe some reader knows if there is a book about the prolonged strike in the 1980s among bank employees in Ireland. People ran out of cash and chequebooks and got into the habit of writing their personal cheques for the ordinary trivial sums of daily life, and when the banking system started again, so I am told, all this improvised currency was honoured.

It isn't only anarchists and New Age folk who are interested in the growth of LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems) in Britain. For example, there is a book I haven't yet seen (from New Times Books at £7) by Helen Barnes, Peter North and Perry Walker called *LETS on a Low Income*. The publishers explain that "over 300 LETS schemes operate in the UK. How do they do it? This report sets out the findings of the first systematic research on LETS in low income communities."

Of course it is the ubiquity of access to computer technology that frees LETS from the tedium and labour-intensiveness of book-keeping in ledgers, and makes it a truly flexible friend. It is smarter than barter. All the same,

Tony Blair's recent declaration about what a future Labour government would not do about a top tax for those earning more than £100,000 is an opportunity to reply to Larry Gambone's critical letter ('Cheating on Taxes', *Freedom*, 30th November) of my 'Anarchist Comment' (2nd November) in which I asked "Cheating on taxes: is it revolutionary?" As an anarchist propagandist, constantly showing that capitalism is the 'root of all evil' with examples of sleaze and corruption wherever big money is involved (the latest example surely is the Internet, and not just only with the porn industry), I nevertheless need, as a human being, all kinds of valuable services paid for *not by government* but by taxes, direct and indirect (VAT) and National Insurance which those of us in employment have deducted automatically from our wage packets. Governments only allocate *our* money and only are in a position to determine, on the one hand how that money shall be raised, and on the other how it shall be distributed.

Larry Gambone declares that I seem to be "unaware of modern technology" in relation to the movement of capital if, for instance, a future Labour government were to ban the export of currency, which in fact was the first thing the Thatcher government released in 1979 and indeed some £19 billion were exported post haste. So what? Until my friend

— ANARCHIST NOTEBOOK — SMARTER THAN BARTER



it is fascinating in ordinary miscellaneous reading, to come across communities successfully relying on barter, quite apart from the systems of reciprocity developed in societies outside the money economy, not only among what used to be called 'primitive' peoples but on the fringes of western society.

I was glancing at a biography by James MacKay of Robert Service, the Scottish-Canadian ballad-monger and author of *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*. MacKay's book (Edinburgh, Mainstream, 1995) describes life in British Columbia at the turn of the century:

"This was a community where cash was so scarce that 'a silver dollar was almost something to put in a glass case'. Business was done by barter, the farmers trading their grain, fruit and dairy products for flour, tea, sugar and tobacco. Everyone was poor, but there was no want. There might be little cash around, but no one needed it, so its importance was diminished."

Similarly, Jill Ker Conway in her autobiographical memoir *True North* (Vintage, 1995) describes the origins of the North American tradition of 'working your way through college'. In the last century, in newly established western farms "where food was plentiful but cash almost non-existent" young men found

work on the farms of Eastern-educated men, clearing the woods and mucking out the barn in return for tuition. "No one counted the labour of the farmer's wife and daughters in the cost of the young men's education, although it was a woman's job to labour on the laundry, mending and cooking for the enlarged households". And she explains that:

"When a group of Ohio men planned the establishment of Oberlin College, they thought first of acquiring a farm, building college buildings on the farmland and enabling talented young men to earn their education there by substituting farm labour for tuition fees. Late in the day the planners remembered about the laundry, cooking, cleaning and mending, the tasks of the farmer's wife and daughters, and quickly developed plans for the admission of women to Oberlin. Women students in the first classes at Oberlin were assigned a male student for whose laundry, mending and cleaning they were responsible - service activities they performed on Mondays, when no classes were scheduled, and for which they were not paid. Men's unpaid manual labour on the farm was fitted in around the academic schedule, as was women's valet-like work for the men."

Of course the women had to take care of their own laundry, mending and ironing in their own time. "Moreover, classes which involved

public speaking or disputation, such as rhetoric and debate, were closed to women. They might learn but never speak about their knowledge in public."

This regime had a clear message in American universities, that became felt when "something happened that no one had planned. Women did better academically than men." Conway examines the response to this around the university community. "At Berkeley, the initial warm welcome given to women students by the men quickly changed to hostility when they took most of the academic laurels at year's end."

