

FREEDOM

80P ANARCHIST NEWS AND VIEWS

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ASDA: PART OF WAL-MART SPY RING

Following an admission from US supermarket giant Wal-Mart that the company has employed some of its estimated 400 investigators to spy on groups who stand against them, enquiries by Freedom have uncovered a similar story at UK subsidiary Asda.

During the most recent major conflict between Asda and an outside body, a dispute between the company and the GMB led to bug detectors being deployed by unionists during negotiations to avoid surveillance by managers.

The clash, which last year saw a major conflict over whether Asda would recognise the unionisation of its warehouse sector, was one of the most acrimonious of 2006 and saw Asda attempt to oust GMB from all of their buildings. Feelings ran high particularly in the Northwest.

Eddie Gaudie of the GMB union said: "We have had concerns on a number of sites where rooms might be bugged, and there were strong enough concerns that people bought bug detection equipment. A couple of times they did buzz so we were very suspicious."

"When there was an adjournment and we were discussing, there were concerns that when they were coming back in some of their conversations were so close to what was being said in the break it was uncanny."

While evidence is yet to emerge of the company using private detectives, high-tech methods of surveillance are becoming standard practice across the company, something which shop

stewards in the GMB have been expressing increasing unease over. Gaudie explained, "They have cameras everywhere. They have cashless snack machines where they give you a card and can monitor what you buy and how long you are spending buying it. They have recently brought in 'RF Pick', where they have co-ordinates of where everything is and feed it through to you via a headset. They can monitor everything their workers do. They even track the 10% discount cards - they have tried to sack people for giving them to family."

"I was in a meeting of over 40 shop stewards from around the country and it's all the same. They have brought the new systems out at the depots. People are being turned more and more into automatons, and people feel they are being asked to do too much."

"We have surveillance in the vehicles both through tachographs [which monitor speed, distance travelled, and rest periods] and GPS [satellite] tracking. Under this 'VEMIS' system, if the driver is over-revving the vehicle they will be brought in. It is another covert way of monitoring the drivers."

There are fears that this level of information being held on the workforce could lead to the ousting of potentially troublesome workers. In a March speech, Asda's chief 'People Director' David Smith suggested the company should not only "hire on attitude, not on skill", but should use every means in its disposal to oust



low-performing staff - a process he calls "removing the red".

The implication is that some of the formidable surveillance equipment being installed - entirely legally - could be a powerful means for the company to divest itself of anyone it thinks of as

having the wrong attitude, something which historically has been used to help remove organisers.

Its parent company Walmart, the ultimate controller of Asda's attitude to the workplace, have notoriously used investigators to enforce its puritanical

views at work, including the 'no fraternisation' rule, and it was recently discovered that some of their 400 investigators, many retired agents from the FBI and CIA, had been used to investigate and assess the threat of activist shareholders to the company.

POINTS ON YOUR FREEDOM

The government has announced a timetable for the introduction of a new 'points-based' system for immigration.

The system, based on the Australian and Canadian models, would give free entry to the rich, scientists and doctors while barring anyone without a specific job to go to unless they are from the European Union, and demanding a financial bond from those with temporary work.

There will be five 'tiers' within the points scheme within which people applying to work in the UK would be categorised: highly skilled, skilled with

job offer, low skilled, students and temporary workers.

The plan will go through in stages, being fully implemented by 2009.

The single plan will replace a myriad of different procedures which have grown up throughout the course of recent migratory movements, which the government say will make decision-making clearer and easier for immigrants to understand.

However the emphasis on bringing in the wealthy and highly skilled has angered international NGOs, who say it will speed up the movement of big money out of poor nations and increase the 'brain drain' which has seen 50% of university level educated African nationals leave for the Northern hemisphere within five years of graduation.

At the bottom end of the scale, the emphasis on only allowing workers into the country if they are from Europe or have a job to go to is thought likely to trigger a massive increase in people-trafficking, with

UK population change*

Net Inward migration	
2001/2	171,800
2002/3	153,400
2003/4	151,000
2004/5	223,000
Net growth**	
2001/2	208,200
2002/3	232,100
2003/4	280,600
2004/5	375,100
Total growth 2001-05	1,098,000

*Office of National Statistics

**Births against deaths plus migration

exploitative gangs taking large sums of money from workers in situations amounting to indentured servitude, in exchange for bypassing the controls.

The new rules look likely to reverse the 'trickle-down' effect which currently sees a large movement of money from short-term workers in the

SQUAT MAYDAY!

