

A communal hall had been built by the colonists, and this was also heated and lit in the same way, though for a time an acetylene gas lighting system was operated.

The hall was in very full use, for all manner of activities - plays and play-readings, country dancing, 'modem' dancing, musical evenings and lectures by colonists or visitors. As it was no less uncomfortable than many of our houses attendances were good!

It was not until 1948 that water mains reached the Colony (21 years after it was first promised). Digging the trenches in our solid Cotswold rock proved too much for the machines, and it was done in the end mainly by navvies.

Electricity reached us in 1954 - some were connected by Christmas, and in one case I know of the daughter of the house, through her school experience, was able to show her mother how to use the cooker!

The rocky nature of much of the land made it very hard to get a living from our gardens, but against this we had the advantage of a lack of sewage systems, so that, with proper composting, everything that was taken from the land went back into it, and the rather shallow soil was at least very fertile. Shortage of water could be a very big problem.

Until the arrival of water mains most people collected drinking water from a pipe fed by a very good spring, but for those on the 'Dry Ground' it could mean a daily walk of up to 30 minutes. For some reason this was known as the 'simple life'.

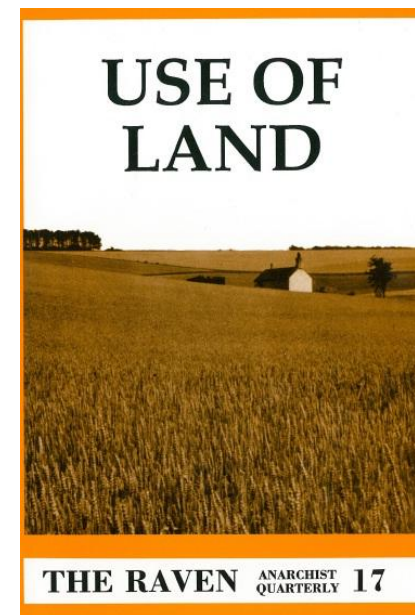
One big problem that arose from the way Whiteway had developed was that while the land was held in common, houses were privately owned. As was mentioned earlier, no mortgage could be raised on a house where there was no tide to the land, and in later years when more people from outside came to live, only those with enough resources to buy outright were able to come in. This meant in many cases older retired people, or well-placed younger ones.

As the available empty plots became more and more scarce, sometimes there might be two or more families wanting to buy

## The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly 17

Use of Land

Various Authors



January - March 1992

up some of these holdings, so that new members could join the community.

The principle of no private ownership of the land was maintained throughout, and new members had to sign a declaration to that effect.

This record of the acceptance of the principle was to play a very important part many years later, when someone wanted to buy a house and wanted a mortgage (not possible without a title to the land) A local solicitor assured the proposed vendor that he could register the land in her name. However, a friendly lawyer in London had, not long before, advised us to put a 'caution' on the land with the Central Land Registry, and when the request was made for registration of title they referred the matter to us and we were able to state our objections.

Thus it came about in 1955 that the matter came before the Chief Land Registrar in London, and among other matters we were able to produce the actual letter in which the original holder of the land accepted the principle, and the Registrar found for the Colony.

By this time the three trustees were dead, and although they had renounced all interest in the land in law they were the actual owners. There was still alive the widow of Sudbury Protheroe living in Salisbury, and the Registrar said that even though she could be considered the owner, if she wished to return she would need to apply to the Colony Meeting for the use of some land, as the Meeting had established full control.

When, in 1929, the Meetings had become larger in an attempt to get business done more easily a 'Director of Discussions' was decided upon and after a few years a system of voting came in. All those living at Whiteway could attend meetings, but only land holders could vote in matters affecting the land.

All this time life was fairly primitive at Whiteway. No running water and no electricity was available, so cooking and lighting was by solid fuel or paraffin.

left Whiteway the land reverted to the control of the Meeting, and could be reallocated.

The taking of separate plots came about after a time because there were some who, in the words of Nellie Shaw (one of the founders), were prepared to use the communal knife and fork but not the communal spade and fork.

There were never any sets of rules or beliefs to which members must adhere - although there was a Tolstoyan influence among those who were the founders. In fact a Czech - Francis Sedlak - who had gone to Russia to see Tolstoy and to learn his way of life was told by the great man that the only place he knew where an attempt was being made to live that way was at Whiteway, where-upon Francis made his way to the Colony where he arrived in 1900. He settled there with Nellie Shaw.

Some local people took advantage of the non-resistance of the community - crops were taken, cattle driven in and so forth, and it was many years before there was any local acceptance of the community's existence.

Gradually members started small commercial enterprises - William Sinclair was a farmer (1905) with dairy cows and supplied members and others with milk and Rachelle Sinclair made good cheeses.