But there are other fields where barter traditionally overcame cash shortages

Harriet, in case grandchildren should ask one day, has been looking into the history of her paternal grandfather who, until he moved to California to edit another local newspaper, had, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, produced the *Weekly Free Press* at Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He was an itinerant printer of the kind you see in old Westerns, who advanced his pay from six to nine dollars a week by becoming the editor of the paper he owned by one of the timber barons. How did he support a family on that income?

A biography by one of his sons, Richard Barry (*Father and his Town*, Houghton Mifflin, 1941) explains that "he got free tickets to all the shows, transportation free to himself and his wife on each railroad, open accounts at most of the stores, and plenty of produce turned in by the farmers in exchange for subscriptions". Paying off really big debts was "the chief family problem of my boyhood", says Harriet's uncle, but:

"We wanted a lawnmower; father got it at the Jenks Hardware, and paid for it with a two-column ad. The grocery bill ran among four stores, and no grocer who failed to advertise got any of the Barry business. Butchers had to be educated to the need for advertising, but father found two who listened to reason. The landlord was a problem until father discovered that his wife was longing for a trip on the Great Lakes ... he took the ad for an excursion line running from Milwaukee to Chicago ... and traded an excursion for the balance due on rent. Father was never disturbed by any economic situation."

The anecdote illustrates the limitations of barter. Harriet's grandfather was the one man in town who could work that particular trade-off. But if a LETS system had been operating in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, a century ago, every resident could have traded their goods and services, using his newspaper to indicate what they could supply and what they needed. My illustration is of a Labour Note issued by one of Robert Owen's enterprises in 1833. LETS has a long ancestry.

Colin Ward

— DEBATE — MORE ON TAXES!

Larry and others realise that the *vraies richesses* of any society are first of all those who produce the food we consume daily to maintain life; secondly those who produce the services which maintain health, starting with my weekly friend the dustman and ending with the doctor and the health service; thirdly those who provide services for mobility (e.g. buses). And for the old these services are invaluable. They also include human contacts for those living in isolated country areas.

Before reaching my conclusions, I must take up the major point in my 'Notes' which Larry has completely overlooked.

Anarchists live in the world - the capitalist world - as it is. Most of us have not only had to live in that world but also to work for a boss or a company. And unless one is a Ravachol, there is no escape. What I was arguing, not only as a propagandist but expressing my own philosophy, is that as a member of this society from which I enjoy all kinds of services, irrespective of the government in office (the multinationals and transnationals, they are the ones in power globally), only as an academic

(or a Class War fanatic) could I in all honesty follow Gambone and agree with him that "rather than suggesting Labour adopt concepts that have failed so miserably elsewhere, wouldn't it be better to advance an anarchist programme and let the Labourites sink into the mushy liberalism they so well deserve?"

Obviously I don't agree with him because I have never suggested, first of all, that governments will take any radical initiative *without real pressure from below*. Secondly, there have been anarchist programmes galore. Surely what anarchists have to do is to succeed in convincing more and more people not that anarchy is utopia *but that the world they live in is rotten to the core* (in spite of all the Internet, mobile phones, pagers, etc., etc.) and that it is virtually controlling their lives unless they decide that their life is so much more important than career, money, computers and the rest.

We only have one life (forget about promises of an everlasting one in Heaven - or Mars?) so try and enjoy it with knowledge, but also with plenty of love - real love. **Libertarian**

TRANSLATED EXTRACT FROM *LE MONDE LIBERTAIRE*

INTERVIEW WITH TWO POLYNESIAN SYNDICALISTS

Le Monde Libertaire: Polynesia, one of the overseas territories, seems a long way from France. Held up as an example of paradise, we often find it hard to imagine the damage which has been done by colonialism. Can you tell us something about the colonial history?

Roland: It is too often forgotten that colonialism was installed here by military force; there were many wars and much blood and yet the Polynesians tried to protect themselves against the invasion of the colonial forces. France, at that time, managed to buy, in a somewhat disguised fashion, the Royal family – the Pomarés – who were the rulers at the time. France blackmailed the Pomaré Queen who was forced to sign the annexation of Polynesia. I think that the methods used by France haven't changed much: today, for example it is still a story of blackmail in many ways in Polynesia and those who are laughingly called responsible are simply puppets with no real power. Major political decisions are taken in Paris and one could say that economically Polynesia has lived under perfusion for many a year. If we take the nuclear question – despite a shower of money here for more than thirty years – still Polynesia doesn't stand on her own two feet. If one speaks of her status one might say that this has recently (supposedly) improved, changed but in reality a bargain has simply been struck between Gaston Flosse – a faithful representative of the RPR (right wing) in Polynesia – and his masters who have given him a little more power. One might make a comparison with those African countries where France speaks of so-called

independence but at the end of the day she controls all and gives out power to just one or two reliable folk over the colonial system and they in turn become dictators.