At the time of writing, the Squatted Social Centre in Camberwell, London, is being threatened with eviction.

Papers have been served and the collective was taken to court on 1st May - yes, Mayday - by the owners of the building.

The squatted centre only opened in March, in an old café. It had been empty since last year, with no electric and water pouring from ripped out pipes, damp and dark. The place has been done up, painted, plumbed, electrified, and turned into a communal space for use as a café, bar, meeting space and much more. It is run by a collective of people living fairly locally, some of whom are in the words of one collective member, Gypsy Lee, "long time South London troublemakers and some more recent arrivals".

The owners of the building and the neighbouring ones want to knock them down and build yet more over-priced flats. The owners originally

agreed to allow the squatters to stay for six months but "for reasons only fathomable to themselves, suddenly decided to take us to court".

They are getting together a defence for the hearing, hopefully staying off eviction for a while. In the meantime the space is being used as much as possible, carrying on with a lively program of events. "We may get evicted, sooner or later, but we will sing dance and create resistance here, for as long as the space is under our control. And then we will occupy somewhere else!"

The building is also available for other folks to use, local or otherwise. "So drop in, check the place out. Use it while it's there."

"Free space is fragile and hard to find/hold in London. Help us keep this one as long as possible."

For more information ring the Camberwell Social Centre on 07982 469755, check out the website at 56a.org.uk, warham.html or email blackdog@alphabettreat.co.uk



A vicious new breed?

Rob Ray looks at the recent manoeuvrings of Private Equity and asks what relevance its growth may have

In scenes reminiscent of the '80s pre-stock market crisis, a major row has blown up over the attempted Private Equity takeovers of high-street giants Sainsbury's and Boots.

While unions and some sectors of the Labour party have attacked what they see as a rapacious reawakening of asset-stripping for the noughties, Private Equity groups have hailed it as perhaps the next step in providing greater efficiency through competition.

Private Equity takeovers occur when management teams buy out publicly listed companies and take them off the stock market as private entities. The most common use of this system for profit stems from the '70s when business tycoons developed 'the flip', where a management team takes over a company, aggressively attacks wages and jobs to 'cut away fat', then sells back to the market in a three to five year cycle.

The flip is achieved through what is known as a 'leveraged buyout' where the massive funds needed to take over large companies are loaned by banks and investors, and secured with the assets of the company being bought out.

The practice reached its zenith in the '80s when major takeovers were attempted by firms later labelled 'the asset strippers', for their practice of taking healthy companies, selling their assets, firing much of the workforce and then selling back a shell to the public markets.

The Private Equity market died down in the '90s, as mega-mergers placed many of the big players beyond the reach of even major private equity groups and confidence dimmed in the risks of investing during an economic downturn.

However the rise of the 'club buyout' in the last 4-5 years, where several major funds buy in to reach for larger targets, has recently seen some of the biggest companies in the world targeted.

Sainsbury's and Boots are just the tip of a very large iceberg. Other major buyouts in the last few years have included the AA, Debenhams, and the largest yet, TXU for \$44.5bn.

The sector has grown at a stunning pace, nearly doubling from \$112.5bn invested in 2004 to \$215bn invested last year, and an estimated \$400bn war-chest for further buyouts. One in five workers in the UK are now under the control of some form of private equity.

Unions have launched an attack on the sector following a brutal fight at the AA, where unionists accused the buyers of gutting the business by selling buildings and then leasing them back, outsourcing personnel and where that wasn't possible, simply cutting staff so roadside coverage was compromised.

At Debenhams, the company has posted its third profit warning after being taken public, as the company struggles to shrug off underinvestment and cuts. Unions are accusing Private Equity of continuing the same cycle of the '80s.

Private Equity, and much of the business press, say otherwise. Quoting a report by the Nottingham University centre for buyout research, they point to evidence that while initial cuts do take place, it is a precursor to expansion by the leaner companies that emerge.

However the centre, which was founded by Barclay's Private Equity Ltd., does not mention where this new



EUROPE'S LEECH-LORDS AND LADIES: 1. UK chair of Barclays Private Equity Tom Lamb; 2. 3i chair Baroness Hogg (ex-Independent editor and public policy advisor to Blair); 3. Dominique Senequier, Chief Executive Officer of AXA Private Equity; 4. Ronald Cohen, chief exec of Apax Partners; 5. Guy Hands, Terra Firma chief executive; 6. CVC chair Mike Smith (we were unable to find a picture of Smith, who is notoriously publicity-shy, but his company is the one which bought out the AA, Debenhams and the commercial rights of Formula One).

employment comes from, or what form it takes. It also fails to say where the initial cuts take place, or to mention the effect of asset sales. It does mention the bankruptcy rate of leveraged buyouts

after the flip is finished. One in eight firms go to the wall.