Sudbury Protheroe had been making bread, and in 1906 Protheroe's Bakery was founded and became an important part of life there, bread and cakes being made there until very recently.

By 1909 minutes were being kept of the proceedings at the Colony Meeting - where all decisions continued to be made on a general consensus of views. It was many years before voting became the rule. The Colony Meeting was made up of all those in use-occupation of land. At first the few settlers took over fairly large plots of land, hoping to make a living for their families. When, years later, these larger areas reverted to the Colony from people leaving in one way or another, it became possible to split

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## *Tom Keell Wolfe* **Whiteway Colony**

It is now approaching 100 years since a small group of people (who had lived in a community which seemed to be going in a direction they did not like) set off to find land upon which to build a new way of living.

After quite a long time a piece of land was found and bought with the help of sympathisers. They had a stone cottage (Whiteway House) and 42 acres of land. There is a stream on one boundary, and the whole is cut in two by a road, giving the Wet Ground and the Dry Ground. The latter was settled later. All this land lies between 750ft and 850ft above sea level, which meant a much shorter growing season than the land in the valleys around.

At first life revolved around the cottage, with some colonists having to find accommodation within a few miles around. It was intended that life would be on a communal basis, and an attempt was made to avoid the use of money.

When the land was bought it had to be transferred to someone and so three of the founders (Joseph Bum, William Sinclair and Sudbury Protheroe) accepted it on behalf of the community. In 1899 the title deeds were burnt with some ceremony and the Colony's basis was laid down - there should be no private ownership of land - control of the land and any business to do with it should be in the hands of the Colony Meeting - individual plots of land were held on the basis of use-occupation. Plots were allocated by the Meeting, which had no power to take it away. Where the occupier

We had in mind Walter Segal Type housing. For domestic sewage we suggested a Clivus. However, reed-beds and other alternatives would all be considered.

To obviate the development of the human double-edged 'Cuckoo in the Nest Syndrome' it is suggested that a National Pool of Smallholdings be set up. Young people could move onto a holding of their own as soon as they could manage one. Older people could continue as long as they were able, or swap for a smaller place if they wished. Existing smallholders could bequeath their holdings to the Pool. No money need be involved. The only condition would be that the land be worked as ecologically as possible.

The proposals have been discussed with the powers that be and the general fear is that everyone would want a holding. Of course they would.

A few pilot projects could pave the way to a steady return back to the land.

## Editorial

Eighty per cent of the land surface of Britain is rural. It is largely owned by a small minority and farmed and worked by an ever diminishing section of the working population. As factory farming and ever larger machines take over so are more farm workers made redundant and small farms swallowed up into even larger enterprises.<sup>(1)</sup>

Our massively urban population is completely uninterested in the fate of our land (above and below sea-level) in spite of the fact that whereas we could, at a pinch, dispense with most of our factories, the land remains our most precious asset. Whether our ever growing number of urban sisters and brothers nourish themselves from take-aways, or pop their ready-cooked packages into a microwave oven for 5 minutes, or depend on their deep freezes — all that (expensive, moreover) food had to be grown, reared, fished by that small number of people — a mere 2% of the working population.

Allow for the fact that anarchists are opposed on principle to private ownership of the land — it belongs to all the people and should be used for the benefit of all — private ownership under capitalism encourages every abuse you can think of. For capitalism is by definition privatisation for profit and those engaged in it have no scruples as to what they are producing so long as it earns them a worthwhile profit.

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<sup>(1)</sup> We look upon this Editorial as only preliminary notes for a much longer and detailed FREEDOM PRESS title in the near future. The literature in our favour already abounds and needs to be assembled and analysed with anarchist conclusions.

Farmers are no exception to the rule, and as farming enterprises get larger and larger, so mono-culture and the ever increasing use of pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilisers are the order of the day in order to produce even larger yields with utter disregard for the effects this factory farming has on the soil and the environment – not to mention the *quality* of the produce. The abuse of the land is also visited upon the livestock for the same reason: *profit*. And whole fish stocks are being depleted by overfishing – again it's the large, technologically sophisticated trawlers which sweep up everything without concern for future stocks, future generations.

It is argued by some that the subsidies farmers receive through the CAP are intended to benefit the so called 'inefficient' small farmers in France and Germany. In fact these subsidies have encouraged the large farmers in Britain to plough up grassland and poorer land to grow wheat or barley, because the guaranteed intervention price was so much higher than the lower price. Hence the so called over production of cereals in the European Community countries – while millions starve elsewhere. In spite of this 'overproduction' Britain imports vast quantities of animal feeding stuffs! European surpluses are exported at subsidised prices at the taxpayers' expense and cheap manioc from the Far East and subsidised maize from USA are imported to produce the feeding compounds with which the British farmers then stuff their battery hens, broiler chickens and pigs that never see the daylight.