Annie: Many powers have been given to the one man but these powers are superficial – honours which flatter his ego. Fundamental power is retained in France. Those powers which Polynesia might eventually have under autonomy are somewhat vague ... the local courts had to be approached for clarification and with the new status it is clear that France is still calling the shots.

Roland: I want to come back to colonialism, the destruction of language, culture, the land, our way of thinking. In the beginning France and England split up the Pacific: England headed off for New Zealand, the Cook Islands and France made for Polynesia. Religion played an important role in the process of colonisation. To start with there were the protestants and then came the Catholics who colonised our way of thinking. Still today the church is a pillar of colonialism. For example, they split up the land in order to break her people. In Polynesian culture land cannot be sold, it is not individual property. She (the land) belongs to the community. She is there to feed the man who takes care of her. On arrival the colonialist insisted that Polynesians should give up their land in favour of a property title which completely smashed the unity of the Polynesian family. Today all families have to deal with this problem somehow. In those days our festivals and dances were forbidden. Places of religious importance to Polynesians were systematically destroyed despite their importance. With regard to language and education we were told at school of things which had nothing to do with Polynesia (France, Napoleon ...) and this helped uproot us from our culture. Many Polynesians don't speak *re'o-ma'ohi* or at least they speak it very badly. They are caught between two worlds. They speak *re'o-ma'ohi* and they speak French badly. I am sure that only a very small minority know their own history, I myself only know a little about Polynesian history. Today it makes me really sick when I see how Polynesian culture is referred to – just folklore and clowns covered in tattoos to amuse the tourists. For me this has nothing to do with culture. They are trying to westernise us. I remember them telling us we shouldn't eat too many mangoes because it would give us an upset stomach, that was what we were told at school. A whole system was built up so that the Polynesian would give up his/her culture; they were hooked onto other products, prepared for a consumer society. We were also told that women could pass diseases onto their babies and so they were given Nestlé's milk while they were breast feeding and then they were put onto Guigoz milk. Day after day this was beaten into us. Today there is everything to do, for example revamp the whole education system. There are very few Polynesian teachers, doctors, lawyers. An

education system is in place that is incomprehensible to the Polynesian – the logic is different. S/he has been force fed religion. People spend hours listening to sermons, it makes them docile; it's all part of the system.

Annie: I would like to add something with regard to the land question, this is a real scandal. In 1842, when Queen Pomaré ceded power to France there was a treaty which was signed and which said 'we won't touch your land'. Land is still owned by the tribes, it is a common right and French law will never apply. The treaty was never respected. The State seized huge tracts of land and handed it over to the Territories when internal autonomy was declared in 1977. The Church has a huge amount of land also but the gift that was given by the clans was simply the right to use the land since the land could not be sold; it wasn't a donation. The people were made to sign anything. Now the Church is selling off the land to the landowners. The treaty has given rise to a lot of argument and was even taken to the High Court but the treaty was never respected. This is hell because today families tear themselves apart over a sliver of land whereas before such problems didn't arise. It's theft. The aborigines have won, the Maoris in New Zealand will also win, one day, for sure, we will win.

Roland: I don't know the solution. Yes in New Zealand the Maoris have won a lot in the way of land rights. I was there last year but the problem is different because land can be sold to tribes, clans. But here we don't know how to sell land or to whom because we have taken on board the buying and selling system. Many people fight on the land. The whole system must change. Perhaps the sale of land must be forbidden; take another look at all the land which has been stolen (by the Church, the State, the legal system). There are people who are well off here. For example there is a young landowner who has some little islands around Tuamotu. One might wonder how he came by it all. Normally in Polynesian genealogy all

Polynesians come from somewhere; from birth his/her placenta is buried where s/he was born to show the link to the Earth. One wonders how big landowners got to where they are. In those documents which deal with the land question we find the same handwriting, twelve signatures in the same hand. Given that Polynesians couldn't read, it was the local lawyer who wrote for them and made them sign any old thing.