The union drive looks set to be a flash in the pan, demanding only that private equity be taxed more. But the

sector is a clear and present danger to workers, as a model which diverts massive assets away from wages and employment towards the ultra-rich, and produces nothing.

TUC plead for union deals

New figures showing a continued fall in union membership, particularly in the south, have prompted a call for radical changes from TUC chief Brendan Barber – he wants bosses to volunteer to unionise their workplaces.

Following years of decline as union militancy has died, and the rise of a whole new generation to whom union membership is an anachronism – in the Eastern and South-eastern region membership for 16-24 year old males was so low it could not be accurately measured – 6.6 million unionists equals half pre-Thatcher levels.

The 0.6% fall nationally is the largest since 1998, and follows a series of high-profile disputes which saw union bosses capitulate to government and private sector pressure over wages, privatisation of services and pensions.

In response to the findings, the TUC praised its member unions for slowing the rate of decline and pointed to evidence of increasing female membership as an example of how

unionism is adapting to the market.

However the increase in female membership is relative, as it declined by 0.2% compared to much faster male losses.

Barber said unions were "running hard" to keep membership stable, and that growth was a priority. He said: "The continuing success of unionised companies such as Tesco, shows that employers have nothing to fear from constructive relations with unions."

The deal Barber refers to, between Tesco and Usdaw, has been heavily criticised for undermining union independence, and has infamously seen the union support attacks on sick pay rights rather than take on their major backer.

It sees Tesco hand out recruitment leaflets to new employees, help with recruitment drives and provide help to union reps.

Bob is a member of the Anarchist Federation, which claims unions are by their nature part of the management structure over workforces. He said: "It's absolutely typical of the TUC

bureaucrats that they should want to get further into bed with the employers.

"This is one of the reasons that their membership is dwindling. Workers feel an appalling cynicism when it comes to the unions. Where I work, colleagues respect the local rep and the branch officials. When it comes to the union bosses though, they have nothing but contempt. We don't believe that it is possible to reform or capture them. At the same time we know that union meetings do provide a point of contact and a place where we can discuss activity.

"We always try to express the need to extend and spread the struggle beyond the confines of the union bureaucrats set. This move, getting even closer to the bosses will make this even harder. It will weaken militancy and strengthen capital. We must oppose it."

Also see comment, from Tony of the IWW, on page 6.

Solfed conference

At the end of April the Solidarity Federation (Solfed) held its national conference. One of the attendees, Keith, reports:

It was good to see old comrades and new faces from all of SF's locals, as well as to have talked with observers from the Spanish CNT, Italian USI and from the IWA secretariat based in the Serbian section, the ASI. An official observer from the Anarchist Federation was also present.

Grizzled veterans and newcomers alike brought informed comment and fresh ideas; differences of opinion were honestly aired, before consensus was reached on a range of motions.

The most important debates surrounded our industrial strategy, which aims to build networks of like-minded militants in their respective sectors, as a step towards the formation of anarcho-syndicalist unions. The Education Workers' Network is up and running with a new issue of Education Worker now available. Meanwhile the Health and Care

Workers' Initiative was formed at the conference itself. In addition the launch of a network for SF students/youth is planned for later in the year.

Network members were brimming with ideas about what can be done today, instead of awaiting some spontaneous emergence of an alternative to Labour betrayal and TUC reformism. There was an understanding that the theory and practice of solidarity, mutual aid and direct democracy have to be implemented now, as a means to win current disputes, as well as to build the organisations of the future.

As anarchism rests upon organisation we must do more, and use more innovative methods, to get our ideas across and to stress the importance of membership, structure and co-ordination. To those anarchists outside of national organisations, we ask: How is the new society to be built? How is the new economy to be created and run? It will take sustained organisation and planning. Serious about anarchism? Join the Solidarity Federation.

Papuans strike and win

Despite near-civil war in Papua New Guinea, workers have other priorities, finds Sam Urquhart

Workers employed by mining multinational Freeport McMoran in the Indonesian province of West Papua struck from 18th to 21st April, gaining a 100% wage increase among other concessions.

Six thousand workers at Grasberg, the world's second largest copper and gold mine, slowed production – resulting in estimated losses of \$11.32 million for the New Orleans based company.