At one time the compounders mixed chicken shit with the menu because it was full of protein that the chickens hadn't had time to digest. They are having to be more careful nowadays since we are not only plagued with salmonella among the egg layers but mad cow disease is actually spreading in spite of a three and a half year ban on use of offal<sup>1</sup> in animal feed. One is talking 18,000 that have to be slaughtered in 1991 compared with fewer than 6,000 in 1989.

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<sup>1</sup> Infected sheep and cat\* brains were recycled to add cheap protein to food-stuffs.

The preceding five proposals were later extended by adding the following:

- vi. *Size of Holdings* – acreage on Third Grade land – 20–25 acres. 10 to 15 acres taken up with buildings, stores, barns, workshops, grazing, fruit, meadow, and cultivations. 10 acres of timber for fuel at half an acre coppiced each year over a 20 year period as recommended by the Forestry Commission.

We feel that the acreages suggested offer the best sustainable area of Third Grade land for a family of four. Holdings on better grade land would therefore be smaller, whilst holdings on poorer land would be larger. 40% of a holding should supply fuel timbers.

- vii. *Viability* – we suggest 65%-70% viability as realistic. This allows for long term projects to mature, e.g. timber, fish ponds (as in France), and, of course, building.

At present anyone moving into temporary housing on agricultural land must prove, over a period of three to five years, depending on the length of time the local authority requires, 100% viability of the enterprises entered into on that land, before permission to erect a permanent dwelling may be sought. Rather a case of putting the cart before the horse. Based as this rule is on financial return, to insist on 100% viability when farming is in such a state in this country, is asking for the impossible.

- viii. *Sitting* – low-density development of holdings, for example four per 100 acres, we suggest would be more acceptable than mobile homes or golf courses in Green Belt.

Add to this Set Aside Land.

- ix. *Houses* as energy efficient as possible, from natural renewable resources.

Experience in my own locality has been that splintering land, particularly the poorer grades, into too small parcels, just does not work. After the First World War property in this area was divided into three, four or five acre plots – the Plotlands. Second and third generation owners have turned commuter and what were tiny shacks on the plots are now mini-mansions.

- iii. *Education* by local agricultural and horticultural colleges and other groups e.g. Forestry Commission.

In a communication regarding these proposals the local Agricultural College said, "... we would be more than happy to give technical advice within our terms of reference and such... advice would also embrace training and the acquisition of skills for people managing the land and the best use there of." Anyone newly taking responsibility for land and lacking confidence would receive aid given in the friendliest of atmospheres.

- iv. *Viability* of the holding also supported by a craft or skill on or off the holding, as in Denmark. This method recognised by the Ecology Building Society.

To have a craft or specialised skills either supporting, or being supported by, land enterprises is akin to having two or more strings to one's bow insurance. It would assist artistic development in the one and reduction of menial drudgery in the other.

- v. *Design* and layout of ancilliary buildings to be broadly envisaged at the outset with the help of the Self-Build architect.

Permaculture depends largely on the inter-relationships of air and water flows, kinds of plants and land contours, so outbuildings could be raised when time and funds permit, or experience dictates.

The experts are at a loss to explain why the numbers should be increasing. They are seeking scientific reasons only. One is that BSE<sup>(2)</sup> infection can survive in the soil for at least three years. But our scientists never question the capitalist system: that profits and greed could well explain that in spite of the bans, offal is still being used in some feeds. Who checks that it is not?

There are a handful of inspectors. But like everything else in society no law can be enforced if the majority do not observe it. Speed-limits for car drivers are not unreasonable but they are flouted constantly, it being impossible to provide adequate 'policing. Just a few unlucky drivers are caught as a result of spot checks. But this applies throughout industry and farming is no exception. AM cereal farmers (who are not organic) have been applying year after year more fertilizers than the plants can absorb and the surplus nitrates have reached the water table, as well as the rivers, and whatever measures can be taken now (and if we were really concerned about future generations we would) the fact is that it will be many more years before the ill-effects of the present farming systems will no longer pollute our rivers and domestic sources of water.

What we are saying is that the capitalist system neither respects the environment nor the liberty of the citizen. However many laws are passed to protect both, the reality is that it is impossible for governments to ensure that they are observed. It would require an army of inspectors and law enforcers which would be out of the question, and even assuming, of course, that one would need another army of inspectors to control the efficiency, incorruptibility of the farmer. And where would it end?