Annie: Hawaii is like here. There was a devastating cultural genocide there. There are very few Hawaiians, they are nearly all métis, Chinese, Japanese, American. They have a hard time getting their land back.

Le Monde Libertaire: Can you tell us something about how the territory is controlled politically?

Annie: It goes back to 1984: the High Commission, that is to say the préfet represents the state and shares power with the local administration with each having his/her respective duties. Under the left wing government the High Commission had a little power. With Balladur this institution became more powerful. Since Chirac – Flosse's big brother – came to power orders are given from Paris to Flosse and the role of the High Commission is simply to carry out orders. The High Commission remains, legally, the highest authority on the territory, Flosse has no power over it so he goes straight to Chirac who hurriedly gives out the orders. This was how it worked in 1995 when the nuclear tests were being carried out – the HC was a mere pawn. With regard to the assemblies they have no real power, simply a rubber stamp set-up. They don't even bother to give a show of hands when it comes to a vote. There's a funny story here. Recently there was a debate which had to be voted on whether to reinstate casinos ... all this was illegal and there was an appeal to have it annulled. The opposition called for a body to be set up to authorise the reopening of the casinos and that this body should be made up of non-political folk. Gaston Flosse was absent that day. The majority voted for the body to be set up. When the president of the assembly got back he made them vote again. Same result. So the sitting was suspended, a few briefings took place, the session was restarted and this time everyone 'voted correctly'. This last vote was the one that was accepted. It's always like that.

QUEENSLAND POLICE ATTACK ABORIGINAL FUNERAL

On Monday 9th of December a group of people picketed police headquarters in Brisbane, the capital of the Australian state of Queensland, in protest at a police attack on the funeral of an aboriginal elder the week before. The funeral, which took place the previous Tuesday at Woorabinda, an aboriginal community in central Queensland, was disrupted when about thirty police moved in to arrest over three hundred people who had outstanding warrants.

As usual, the Queensland police force demonstrated their heavy-handedness and total lack of respect for human rights by disrupting a funeral in this way. Most of the warrants they were arresting people on were for breaches of community by-laws and other minor offences which could in no way justify this sort of action. They succeeded in arresting less than a hundred people during a two-day operation, mainly for non-payment of fines.

Woorabinda is one of many aboriginal communities around Australia that were originally set up as concentration camps in an effort by the colonial powers to wipe out the indigenous population of the continent. These concentration camps are euphemistically known as 'missions' – due to the fact that the process of cultural and actual genocide was conducted by so-called 'Christians'.

Naturally, these communities have more than their fair share of problems partly as a result of their history, partly because of their isolation and partly because Australia's unofficial apartheid system makes damn sure they live in crushing poverty. This sort of unprovoked attack on such a community by the Queensland police – who are known throughout Australia for their closed-minded, totalitarian brutality – is just another event in the long saga of colonisation and genocide.

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NEWS FROM CANADA

23rd October: The World Conservation Congress ended today in Montreal, after ten days of discussion. More than five thousand species are threatened with extinction due mainly to loss of habitat. Over a hundred resolutions were made, including preservation of the Temagami forests, the creation of a worldwide data bank on biodiversity and a global initiative to examine the state of the world's temperate forests.

25th October: Close to 100,000 people demonstrated or went on strike for a day in downtown Toronto against the Ontario government's deficit-cutting measures. This was the fifth in a series of protests in Ontario, and the largest. Labour leaders claimed a victory and are now threatening a province-wide general strike. City transit was shut down to force workers to stay at home. More than three hundred other sites were targeted for picketing. Nevertheless, most Torontonians managed to get to work by train or car and many shops and businesses remained open. 40% of teachers and a third of government workers stayed home. A thousand demonstrators attempted to invade the Toronto Stock Exchange and were repulsed by police. While the number of strikers was less than anticipated and the expected 'chaos' did not ensue, the protest was costly, running into the millions of dollars in lost wages and production. The working population remains deeply divided as only a third of the population supported the action, according to a poll.

26th October: A mass demonstration in downtown Toronto in opposition to the Ontario government's deficit-cutting measures drew immense numbers of people. Called "the largest social protest in Canadian history", the action attracted anywhere from 75,000 to 300,000 participants.