As Frans Pigome of Tongoi Papua, the main group involved in organising the strike told the *Times* on 22nd April, "We are satisfied. After more than 40 years in operation, this is the most spectacular increase. They could have increased it years ago, but they think only how to profit themselves."

The settlement will result in an increase in the wages of the lowest paid workers at the mine to \$341 per month. However, Tongoi Papua had initially tabled demands for larger wage increases, better pensions, worker representation and programmes to increase the proportion of Papuans on the workforce of the mine.

Out of the 9,000 employees at Grasberg, only 3,000 are Papuan, giving rise to charges of discrimination and the marginalisation of local people. Freeport officials have only said that they will begin a feasibility study concerning a 'Papuan affairs department' within the company although they did agree to arrange for the removal of some Jakarta-based Indonesian officials.

Moreover, instead of the 3.2 million rupiah offered to Grasberg workers, Tongoi Papua had initially pushed for 3.6 million. Pigome also threatened to shut down the mine for one month or more if their demands were not met, although in the face of military and police intimidation this longer stoppage did not materialise.

While about 6,000 mine workers struck at Grasberg itself, Tongoi Papua also organised protests in the regional capital, Timika, beginning on 17th April. Hundreds gathered to coincide with collective wage negotiations being carried out between local politicians and Freeport representatives, where they were met by dozens of armoured vehicles, 200 police and soldiers armed with anti-riot gear and firearms.

As Penina Karma, secretary of Tongoi Papua told Reuters on 17th April, "This is a surprise to us. It is just like a war."

Despite the intense military and police presence, workers elected to strike when their calls for talks with Freeport executives were rejected by the company. Although no violence was reported against those taking part, an internal Freeport memorandum was leaked to the Reuters news agency on 19th April in which company executives described the strike as illegal and that workers who left their jobs to participate in the illegal strike, "could be subject to disciplinary measures," an indication of how seriously Freeport has taken events



UNFAIR: Trainees at the Freeport mine where the company has been accused of unfair and discriminatory hiring practices at the world's largest gold and copper mine.

around the Grasberg mine.

The Grasberg strike comes after a wave of similar actions at mines across the world. Zambian workers struck in March to secure a 20% increase while the world's largest copper mine at Escondida in Chile was shut down for almost a month last year. Inco workers in Canada shut also down a nickel mine

in March, while indigenous protesters in New Caledonia have frustrated the Goro nickel project since its inception, driving up costs and putting the future of the mine in doubt.

With copper prices nearing an all-time high, Freeport's CEO Richard Adkerson, recently told reporters that a tightening of the global copper market was creating

'challenging' conditions for mining companies. Mines have been working at full capacity or expanding their operations to keep up with spiraling demand, particularly from China. While price increases have delivered higher corporate profits, these have not reached workers who are struggling to meet demand.

Death and Taxes

As in the UK, United States tax returns are due in April. The IRS (Internal Revenue Service) will take in something close to \$2 trillion this year, almost 40% of which will go to the military according to the National Priorities Project. Specifically 27% of all taxable income will go to current military spending; 9% towards paying off debt from past wars and 3% for 'veterans'. These are the highest rates since World War Two. But there is practical opposition: tax resisters nationwide plan to withhold part or all of their taxes in protest at the war on Iraq.

The figures are pretty well-known: for what the Iraq war has cost, university scholarships could have been provided for every single school

leaver this year; children could have been provided with free health coverage for the entire length of the Iraq war and the national debt could have been halved. According to Pamela Schwartz, Communications director at the National Priorities Project, twenty times more is being spent on the military than on meeting Americans' basic needs.

Ruth Benn, Coordinator of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, describes how she refuses to pay: "I fill out the tax form and show the balance due. I actually do pay into Social Security, and I pay state and local taxes. It's the federal income tax that I focus[ed] on... I send my form to the IRS with a letter saying, 'This is what the form says I owe to you, but I'm taking that money and I'm giving it to groups who don't kill people, basically, who don't do violence'."

The IRS usually sends letters to demand payment in full in such circumstances and is increasingly able to take money directly out of salaries

and bank accounts. Scott Kennedy, who works for the Resource Center for Nonviolence (in Santa Cruz) and used to be the mayor there, has been a long-time war tax resister and is now having his salary reduced in this way.