Critics of anarchism write it off on the grounds that anarchists assume the goodness of mankind. Which of course is not true. We say that people can react for good or for bad. We also maintain that anarchism by definition brings out the best in human beings be-

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<sup>(2)</sup> Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (*mad cow disease*)

cause it encourages sociability, cooperation, mutual aid and therefore love. By contrast capitalism encourages individualism, competition and the I'm alright Jack philosophy which invariably brings out the worst in human beings. If we are right then the private ownership and management of the land within a capitalist economy must bring out all that is bad in those who farm it.

Richard Norton-Taylor<sup>2</sup> - describes the agricultural scene succinctly and devastatingly:

Land is abused, wasted, treated just like any other commodity. It is at the mercy of individual wealth, greed, mere complacency. It is prey to attitudes that put short-term profits before the longer-term interests of the community. Thus farmland is drenched with chemicals to produce higher-yielding crops; farmers dispense with labour to channel their earnings, loans and grants into pesticides and machines. Farms get bigger and bigger so there are fewer and fewer. Wealthy individuals, companies and financial institutions move in as smallholders cannot keep up with the race, just as corner grocers give way to supermarkets filling up more and more shelfspace with processed and convenience foods.

There are still urban-based romantics who defend private ownership of the land on the grounds that farmers love the land, and their animals and the wildlife that inhabit the hedgerows. All nonsense (with, as always the exceptions that prove the rule). When cereal growing became the most profitable crop, more than 25,000 miles of hedges were grubbed up as the small fields of mixed farms were converted into mini cereal prairies. The transformation was all paid for by the taxpayer. In the years that have followed more and more small farmers gave up, their farms gobbled up by the Big

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<sup>2</sup> In *Whose Land Is It Anyway* (Tumstone Press 1982)

Trees are usually the first casualties to fall to chain-saw-happy rural newcomers, who, having seen the bulldozing practices all too commonly employed by certain farmers and landowners, blindly follow suit.

In many ways 'coming back to earth' can be a very traumatic experience, yet there is no doubt that there is a deep seated need for human beings to be in close contact with the land and they will continue to respond to the geophysical 'pull' as best they can. During the last few years there has been a proliferation of Golf Courses in our area which is in a Green Belt. Recently 478 acres were acquired for a golf course and yet there are people living in the vicinity who are in desperate need of a secure environment and housing. Having taken the independent step to live in a rural area and not wishing to be manoeuvred back into the twilight land of Sheltered or Council bedsits or flats the following ideas and proposals regarding redistribution and subsequent usage of land, were originally conceived to provide an answer to specific housing problems besetting some of my neighbours and myself. Our group could not seek to develop derelict industrial land — as did the Lightmoor Project — as none exists in our area, so our initial proposals were:

- i. *Self-Build Housing* of an environmentally sensitive type in both design and method of construction.

The type of Self-build housing we had in mind requires group participation, but overly large groups, we know, do not assimilate well into established rural communities, so the suggestion here is for groups of four or five households to work and build their houses together. This would also lessen area impact on land and services.

- ii. *Agricultural Land* which is to be continued as such — worked as holdings with regard to the grade of land and nature of soil. These two latter criteria would have a bearing on the decision relating to the size of holding.



## *Maureen Boustred*

# Coming Back to Earth

At a Smallholder and Self-Sufficiency Show two years ago I helped man the stand of our local Agricultural and Horticultural College. Most enquiries for part-time courses were made by people with young families. In addition to allotting the time required to sustain their full-time work, the menfolk, in particular, were eager to put in time to learn extra land-based skills via the College. Few families had their own land — many had none. Couples said... some day... well... perhaps when we've saved up enough... we'd like a place of our own, a few animals, grow a few things... it's just a dream... Then they would gather up the children and go off to lean over a pen to watch goats or sheep, discuss the merits of differing designs of chicken housing, muse over leaflets offered by the Centre of Alternative Technology, and generally absorb sights, sounds and atmosphere of a way of living to which they aspired but felt they would never achieve. Suggestions that to make the dream come true they could do something other than wait to save up, or for a pools win, or an auntie to bequeath, were met with comments of disbelief.

Some people do manage to buy a small property in the country but 'living harmoniously with the earth' is a concept of which many involved in the present outflow from the towns and cities are unfortunately unaware. From my position 23 miles from London, I have observed the difficulties experienced and caused by urban dwellers embarking on a change of life-style.

