

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Why can't I see it yet?

Albert Meltzer

1991

We have refrained from giving much publicity to the actual whereabouts of the Kate Sharpley Library. It was originally in 121 Railton Road but with the possibility of eviction (not realised) it was removed to private premises and became dormant until recently. It requires an immense amount of work, and many documents, even books, are irreplaceable. Now (as will be seen when cataloguing is complete) it is a unique record of anarchist activism.

What is the danger such collections face? It is not overt fascist attack, fire-bombings etc. Arson may have been incidentally the case in the past, and it was a hazard in 121 Railton Road, but fascist goon squads would give a low priority to such attacks unless, as in early fascist Italy, the Argentine recently, or Spain, the premises also housed workers' clubs or printing presses. Hitler didn't 'burn the books' until he got power and then did it for dramatic effect.

There is more danger from "anarchologists", pretended experts from outside, the Intellectual Mafia who want to seize anarchist records of anarchist activity and doctor them to furnish a growing thesis industry. They have used up Marxism and Socialist labour

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history and are extending their researches for new and original doctoral theses, and anarchism represents a fair field to plunder.

Freedom Press had a large library of anarchist books and records from the earlier Freedom Group. In a recent leaflet as well as in the dubious “Centennial” issue Vernon Richards accuses “so-called anarchists” of having stolen them, yet the archives have never been open to anarchists. No workers have penetrated the archives, only “accredited students”.

Some valuable material was entrusted by Freedom Press to the London School of Economics Library, including annotated copies of earlier issues by Peter Kropotkin and Charlotte Wilson. Where are they now? Go in the LSE Library (if you can) and try to find them! Like much else in academic libraries, they have been removed either by the Rewriting of History Mafia, or more directly by university book thieves. High prices can be obtained from second-hand booksellers and archivist collectors.

The same applies to the material of the CNT, stored carefully in Amsterdam during the War and Franco regime to avoid confiscation, only to have the Institute refuse to hand the collection back. What they have obtained after strenuous efforts to form their own library in Barcelona, has dwindled to very little.

Until the material we have can be photocopied and stored — a large project for the future — it has to be kept secure. Otherwise we are wasting our time and our efforts will be vain. We trust our friends will see the point.