According to Benn, here are people who just don't co-operate with the system at all; they never fill in the forms, they don't file income tax returns and stay out of the system regardless of whether they earn below taxable income or not. Encouraging,

• In another development on a story carried recently in these pages and with relevance to the Asda spy story in this issue, in an obvious increase in its militarisation and efforts to silence dissent, Wal-Mart has apparently begun recruiting former military and government intelligence officers for its global security operation. Job descriptions suggest that their role will be closer to undercover aggression against employees than selling bananas.

Louis Further

World Bank corruption

Accusations of nepotism towards the World Bank President, Paul 'anti-corruption' Wolfowitz, have dominated the opening of the Bank's spring meetings in Washington.

The Bank is facing an increased crisis of legitimacy over Wolfowitz's undue influence on appointments and pay rises. A Bush administration architect of the Iraq war, Wolfowitz's move to the Bank in 2005 was viewed with concern by many.

The disclosure of his role in securing his partner, Shaha Riza, a position in the White House and a \$60k pay rise – from \$132,660 to \$193,000 – has only increased dissatisfaction. Riza, paid \$10,000 a year more than Condoleezza Rice, is now the highest-paid official in the state department.

A researcher at the Bretton Woods Project, which monitors the Bank, said, "this is merely indicative of his poor judgement on several appointments, and failure to provide leadership on a number of issues, including climate change... his position is no longer tenable".

Wolfowitz faces further criticism over

the appointments of Robin Cleveland and Kevin Kellems, also Bush administration staffers. They obtained top aide positions and salaries of over \$200,000.

Three of the top five outside international appointments during Wolfowitz's tenure were senior political appointees of right-wing governments who have backed US policy in Iraq.

Wolfowitz has come under additional fire for his appointment of Bank general legal council Anna Palcio, and Bank's Managing Director Juan Daboub.

An email recently leaked to the press reveals Daboub's order "to take out all references to family planning" from the country assistance proposal for Madagascar. The new draft Health, Nutrition and Population Strategy, too, contains almost no reference to sexual and reproductive health.

Some have suggested that Wolfowitz's anti-corruption crusade enabled the bank to pour money into the corporate reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq, while reducing finance for poor countries. Calls for his resignation are now widespread.

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REVIEW

'Anarchist seeds beneath the snow' misses out some major libertarian writers, but provides an excellent background, finds Richard Alexander

Firstly some words of clarification. Of the eleven featured authors, only six can be properly counted as anarchists: Edward Carpenter, Oscar Wilde, John Cowper Powys, Herbert Read, Alex Comfort and Colin Ward. Of the other three, George Orwell never described himself as an anarchist, Aldous Huxley and Christopher Pallis are at best 'anarchistic', and E.P. Thompson and William Morris were very much Marxists, albeit of the libertarian shade. The sub-title is therefore necessary to show the wider scope of the book.

Secondly, although these are the featured authors, the book is not exclusively about them. You will also find substantial discussion of writers such as Nicolas Walter, Eric Gill, George Woodcock and Peter Marshall, Carole Pateman and April Carter with walk-on parts for many others, which help to situate the work of the main authors and describe the political and social context in which the authors worked.

Thirdly, this is not an account of a movement or of the activists within it. It is a study of writers first and foremost, with a detailed discussion of their written works, albeit from a political (indeed explicitly anarchist) perspective. And as such this book provides readers with a valuable and entertaining guide to the written works of those authors.

Of the main authors discussed, I was already familiar, to varying degrees, with the work of most of them, though I wouldn't claim to have read the complete works of any of them. One author, John Cowper Powys, was new to me in this context. I had been aware of him as a writer but never grasped his political position, although this was very much at the 'contemplative, spiritual' end of the anarchist spectrum. Having said which he knew Emma Goldman and had

some small involvement with *Spain and the World* and the Sacco and Vanzetti defence.

(One looks forward to reading David Goodway's forthcoming edition of the Powys-Goldman letters!) That said, I'm not sure I shall be tackling his lengthy novels, and his more philosophical works are not top of my must-get list.

Other than Powys, I am sure most readers of papers such as *Freedom*, will be aware of the other authors, although I suspect that people such as Herbert Read are considered rather out-of-fashion these days, and even Alex Comfort is little read (even if his picture books on sex remain very popular). Aldous Huxley's novels, apart from the obvious *Brave New World* and possibly *Island* are rarely read and Herbert Read's work on art has been superseded, whilst his advocacy of *Education through Art*, whilst essentially libertarian, seems to stand little chance in these days of national curricula, testing, league tables and the like. Christopher Pallis (or Maurice Brinton as many will know him) I've discussed elsewhere, comes across as the most 'engaged' writer in 'industrial' terms, whereas Colin Ward's contribution to the national debate over housing, transport and planning issues is second-to-none. Oscar Wilde has been successfully rehabilitated by Stephen Fry (amongst others) but it is useful to have a reminder of his overt politics, yet his contemporary Edward Carpenter, an equally outspoken person on sexual and political matters, seems to languish in near obscurity, lacking, perhaps, Wilde's notoriety, charm and wit.