Boys referred to in Richard Norton-Taylor's piece. Actually the institutions (such as Pension Funds) which had been buying up any larger properties which came up for sale when arable land could be purchased at about £800 an acre, wisely sold when prices reached a ridiculous £2,000 an acre. The farmers who are now crying their eyes out at not being able to make their farms pay, were among those who in the credit scramble of the 80s were borrowing vast sums from the banks against the inflated value of their existing properties, in order to purchase adjoining pieces of lands or even whole farms which also meant that they needed even bigger machinery all of which was being granted special tax relief at 100%. And as the machines got bigger so they could dispense with the services of more farmworkers. The extent of the farmers' indebtedness to the banks is some £7,000 million. But including other indebtedness it has been estimated that it must amount to some £10,000 million.

No wonder then that some farmers declare that in spite of considering themselves to be the most efficient food producers in Europe (which is not true!) they are in some kind of financial trouble. But everything is relative. The fact is that in spite of the 'crisis' in farming, who are the buyers when farms come up for sale? The answer is *farmers* (not working farmers!) The broadcaster, journalist, 'farmer' Oliver Walston runs a 3000 acre farm (much of it rented) and he can declare to the world at large that but for the subsidies he could not make his farm pay. What he does not tell us is how much he wants his farm to pay him!

One other statistic: in 1990 some 14,000 farmers and farmworkers left the land. They are part of the 100,000 such jobs expected to disappear by the year 2000 (that's only 8 years away). At present the agricultural horticultural work-force is down to about 300,000. And bear in mind that more and more farmers are only 'farmers' in name. For instance to this writer's knowledge four 'farmers' with at least 1000 acres each in one corner of Suffolk have recently sacked their staff, sold their machinery, and put their farms out to

contract. They are not farmers nor are the contractors who direct operations from offices in Colchester or Chelmsford. Furthermore no one knows how many farmers – real and City tycoons – there are in this country, apart from perhaps the Inland Revenue. We have had no modern Domesday Book and one can only suspect that when we are told that there are 180,000 farmers in the UK, it actually means farms which go on retaining their names, in spite of amalgamations under one ownership. So there are considerably fewer than 180,000 owners of three-quarters of the land surface of this country which produces food without which, even with the latest technological gimmicks, human life could not be maintained for the 56 million inhabitants of these islands.

But the capitalist free-for-all chaos allows those 180,000 farmers/ landowners/City tycoons to do what they wish with their land (apart from requiring planning permission for certain kinds of development). But there is no law to stop them from growing *nothing* on their land. Indeed the crazy C.A.P. (Common Agricultural Policy) is now encouraging farmers to *Set Aside* land on which they have been growing cereals, and paying them to do so.

If, as seems possible, CAP subsidies are to be abolished in the not distant future, more medium-sized farms will no longer be financially viable mainly because of high debt interest repayments and one can expect therefore farm units to get larger and larger (already the average English farm is three times the size of the average European farm) and we shall end up with a capitalist monopoly of food production which will be linked to the existing and still growing monopoly in food processing and distribution. At the moment 10 of the main supermarket chains account for more than 30 per cent of food distribution. It is interesting to note that much research and development into new varieties of seed has been taken over by the supermarket grants so that they can impose their choice as to what tomatoes, what courgettes, what peas and beans the public shall eat.

ket, with nature, the consumer's world, the world, be it the first or the third. There is a genuine camaraderie between co-operative members of the districts and their children. Is it possible to expect more from a co-operative?

But above all, the experiment could be repeated everywhere. Conditions would certainly be different in a big city (one would have to give more importance to the district and to the distribution, that is, transport from the gardens) and in other climates. The season is a short one in Stockholm; the soil is poor in Canberra; in Palermo there will be oranges and organic lemons.

The sharing of tasks between producers and consumers can be negotiated and all sorts of combinations are possible in the farm yard, with fruit trees, a bakery, a sweet shop. (Are you looking for recipes for vegetable bon-bons?)

Cocagne, in Geneva, welcomes any visitors or learners, if you are tempted.

Produce			
Quota (220 shares at 750 fr.)		165000	
Sale of bread and eggs		5000	
Sale of tomatoes and potatoes		5000	
Joint orders		200000	
Indemnity for missing half working days		5000	
	<b>Total</b>		200000

## And now?

The Gardens of Cocagne would have wished to be the forerunners of the Land of Cocagne. But the world is such that our ways of life are not always in harmony with our values. If the gardeners were not the driving force behind the co-operative, it would wither away. The members who owe three half-days of work a year do not go there willingly, some want to go on such and such a day, at such and such an hour. The development one hoped for never took place.