29th October: More than five thousand angry protesters demonstrated against the government's so-called Economic Summit. This meeting of business, government and trade union bosses seeks to overcome Quebec's economic problems, chiefly high unemployment and a towering government deficit. Demonstrators, who included members of labour, student, poverty and women's groups, feared being sacrificed to this process. Both the Economic Summit and its opponents bring into clear definition one of the major contradictions facing Quebec nationalists: to become an independent state Quebec must have a strong economy, to have a strong economy government debt must be slashed, but doing this will alienate the nationalists' strongest supporters who are the trade unions, student organisations, government functionaries and social action groups.

30th October: Students at three Montreal colleges voted to go on strike in opposition to the Quebec government's increased tuition fees.

1st November: The province of Manitoba has proposed a law whereby all political activities of trade unions must be approved by the membership. The unions ask why they, of all other institutions, are singled out. The government's sudden interest in union democracy has no doubt arisen with labour's effective advertising campaign against government cut-backs to healthcare.

7th November: Students at eighteen colleges in Quebec are now on strike, totalling 60,000 students. Three hundred protesters occupied the Ministry of Education, while three thousand picketed the Education Minister.

8th November: Student strike expanded to 23 colleges and 3,500 demonstrated in Quebec city.

Reclaiming the Future

Dear Freedom,

In your recent reporting on the founding of a new paper *Reclaim the Future*, you stated that it was the initiative of the old Workers Revolutionary Party/Workers Press group. Now the leader of this group, Cliff Slaughter, was Gerry Healy's chief hatchet-man/scribe in the horrendous Trotskyist outfit the Socialist Labour League and its equally horrendous successor the Workers Revolutionary Party. Whenever Healy needed a character assassination of another political group or individual, Slaughter was on hand to dip pen into vitriol. For years he and his chums chose to ignore the financial irregularities of Healy and his systematic sexual harassment and rape of young female Party members, until it was politically expedient to no longer do so, and throw Healy out of the WRP. Of course the WRP continued as Healyism without Healy. Now it might be argued that the dissolution of the WRP and its 'opening up to the social movements' is a good thing. After all, anarchists are very big on people being able to change and drop old ideas – that's what social revolution is all about. We can also cast our minds back to the days when a number of ex-SLL members – many of them who had been in leading positions – definitively broke with Leninism and set up the libertarian socialist group Solidarity, which did much to enrich libertarian thought and action in this country in the '60s to '80s.

However, certain things need to be taken into account with the dissolution of Slaughter's group, which at face value seems to be a very healthy development. Those who

dissented from dissolving the WRP were sidelined in typically bureaucratic manipulations, with little chance to adequately express their views. Serves them right, you might think, they've been hoist with their own petard. But still, if this sort of behaviour has not been broken with, then we should reasonably have the right to have suspicions.

Secondly, at the Direct Action conference in Brighton the *Reclaim the Future* ex-WRPers were insistent that any existing publication speaking for the social movements dissolve themselves and throw in their lot with *Reclaim the Future*. This, not unnaturally, did not go down well in certain quarters, for example the people around the excellent news-sheet produced in Brighton, *Schnews*, which reports on struggles against the Criminal Justice Act as well as many other struggles, taking umbrage.

I hope the people in Reclaim the Streets, Freedom Network and Advance Party are not being naive in going into this venture with Slaughter's group. We should of course give them the benefit of the doubt, but at the same time closely monitor what is going to happen over the next year or so. I live in hope that the Slaughter group is breaking with the old ideas of Leninism and can bring some valuable contributions to the new movements. At the same time I think we should exercise extreme vigilance in investigating whether, instead of bringing some assistance, they may be shackling the movements to the old ideas and dead weight of the Bolshevik past.

Yours for anarchist communism,

Nick Heath

Powers and Prospects

Dear Freedom,

Forgive me if I am going over old ground but I've just finished reading a chapter in Noam Chomsky's book *Powers and Prospects* (Pluto Press) and wondered whether any other *Freedom* readers were troubled by his conclusion that "the goals of a committed anarchist should be to defend some state institutions from the attack against them (by private tyranny), while trying at the same time to pry them open to more meaningful public participation – and ultimately to dismantle

them in a much more free society, if the appropriate circumstances can be achieved" (page 75).

Given the union of interests between government and business, so clearly demonstrated by the Scott Report, it seems likely that the state will perform an increasingly administrative function in the future with private interests dictating policy decisions. In what was ostensibly a meeting between nation-states at the recent APEC summit in Manila, it is worth remembering that, as Ray Heath for the *South China Morning Post* points out, "at least twenty agreements worth \$2 billion were finalised between different US and Philippine companies". The state will / has become a convenient cloak behind which decisions affecting our lives are made with apparent legitimacy.