What is quite fascinating are the connections between the various writers discussed. For example, William Morris knew Edward Carpenter, Oscar Wilde knew William Morris and attended Socialist League meetings at Hammersmith, whereas John Cowper Powys was interested in



Nicolas Walter (left) and Vernon Richards

writing an introduction to Tom Bell's *Wilde without Whitewash* manuscript. Powys (and Goldman) provide the link between the late Victorian writers and those who came to prominence after the First World War. Herbert Read was involved in support work for the Spanish anarchists with Emma Goldman and became involved with the Freedom Press Group.

Elsewhere Aldous Huxley had the pleasure of being Eric Blair's (George Orwell) teacher at Eton for a while, later serving on the editorial board of *Realist*, a journal of scientific humanism, with, amongst others Herbert Read. The main organisation however, that brought people together was the Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA), which Emma Goldman formed in London in December 1937. Huxley was approached to participate but although supportive, had recently moved to the USA and felt unable to take an active part. However John Cowper Powys, Herbert Read and George Orwell all became involved.

In 1945 Orwell became involved with the Freedom Defence Committee (originally formed in 1944 as the Freedom Press Defence Committee to defend the editors of *War Commentary* who were being charged with attempting to subvert members of the armed forces), whilst Colin Ward had, by then, joined the Freedom Press Group, with Alex Comfort contributing articles to the paper and writing a couple of pamphlets. Which leaves us with Chris Pallis. Pallis was never involved with Freedom Press but other members of Solidarity, such as Ken Weller and Nicolas Walter, were involved with the Committee of 100, the direct action anti-nuclear weapons group, alongside Freedom Press group stalwarts Alex Comfort and Herbert Read, and Nicolas Walter later became involved with *Freedom* itself.

So a fine thread can connect all the writers, but do they end up producing a coherent set of political positions?

David Goodway summarises the contributions each writer makes to an overall anarchist politics: from Carpenter, how the simplification of life and sexual liberation can effect radical social change; from Read, the need for liberation to begin in the classroom; Huxley brings decentralisation, alternative technology (he was an early advocate of solar power), and the yoga of love.

Comfort contributes his emphasis on disobedience and personal responsibility (and I'd add his work on sexuality and 'human nature'); Pallis his demystification of power and decision making (and his debunking of Bolshevism) and Ward's contention that anarchism is, if you like, how people naturally organise their lives, alongside and despite the authoritarian power structures that attempt to control and constrain them, and I'd add his insistence that people are fully capable of individually and collectively able to determine housing, planning and transport issues in a non-authoritarian way.

Finally John Cowper Powys adds his life-philosophy, his simple art of everyday living and self-liberation in the here and now. There are other common themes, the total opposition to war, and in many cases violence, and also, in many cases the working for social change without the revolutionary myth that sustains much 'class struggle' anarchism, (although some might argue that it is a necessary and enabling 'myth'.)

There is, of course, much more in this dense and well-written book. The male bias reflects the male bias of the subject matter, but perhaps more could be said of writers such as Ethel Mannin, or the libertarian influenced feminists of the second wave of feminism. As with any such book, one could quibble over who has been included and who excluded. For example, one might query the omission of contemporary poets or novelists, but I presume this is due the

fact that most have produced little explicitly political prose works.

Equally one might have liked more mention of Brian Morris, who has written extensively on anthropology from an anarchist perspective, plus his works on Bakunin and Kropotkin. A.S. Neill might also have been worth further discussion, but his works are already covered by existing books on libertarian education.

And I suspect some people might be expecting Guy Aldred to put in an appearance too. However at 400 pages the book is plenty long enough for most readers (and at the limit as far as publishers are concerned!). Cramming more authors in would only have diluted the existing material, to its detriment.

Some of the material may be familiar to readers, as certain chapters are revised versions of works that have appeared elsewhere, in particular in David Goodway's introductions to the works of some of the authors featured. The text is complemented by an extensive, if not exhaustive, bibliography, which should provide more than enough books for readers to chase up if they find their interest in a particular author stimulated by the text.