For example, in the wake of the Gardens of Cocagne, groups of people started collective purchase of groceries such as cereals, dried fruit or detergents, but they were only interested in the quality of the products (organic, ecological, cheap) not in how they were produced. And yet the experiment is rich and powerful. Think about it – we have different relationships at work (at least for the gardeners but even for those who want to participate) at the mar-

We have opened this long parenthesis in order to only briefly justify our main argument which is that nobody should own land nor produce food for profit. Let us be quite clear, if only to counteract the hecklers. We echo Marion Shoard<sup>3</sup> in looking upon the land as

the source not only of the food we eat and the minerals from which we build shelters and shape implements, but of the space we occupy as well. When it has provided for our needs, it accomodates our pleasures<sup>4</sup>

So long as the land remains 'private property' a few people, at most 180,000 can refuse access to 56 million in 'this our land'. And what is even more grotesque is that what we eat is also being determined for us by a mere 'handful' of people and capitalist enterprises. Governments can enact laws to ensure standards of quality and safety until they are blue in the face. The reality is that there is no physical way of monitoring how our food is produced. One must rely on the producers' honesty and this is not possible in a capitalist society where profit and competition dominate.

The farmers' lobby in this country is constantly arguing that they cannot compete with 'the foreigner' because he always cheats. And of course nobody cheats on this side of the Channel!

So the only way that we can enjoy food and quality that is not contaminated; and meat that has not been produced by cruel factory methods, is by removing the profit incentive from the enterprises where it is produced. This means the end of competition, and private ownership and control at community level. Producers of our food will be people - who love working on the land or with animals. They will be treated and remunerated as equals among equals by the Community. (Today landworkers are among the lowest paid and, unnoticed by the Press, they were recently awarded

<sup>3</sup> *This Land Is Our Land: The Struggle for Britain's Countryside* (London 1987)

<sup>4</sup> *This Land Is Our Land: The Struggle for Britain's Countryside* (London 1987)

a 4 per cent increase on their miserable £3.40 an hour in spite of the opposition of the N.F.U. (Farmers Union) who considered that their wages should be frozen), and will produce to the best of their abilities and as far as possible to satisfy local needs in the first place with any surpluses being exchanged or sold outside.

Today there is no such thing as a free market. Every county including the United States which is pressing for the ratification of the G.A.T.T. (General Arrangement for Trade and Tariffs) aimed principally at the EEC (European Economic Community) and the ridiculous subsidies which mainly benefit the inefficient *large* farmers (we are always being brainwashed to believe it's the other way round) subsidises its farmers in one way or another. For instance if the EEC subsidies will be removed then Government has already said that farmers will be paid to *look after the countryside*, and those who put less poison on their land will get as well as a pat on the back more money. And those special areas either of natural beauty or special wildlife etc... will also be rewarded... *with money!*

We say surely the time has come to take over the land from these miserable hedge grubbers and money grubbers and let those who really love the land work it for the benefit of all of us. We in rum will see to it that those who produce our food to the highest standards of quality and respect for the environment will be looked after as among the most cherished citizens and friends.

Some of the contributions to this issue of *The Raven* point to the way small steps towards this goal can be attempted within our existing society. We should not be put off by the failures.

Produce			
Vegetable quota – shares (220 shares at 675 Frs on average)		145000	
Sales and orders		13000	
Loss:		10000	
	<b>Total</b>		168000

Budget 1989–90			
Overhead charges (basis 1988–89)		168000	
Wages increases		32000	
	<b>Total</b>		200000

Accounts 1988–98:			
Annual expenses		Francs	
Ground rent and sheds		1600	
Manure: compost		4700	
Seeds		12700	
Vegetables		6100	
Water		3500	
Machinery maintenance		8000	
Tools – material		4000	
Transport – cars		13000	
Social charges		16500	
Depreciation		16000	
General		8000	
Expenses, Administration			
Bulletin		1800	
	<b>Total</b>		168.000

## *Graeme Nicholson*

# Property and Expropriation: The Anarchist Approach

The writings of Kropotkin remain important today to anarchists and to all those who want to understand anarchism. Because they are lucid and concrete, they give us something definite to get hold of in areas that often seem confused. Too often anarchism has been defined only in negations. The goal, anarchy, has been seen merely as the absence of state and boss; the anarchist movement seen as one without hierarchy. But we need more than that if we are to recognise a process that is anarchic, and if we are to communicate an idea of the goal. Anarchists sometimes argue that if we could only smash the state and other systems of authority, the workers would know very well what to do, and it would be wrong and inconsistent to try to lay down in advance what ought to be. But this is only superficially plausible. To leave maximum room for future initiatives is a worthy goal, but we need to know now what kind of social arrangement will promote that. And when we look at Kropotkin, we find clear and positive definitions of forms of society that would be stateless, and of revolutionary processes that are authentically anarchist. So I shall begin with some comments on *The Conquest of Bread*, published in French in 1892. It is true that a wide gulf separates us from Kropotkin's writings: the history of the past century. His writings sometimes seem to hover in another part of space and another part of time. He was unable to inaugurate the strong kind of movement that would force others to respond to

it, and when we consider a globe now disposed into a first world, a second world and a third world, we realize how staggering is the *ag-giornamento* anarchism needs. Nevertheless, there is one assumption in his book for which nobody need apologise. Basing himself on the memory of the Commune of Paris, Kropotkin envisages a widespread and militant insurgence of working people in the towns and in the countryside. This was not taking place when he wrote the book, any more than it is taking place in Canada in 1981. But it had happened twenty years earlier, it was repeated time after time in the decades after Kropotkin in various countries, and we may be certain that it will happen again. He wrote during a hiatus like our own. Still, at the end of this paper, I should like to discuss how anarchism can be practised during times of quiescence.

