



The FUTURE of ANARCHISM

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ANARCHISTS HAVE THEIR FINGER IN EVERY PIE. The distinguishing feature of anarchism is that it brings political, social and individual revolution together and asserts that each of them is dependent on the others.

One of the consequences of this, taken together with the nature of anarchist ideas, is that we are at a crossroads among minority groups. In one direction the ILP, the SPGB, the dissident Marxists and libertarian socialists all feel some kind of friendship towards anarchism, particularly aspects such as support for direct action, workers' control, and hopes for a free socialist society. Despite some assertions of purism this friendship is reciprocated. On the other hand groups which are chiefly interested in individual salvation, such as the pseudo-psychology cults also find it possible to exchange mutual sympathy with the anarchists. In yet a third direction, every reformist organisation whose objects or methods can be stretched to include a leavening of libertarianism finds some support among anarchists who feel concerned in that particular direction. Hence anarchists have been closely associated with the Aldermaston and Direct Action movements, the Boycott, and the anti-Capital Punishment campaign. The list can be extended. Occasional voices assert that truth can only be found when the anarchists get together with the Flying Saucer people, and so on.

Anarchists therefore, tend to develop a kind of minority consciousness. That is, a feeling which is common to people who belong to minority groups of very varied kinds, and is independent of the particular features of their own minority.

This brings several problems in its train. One of them is the way in which peculiar individuals find a home on the fringe of the movement, and discourage casual inquirers. There are certain people who cause groans to go up simply by coming into a meeting because whatever their hobby horse, they will get a chance to bring it in discussion, divert the course of the meeting and considerably reduce its value in attracting non anarchists. Whereas the authoritarian parties would expel or dissociate people who misrepresent their views to outsiders, the tolerant anarchists welcome them as just another group of valiant non-conformists.

On the group and movement level this spirit of generous acceptance also makes itself felt. As mentioned above, anarchism has a practical kinship with an extremely varied selection of movements. Simply form a group which is generally progressive, and a tiny minority, and you will find some anarchists supporting it, writing about it in our papers, writing about anarchism in its papers, and so on. As a result, anarchism is often treated, not on the merits of its case, but as one of an indistinguishable array of minority cults.

Another problem, which is more important, is the effect on anarchist ideas themselves of this minority position. A leading article in FREEDOM a few years ago began: "Writers in this newspaper are not at all elated that our speculations on world politics are usually accurate. It strikes us as a social tragedy that a handful of anarchists are alone

able to grasp the significance of competitive political power when the facts are available to all." Now if we are right, and our ideas are fairly simple to grasp, then the mass of people who have consistently ignored them for a century must be particularly foolish, neurotic or vicious. Unfortunately, it is these people to whom we have to get our ideas across if they are going to have very much effect.

It is suggested by more conforming people that rebels just enjoy opposing the majority attitude for the sake of being different. Whether this is ascribed to moral defects or complicated psychological drives depends on the sophistication of the attacker. However, this sort of feeling only becomes dangerous when it is inwardly accepted by the person to whom the criticism is directed. Once a group assents to the idea that it is doomed to be an ineffective and diminishing minority, that the big world is too corrupt even to recognise the people who can put it right, and that rebellious attitudes often spring from psychological needs quite different from the ones to which they are ascribed, then it will indeed become ineffective and its activities sterile.

Objectivity demands that we concede some truth to the above criticisms, but what is really important is that it should be demonstrable that they are not true as a whole. That is, anarchists must find ways of expressing themselves which do not consist of crying in the wilderness, or playing ring-a-ring o'roses with all the other minority sects. It is no use making propaganda at all unless we feel confident that it will have a good effect.

To achieve this, anarchists should consistently try to find answers to the problems that ordinary people are facing. The outlook that leads to debates on "Which should the Working Class support: the Revolutionary Marxist Unity Party or the United Socialist Workers' Front?" has nothing to do with reality. The ideas we put forward must however, be anarchist ones and not watered-down versions for popular consumption. The false dichotomy between the conceptions of "escapist" revolutionaries and practical-minded "revisionists" needs breaking down, and the best way is by showing in practice that anarchists can provide a realistic way of facing up to practical problems.

Finally, to what extent does anarchism still involve the idea that it can only be effective when everyone has accepted it? Are we looking for world-wide unanimity or are we content to make a contribution to finding a way through social problems knowing that the solution reached will be either a synthetic one or a pure compromise and hoping that the anarchist influence will be as big as possible?



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COLIN WARD

A GOAL THAT IS INFINITELY REMOTE is not a goal at all, said Herzen, but a deception. And it would be a useful exercise in mental self-discipline if we anarchists, instead of aiming at infinity, were to set out what we think we can accomplish by, say, 1970. (I am making the assumption that we do want to effect *some* kind of social change—and if you don't think so, don't read on). If you attempt this discipline you will see what modest hopes we can honestly expect to entertain for the next few years. We have to tell the world that the anarchist idea exists and what it means: this more than anything else is the value of George Woodcock's book which will be in a thousand shops up and down the country in a few weeks' time. We have to tell the world that people exist today who propagate the ideas of anarchism: this more than anything else was the value of the notoriety accruing from the demonstration in London on Easter Monday. We have to tell the world that journals exist which seek to apply the ideas of anarchism to the contemporary world. Personally, I want the monthly sales of this journal to reach 4,000 by 1970—and if this seems to you a pathetically humble aim, just try and realise it.

That I can advance the mere act of saying "Look: we exist!" as the basis of a programme for a decade, illustrates the confusion in the anarchist vocabulary between "is" and "ought", between what is likely to happen and what ought to happen. One consequence of this confusion is that, with our eyes fixed on one big ultimate solution, we neglect the thousand minor, temporary, transient solutions which might actually be attained. The great anarchist virtue of many supporters of the Committee of 100 is that simultaneously with their "sublime folly" in making a frontal, if symbolic, attack on the State at the point where the State is least likely to yield at all, they are intent on other direct action projects in fields where their impact might even be felt—the housing shortage, racial tensions, the Factory for Peace, the care of the old and the liberation of the young. This combination of intransigence and creative effort, of permanent protest and the use of anarchism as a *method* of approach to present problems, is, it seems to me, sufficient programme for our generation.

Kropotkin remarked that man will be compelled to find new forms of organisation for those social functions which the State now fulfils through the bureaucracy and that "as long as this is not done nothing will be done". To discover, to describe, to develop and to propagate these new forms of organisation is, I think, the most important task for anarchists in the immediate future, especially when, as at the moment, there is a certain wave of interest in anarchist ideas around us, an interest which we should not lose our chance of exploiting.

It is also the particular function of ANARCHY to serve as a journal of anarchist *applications* and techniques: the techniques of "encroaching control" in industry, of "de-institutionalization" in the organisation of social welfare, of applying in the ordinary primary and secondary schools the lessons of the progressive schools, of encouraging and widening the field of the habit of direct action. If we can manage to implant anarchist aims and methods in the fabric of our daily common life, we won't have to worry about the future of anarchism.