David Goodway has written an exceedingly accessible book, which I can commend to anyone interested in the strand of anarchism (or left libertarianism) he has picked out for discussion. As for the pricing, well I understand that these days the paperback price is the going rate for academic books – one wonders who pays out for the hardback editions! As ever your friendly local public library will assist those of us who find the price, even of the paperback, excessive.

Richard Alexander

Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward by David Goodway. Liverpool University Press. £20 (hardback edition £50)



George Orwell

Commentary

FREEDOM

Volume 68 Number 09

Anarchism

Anarchists work towards a society of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. We reject government, and all forms of exploitation and domination.

Freedom Press is an independent anarchist publisher, founded in 1886. Besides this newspaper, which comes out every two weeks, we produce books on all aspects of anarchist theory and practice – see our website for a full list.

In our building in East London we run Britain's biggest anarchist bookshop and host the Autonomy Club meeting room and the Freedom Hacklab open-access IT space.

Our aim is to explain anarchism more widely and to show that people can work together and use direct action to practically improve our lives and build a better world.

Freedom's editors wish to present a broad range of anarchist thought, and as such the views expressed in the paper are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial collective.

Angel Alley

Things seem to be ticking over gently at the Freedom Press building following the elections, which never seem to change very much (well we would say that, wouldn't we).

It has been an enjoyable four weeks, as the energetic ministrations of our main organiser for the mailout have resulted in papers being mailed almost as soon as they arrive.

We are also looking into putting together a marketing collective – a radical step, I know, but one which as we move into the 21st century could help keep us on the cutting edge of commercial practice.

Finally, you may have noticed an increasing number of different-sounding voices in the paper in the last couple of issues. This is because we have again discovered the 'email list', a wonderful invention which allows us to organise our news agenda and solicit writers more easily. Wonderful thing, progress.

If you fancy having a go at this new-fangled 'marketing' thing, let us know through the usual channels (see below), or you can volunteer to run the shop, write articles, do a bit of DIY...

RR

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Next issue

The next issue will be dated 19th May 2007 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 10th May. Send articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A great reactionary tradition

Though some may accuse Bob (Freedom, 24th March 2007) of making a little go a long way in the same way that they charge the Northern Anarchist Network with doing the same thing, he does demonstrate the dilemma we face on the British left. The title of his interview, 'Organising for Resistance', sums up what we in this country are up against better than any carefully argued critique.

It shows, without any sign of embarrassment, that others, in this case the State and bosses, are setting the agenda and the Anarchist Federation (AF) are reacting against it by forming glorified protest groups against the proposed introduction of ID cards in England and the ministrations of Royal Dutch Shell PLC at Rosport in Ireland.

Ten years ago when I edited the essays of Geoffrey Ostergaard in the *The Tradition of Workers' Control* for Freedom Press, I ventured a quote from E.P. Thompson on this defensive tradition of the British radicals in the nineteenth century: "Hence these years appear at times to display not a revolutionary challenge but a resistance movement, in which both the Romantics and the Radical craftsmen opposed the annunciations of *Acquisitive Man*."

It is not my place to criticise any of this except to draw attention to this deeply rooted English radical tradition. At least for most of the twentieth century the left here simply reacted to the actions of Governments. From the General Strike of 1926 – which was about threatened pay cuts in the pits – onwards to the Ban the Bomb protests of the 1960s; to the Miners' Strike of the 1980s – about retaining status quo in the pits; to the Poll Tax riots of the 1990s; to the current Stop the War protests, it is a history of reacting to or of organising resistance to the actions of either the boss or the State.

Bob puts this in a nutshell when he describes the AF activities as 'Organising for Resistance' and not organising for social change.

Naturally this is all that the rest of the left in this country are doing in

their different ways and Bob is only being honest, modest and, some would say realistic, about his organisation's intentions. In the same way even the British trade unions with their size and resources merely delegate social change to the Labour Party legislators. It's all about tactics and no strategy can be seen.

This issue of British resistance and protest politics was discussed at the last meeting of the Northern Anarchist Network (NAN) this March. At the NAN this British tradition was contrasted with the Spanish anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement in Spain in the 1930s.

It was argued that there was a qualitative difference between the historic Spanish revolutionary trade unions of the CNT and the British left resistance movement, which couldn't carry out a general strike in 1926 with any degree of conviction.