*The Conquest of Bread* sets out a strategy for making revolution that is recognisably anarchist: the strategy of expropriation. We may look not only at the chapter of that title but also at the chapters called 'Food', 'Dwellings' and so on. A couple of excerpts from the chapter on Food will give us sufficient detail on the conduct of expropriation.

Thus the really practical course of action, in our view, would be that the people should take immediate possession of all the food of the insurgent communes, keeping strict account of it all, that none might be wasted, and that by the aid of these accumulated resources every one might be able to tide over the crisis. During that time an agreement would have to be made with the factory workers, the necessary raw material given them, and the means of subsistence assured to them, while they worked to supply the needs of the agricultural population. For we must not forget that while France weaves silks and satins to deck the wives of German financiers, the Empress of Russia and the Queen of the Sandwich Islands, and while

that our needs change, our age, our thinking, our desire not to give in completely to over-production in farming or vegetable growing which, alas, organic growing cannot prevent. In the long run, we cannot increase our wages by just growing more. Would it be better to increase the present scale, based on ordinary market prices, with a 5 to 10 per cent mark-up for the organic label and acceptable long-term working conditions (oh, my back!)? This would still leave the price of Cocagne vegetables well below those at organic markets or health food shops. (*Bulletin*, October 1989).

Here is the price and value of the vegetables as based on the average price of the market:

SALADS 100m <sup>2</sup> , about 1000 plants <i>Work:</i> planting and care 10 hours harvesting 8 hours Total 18 hrs. x 52.50 franse 945.
NEW POTATOES 1000m <sup>2</sup> <i>Work:</i> planting and care 32 hours harvesting 80 hours. Total 112hrs x 52.50 fr. 5880 <i>Crop:</i> 2500 kg. x 1.80 fr. 4500.
TOMATOES 400m <sup>2</sup> (tunnels), about 900 plants <i>Work:</i> planting 12 hours Cultivation and care 84 hours. Harvesting 24 hours. Total 120hrs. x 52.50 fr. 6300 <i>Crop:</i> 300 kg. x 2.80 fr. 8400.
GREEN BEANS 200m <sup>2</sup> <i>Work:</i> planting and care 10 hours Harvesting 30 hours Total 40 hours x 52.50 fr. = 2100 fr. <i>Crop:</i> 200 kg x 5 fr. = 1000 fr.

Thanks to new grounds better suited to the cultivation of some vegetables; thanks also to investments in machinery, tunnels and water installations, we are working the same hours while increasing our production by 45 per cent. It is good, but obliges us to increase total production.

This increase, in turn, should help pay off investments and increase wages. It means deurerquota-shares (10 percent) and more deliveries on order.

Until now what we wanted to do, first and foremost was to produce cheap vegetables. But, today, things are different: it could be

Paris fashions wonderful trinkets and playthings for rich folk all the world over, two thirds of the French peasantry have not proper lamps to give them light, or the implements necessary for modern agriculture. Lastly, unproductive land, of which there is plenty, would have to be turned to the best advantage, poor soils enriched, and rich soils, which yet, under the present system, do not yield a quarter, no, nor a tenth of what they might produce, would be submitted to intensive culture, and tilled with as much care as a market garden or a flower pot. (*Conquest of Bread* p.87)

Instead of plundering the bakers' shops one day, and starving the next, the people of the insurgent cities will take possession of the warehouses, the Cettle markets — in fact of all the provision stores and of all the food to be had. The well-intentioned citizens, men and women both, will form themselves into bands of volunteers and address themselves to the task of making a rough general inventory of the contents of each shop and warehouse. If such a revolution breaks out in France, namely, in Paris, then in twenty-four hours the Commune will know what Paris has not found out yet, in spite of its statistical committees, and what it never did find out during the siege of 1871 — the quantity of provisions it contains. In twenty-four hours millions of copies will be printed of the tables giving a sufficiently exact account of the available food, the places where it is stored, and the means of distribution.