I can think of no state institution which can be defended without thereby strengthening the hold that "private tyrannies" have over our lives. Ultimately actions designed to both defend and undermine the legitimacy of the state will be self-defeating.

Chomsky says that the state provides protection (albeit weak) from business-run totalitarianism by offering "to the despised public an opportunity to play some role ... in managing their own affairs". Those of us in a position to manage our own affairs should recognise that this 'opportunity' provided by the state is illusory; an impotent degree of autonomy conceded by business interests, not the state, as a necessary safeguard against what might otherwise become a questioning public.

I believe that an anarchist should be concerned about changing, not managing, affairs they consider unacceptable. Support for the state, however small, runs contrary to both my vision and my goals.

Andrew Harmer

Class War: from strength to strength

Dear Freedom,

Rumours of our demise are much exaggerated! Your claims that Class War has wound up and that the *Class War* paper has ceased publication are both premature and false. That the federation is undergoing a continuous review is no secret; any visitor to our stall at the Anarchist Bookfair could have found that out.

The Class War Federation continues to go from strength to strength, and our message is still very relevant and popular. You report that you have sold out of all issues of *Class War*. This reflects what's happening across the country, where interest in our ideas is high.

In future, before printing unfounded rumours about us, please check with us before consigning us to the revolutionary cupboard of the yesterdays.

George Burroughs
for London Class War

Dealing with Delinquents

Dear Editors,

In his letter to *Freedom* (14th December) David Murray first distinguishes between what we might call 'ordinary delinquents' and those who "are too dangerous to be allowed to walk freely". He is unfair, though, to Chris Platts, who never "denied" (*Freedom*, 30th November) there might be such dangerous people. But then he seems to lose sight of that distinction himself.

Even among the 'ordinary delinquents' we have to distinguish between different groups. The mugging of old ladies – in fact perhaps the smallest group at risk of being mugged – and the terrorising of people in their homes are surely indeed mostly the result of capitalism's division of people into haves and have nots. As regards rapists, one hopes there would be far fewer of them in a more truly civilised community with more open and relaxed attitudes to sex.

As for the sexual abuse of children, correct me if I am wrong, but surely the vast majority of cases are in institutions, including the family, where adults have authority over the children. I return to my original first point: the basic cause of child sexual abuse is power, just as it is of most human problems, which is presumably why most anarchists are anarchists. It is in the nature of the situation as it is today that we cannot know how many children enjoy or are at least unharmed by sex with adults. We naturally do not hear about most such cases, whatever their number may be. And we have no more right to regard paedophiles as sick than we have to regard homosexuals as sick. But in the end the question of whether or not children enjoy sex with adults is irrelevant. What is important is simply that children should not be forced to do things they do not want to do.

Then there is the problem of those who "are too dangerous to be allowed to walk freely". By this phrase is presumably meant those who behave violently, and often unpredictably, towards others and whom it seems impossible to influence in a better direction with any likelihood of success. (Incidentally, the fact that the 'Amerindian' solution does not work for them does not invalidate the 'Amerindian' solution for the rest of those who behave 'delinquently'.)

Certainly this *Freedom* reader is horrified by David Murray's suggestion that such dangerous people should all be put in quarantine

together. That would be a savage punishment, particularly when one considers that these would be people supposed to be violently 'psychopathic'. Imagine what they would do to each other. The fear of this punishment would keep the situation as it is today, with the constant risk of awful acts committed to avoid detection.

Our responsibility towards children includes, among other things, avoiding the sort of punitive attitudes and actions that increase the danger they are in. But we owe the wrongdoers responsibility as well. For me anarchism includes as a basic principle a sense of solidarity with *everybody* without discrimination. And would David Murray be happy to be the self-appointed judge of who deserved to be sent into quarantine? And to organise and supervise the presumably armed men who would force them into it? And to stand guard at the borders of the quarantine to make sure the 'psychopaths' did not return?

My own suggestion is that dangerous people should be given 'minders'. These would interfere with the lives of their 'wards' as little as possible; only so much as would protect others from them. There would still remain the problem that always faces anarchists. When individuals or a community decide that it is essential to limit the freedom of others in some way, how do you decide what authority is to make that decision and who, under what conditions, is to enforce it? But at least the solution by means of minders does not pose such a difficult dilemma as most others, since whether minders appointed themselves or were appointed by others, their effect on their wards would not be nearly so intrusive, decisive and tyrannical.