The Spanish left and the CNT had a strategy for social transformation, agreed at the Saragossa conference of 1936 when a framework was worked out independent of political parties or the State. Based on these Saragossa conference decisions Anthony Beevor, the military historian, writes (2006) of the situation in Barcelona in July 1936: "Services such as water, gas and electricity were working under their new management within hours of the storming of the Atarazanas barracks." And Beevor adds: "a conversion of appropriate factories to war production meant the metallurgical concerns had started to produce armoured cars by 22 July". Compared to these Catalans I have grave doubts that most on the British left could cope with managing a junk shop.

In Britain, it seems, we must stumble on forever moaning, protesting and complaining about this or that proclamation of those in power, forever resisting, and with a firmer grasp on our clichés than on any real concept of social change or what to do.

Here history shows it is the State and the bosses who set the agenda, not the trade unions and the left movement, even the anarchist left.

Brian Bamford

Brendan's boob

When Brendan Barber talks of building union membership through partnership* he does not realise that one of the main causes of trade union

decline in recent years is precisely this partnership agenda. We can see how unions are becoming crippled by it, not only in the UK, but also all over the world.

It is also obvious from some recent campaigns, such as Unite! in New Zealand, that the only way to build strong campaigns is to do away with this pretence to working with employers in partnership. I see this slowing of union decline as a result of some unions beginning to cotton on to the fact that partnership simply doesn't work. It only ever benefits the bosses.

The main barrier to growth, I believe, aside from an increasingly complex, fluid and decentred global capitalist system (which is never going to be helpful!), is the fact that unions have turned their backs on the very tried-and-tested qualities they know get the goods. It is an indisputable fact of history that rank and file power, leadership accountability, and militancy are key aspects of any successful union.

The union bureaucracies simply cannot afford to make wet, liberal requests to businesses as 'representatives' of the membership and expect members to take them seriously. This is also a key factor in the re-emergence of (anarcho-)syndicalist** unions such as the IWW in recent years – militant workers are turning to the radical unions because their own unions repeatedly sell them out, stifle their autonomous action and refuse to engage with any political agenda that might be seen as radical or controversial.

Instead of scrambling for the central ground, workers would have far more respect for unions if they were to stick their necks out and take some risks in the interests of their members.

Tony

IWW member

* Recent comments from the TUC boss have suggested businesses should help build unionism as a partnership with workers, see page 3 for more.

** Anarcho-syndicalist unions work using a de-centralised federated system, control coming direct from the shop-floor rather than from union chiefs.

Black Flag update

After a relatively successful meeting in March, it looks like *Black Flag* will be continuing. Around six people meet to discuss the future of the magazine and it was agreed that it would be good if the magazine continued.

The aim is to re-launch *Black Flag* as a magazine at this year's book fair and aim to get two issues out next year. Hopefully we will be able to get back to quarterly in the following year or so. While we have a small group as the basis for a new collective, it would best if more people get involved. Otherwise our plans may not blossom (and this has happened repeatedly in the past so it is a possibility).

As decided at the March meeting, a follow-up meeting has been organised at Freedom Bookshop (84b Whitechapel High Street, Aldgate East is the nearest tube) at 7pm on Wednesday, the 9th May. If you cannot meet the meeting but want to get involved please reply and let me know. If you live outside London, you can still be involved. Please contact *Black Flag*

(Black_Flag@lycos.co.uk).

Please remember that one meeting does not constitute a successful collective. We have had well attended meetings at the book fair and no one attended any follow-up meetings. So, please do not assume that someone else will get involved. If you want *Black Flag* to continue then please come along to the meeting or contact us.

Iain

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Points on your freedom

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UK sent back to third-world countries.

The most recent figures released by the Office of National Statistics have found that net inward migration, deducting those leaving from those arriving to reach a total figure, was 185,000 last year, nearly 40,000 down on the year before. It appears that the major rise, following European integration, was mostly short-term work related.


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Quiz answers

- Afrikaans. The text was by Abu Bakr Effendi for the Muslim community of the Cape. Afrikaner nationalists have always claimed that the language was developed from Dutch by Christians, denying the multi-racial and multi-cultural origins of the tongue. Even now it is spoken by more non-whites than whites.
- A financial organisation that buys distressed debt on the cheap and then tries to enforce full payment through the courts. Scum even by the standards of international financiers.
- Mutiny over conditions. They removed the magnetos from all the transport on site and won all their demands.
- A massacre of striking IWW miners in Colorado in 1927, at the Columbine mine in Serene, near Denver. Six miners were killed and over 60 injured.

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