David Murray must also be wrong, surely, when he says there are not enough human resources, even in a non-capitalist community, to help both the unhappy and the damagers of others. The personnel of any single large present-day British bank would be more than enough in numbers to look after everybody who needed comfort, protection or friendly restraint.

He is absolutely right about one thing, though: the nature of "people's justice" and "people's power". This raises a fundamental issue, the relationship between anarchism and democracy. I should like to return to that subject some other time, if I am allowed.

Amorey Gethin

Flies Unbuttoned

Dear Freedom,

Colin Ward's neat attack on the assumptions underpinning William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* ('Flies Unbuttoned', *Freedom*, 14th December 1996) made informative reading. We might also note the most obvious flaw in Golding's belief in the innate savagery of mankind is that the unfortunate castaway boys are, of course, the product of the society they have been reared by. This is, in fact, acknowledged in the novel by the background of world war, and, potentially, by the presence of the corpse of a drowned military pilot that inhabits the top of a hill with his billowing parachute. This figure takes on totemic power, and is a type of fetishistic demi-god lurking in the background of the novel. The boys are not responsible either for the war, nor for the death of the pilot, and these facts provide the adult alibi for the boys' behaviour.

I don't know how Golding himself saw small boys, but I remember some years ago seeing a television documentary about the author which mentioned his life as a schoolteacher. In the film of him with boys from his school he seemed amiable and relaxed with them, signs that perhaps he liked them more than one might guess from *Lord of the Flies*. My own experience of school teaching was that the

worst characters that I came across were usually adults, either parents or teachers (and even then there were really very few of either), the children were fine. Further, behavioural problems were invariably connected with the children's experience of the adult world, particularly their family backgrounds. It strikes me that one probable cause of the perceived increase in private and communal anti-social behaviour in Britain (insofar that such perceptions aren't merely the result of historical amnesia) is the private impact of too many appalling wars this century. The presence of war-traumatised fathers in many British households after both major wars, and an endless stream of 'little wars', cannot but have damaged the lives of many children, later to be adults. One would think that this is a rather obvious point, yet it was missed by Michael Rutter and David Smith in their major study *Psychological Disorders in Young People* that came out in 1995 to general acclaim. The problem is, I feel, explaining the enthusiastic mass brutality in wars of people who are decent enough as individuals – this was one of the issues that Golding sought to tackle, but with no great success in his most famous novel.

Steve Cullen

London Anarchist Forum

Meets Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL (nearest tube Holborn). Admission is free but a collection is made to cover the cost of the room.

– 1997 PROGRAMME –

10th January Towards a Stateless Economics: the Case Against Anarchist Communism (speaker Dave Dane)

17th January General discussion

24th January Symposium on Work (short submissions invited)

31st January A speaker from *Green Anarchist* (probably Arthur Mix) talking about their court action and showing the video *Exit Stage Right*.

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Discussion meetings open to the public are convened by the London group of the Anarchist Communist Federation on the first Thursday of every month. They start at 8.00pm at the Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square). Disabled access. Free entrance.

Thursday 9th January at 8pm MORAL CRUSADES: TROJAN HORSES FOR THE STRONG STATE

A number of moral crusades have been launched in the last year using Dunblane, the murder of Philip Lawrence, squeegee merchants, etc., as pretexts to preach in favour of law and order and the traditional nuclear family. Major, Blair, Ashdown stand united in their support for these moral crusades. We argue that these campaigns are designed to fan hysteria, to strengthen the state and stiffen up police powers, and to bolster a climate of opinion which condones the scapegoating of the poor and further attacks on any little 'freedom' in this society. We expose the hypocrisy of those who preach morality whilst carrying out the usual game of accepting bribes, fiddling votes, arms dealing and Stock Exchange scams.

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Red Rambles

A programme of free guided walks in Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire for Socialists, Libertarians, Greens and Anarchists. All walks are on a Sunday unless otherwise stated. All walkers are reminded to wear boots and suitable clothing and to bring food and drink. Walks are 5-8 miles in length.

January 5th: Walk leader Mike. Loughborough Countryside. Meet 11am at Forest Gate pub car park, Forest Road, Loughborough.

February 2nd: Walk leader Jonathan. Blore, Ilam and Limestone Country. Meet 11am at roadside next to Blore Hall, Blore, Derbyshire (Blore is off the A52T Ashbourne to Leek road).

March 2nd: Walk leader Malcolm. Derwent valley, woods and pastures. Meet at 11am at Lea Mills car park, Lea Bridge (near Holloway), Derbyshire.

April 6th: Walk leader Ray. Charnwood Forest. Meet 11am at Flying Horse Pub, Field Head, Leicestershire (take A50 from Junction 22, M1).

Telephone for further details
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FIELDS, FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS & OFFICES

OUTLAWING STRIKES

A new commissioner for protection against unlawful industrial action will be introduced if proposals on a draft Government Green Paper get on the statute book. One of the Green Paper's proposals is that the calling of a strike with 'disproportionate or excessive' effects would be unlawful and any employer of other business affected could seek an injunction against a union.

The draft paper says these effects might be defined as involving one or a combination of:

- Risks to life, health or safety.
- Threats to national security.
- Significant disruption of everyday life or activities in the whole or part of the country.

A court, the paper says, should take account of the intensity, frequency and duration of the industrial action and of the damage and disruption.

The draft document claims that "it would be clear in most circumstances whether or not the effects of industrial action was likely to be disproportionate or excessive."

The paper insists existing industrial relations law is "generally working well" with postal ballots before strikes having stopped "manipulation and intimidation" in industrial decisions.

"Nevertheless," it says, "strikes still have the potential to prevent people going about their normal activities, to disrupt business, to harm the economy and even to threaten life and property. This has been demonstrated recently by strikes affecting fire services, public transport and the postal service."

Given the legal minefield this suggested legislation opens up with its delicate definitions such as 'significant disruption of everyday life', 'normal activities', 'disproportionate or excessive' effects, this could be the Tory government's revenge of the judges as much as the unions. *The Financial Times* correspondent, Andrew Bolger, says "judges will have their work cut out if the government's

proposals to restrict further the ability of trade unions to call strikes ever reach the statute book".

Certainly the government and the judges have not been hitting it off for some time, and this kind of law can lead to the judges being targeted by the radical left.

Industrial Layabout

NEW TECHNOLOGY EQUALS 'CONSTRUCTIVE DISMISSAL'

Banking means big money these days. In the past four years the FTSE actuaries retail banks sector index has tripled. Greed is good, so they say!

This explains the mad rush of building societies into plc status. Building societies like Halifax, Woolwich and Alliance & Leicester can't wait to convert into banks and float their shares on the stock market.

Barry Riley, in *The Financial Times*, says: "Their managements favour complex business-related justifications, but the pull of money is powerful".

DANTE'S INFERNO

What of the staff? What of the customers?

Well, the staff are being bullied, and the customers are being bribed into selling mutuality status rights.

The customers, if they vote for plc status, will get a bonus of about £1,000 next year sometime. But in the meantime, as Mr Riley points out, "exploitation of the customer base is reaching a new extreme as building societies - headed by market leader, Halifax - take advantage of the fact that their members are effectively locked in ahead of next year's bonuses".

For the staff of building societies, which have staff associations and have never had proper trade unions, the road from mutuality status to the stock market had been like the descent into Dante's Inferno. For years they have watched a bossy manage-

ment structure slap down their staff associations and impose Draconian work routines in the office.

From being customer-friendly and easy-going drop-in centres on the high street, these societies are now being ruled by a new brutalism as management bring in new technology and high-handed management techniques. They can do this against a defenceless workforce which lacks the minimum of union protection.

GLORIFIED SALESMEN

Ironically some of the worst sufferers, up to now, have been the middle managers. We know that new technology and computers hasn't so much hit the typist as replaced the middle manager.

In the Alliance & Leicester some of the branch managers were told to take postings as glorified salesmen. Redundancy does not seem to have been an option, so after years of service they were going to be sent out to sell business, and if they didn't meet their targets they could be got rid of without the society having to find any redundancy money.

Getting their snouts in the banking trough may have its attractions to building societies, but Mr Riley suspects "that significant risks are being incurred - possibly in the securities markets, where banks are lending heavily to hedge funds and other exotic operators with an uncertain ability to survive the next market crisis".

Will Hutton (*Observer*, 6th October 1996) complained about how the building societies are becoming publicly-quoted companies. He said "these are financial institutions founded on the principle of collective self-help and mutual ownership ... Mutuality is too precious an idea to die."

Many anarchists would agree, but most of today's building society bosses are willing to court crisis, scandal and crash in the world of high finance to get big dividends and bigger salaries.

White Collar