In every block of houses, in every street, in every town ward, groups of volunteers will have been organised, and these commissariat volunteers will find it easy to

work in unison and keep in touch with each other.  
(*Conquest of Bread* p.90)

Besides the expropriation of current food supplies, the people are to take over the estates of landowners, and introduce intensive agriculture and grazing in the parts now unused or reserved as private parks. We read how rent can be eliminated (pp.105ff.) and mansions turned over to families in need. Mines, factories and business offices will be occupied, and put to work, and likewise all railways, shipping and means of communication. The soldiers and police will not move against the people, and so all weapons systems will be expropriated, prisons emptied, the seat of government occupied. These steps are for Kropotkin just the preliminaries to revolution, the real task of which is the provision of bread and all goods to all. After only a short period of time, he imagines the workers saying, "Enough! We have enough coal and bread and raiment! Let us rest and consider how best to use our powers, how best to employ our leisure". (p.54)

Kropotkin does not talk very much about the state in this book, and (amazing for Canadians to read!) he hardly considers at all the idea of using a workers' state to seize the properties and factories of the wealthy. Most of his references to the state speak of it as a force of inertia, a bulwark of property, and in the one or two passages where he briefly entertains the idea of expropriating through state power (pp.98–9, for instance) he stresses how hopelessly inefficient it would be to try to organise such a vast programme through a bureaucracy. It is plain that he takes it for granted that state power, no matter how it is refashioned by revolutionaries, will never, can never, wither away.

The expropriation must be thoroughgoing and universal; it cannot be confined to land, or to heavy industry, or to banks and railways. One of his arguments on this score is based on considerations of efficiency (pp.77–80): that in a modern economy, the sectors are all so mutually dependent and interwoven that if there

Of course, the gardeners are the most eager to make contacts and join more producers' associations. "All members of a co-op," writes a former gardener, "have a common interest with all these people — to have healthier food, improve our relationships, exercise control over our work and what we eat, avoid 'sweetening middle-men to help distribution and selling directly, organise oneself independently in the districts..." But here also there is a choice between different associations, notably with organic growers or militant peasants, according to the ethic they defend, the solidarity they practise.

In the last few years, one of the gardeners has been working on a project of self-development for a village in Senegal, and he is appealing to the solidarity of co-op members to support his project. The garden is also a meeting place. Trainees are working there, or friends trying to launch a similar project somewhere else. Teachers bring their classes, or handicapped children. There are picnics, fetes frequently. And in the vegetable bag there is always room for a news bulletin or pamphlets or requests for help.

## Production

Production is obviously the central aspect of the co-operative. How does it rate compared with a conventional enterprise? From March to August, 1989, the volume of vegetables delivered has been 30% more than anticipated and this will continue till December. The bags contain more mixed vegetables but some crops (leeks, salads, tomatoes) are more prolific than others (beans, peas) the harvest of which is less predictable.

The working hour is paid at 17 Swiss francs. Its real cost for Cocagne is 52.50 fr., inclusive of social and administrative charge as well as seeds, water, compost, tools and machinery, maintenance, ground rent costs.



At the very beginning the participants were probably more interested in the experimental and self-regulating aspects of the venture. On the day of distribution of the bags of vegetables in the districts people met to exchange recipes, dreams, to talk about gardens and life, sometimes to change the world. The bulletin was edited by a district group or a 'commission' who knew how to fill it with projects and considerations of great import. But soon new co-operators started to give more importance to what they eat and give their children to eat, and are not always keen to widen their horizons. During the last general meeting it was suggested that the week's harvest in October, which coincided with the school holidays, be delivered to the Peugeot Factory, then on strike in Mulhouse. One person rose to ask what link existed between the Cocagne co-operative and the support for a workers' strike. At the beginning, the idea was to create co-operative networks of many shapes and colours. It was a time of numerous communities and more varied ways of life.

This idea is still dear to the gardeners and to those members who live in communes, who set up more or less successful or lasting workplaces. But the bulk of the 'Cocagnards' is made up of families or employees such as teachers, social workers, civil servants, and only a fraction their leisure is devoted to this kind of organised movement. Indeed, there is no obvious connection with more 'alternative' or radical groups — the freedom to squat, barter, to refuse salaried work or money, to live the itinerant life, is not compatible with the annual payment quota in return for the weekly collection of a bag of vegetables.

Nevertheless, since the beginning at Cocagne there has been some progress in the thinking about the market gardening situation in Geneva and elsewhere, about food distribution on international trade. The co-operative has participated at discussions and projects with farming associations, Third World groups, ecologists, etc.

were a merely partial expropriation the entire system would be dislocated and could not function. However, the real reason for going all the way is something far more important than that. He thought that his own era had already attained the capacity for satisfying every need and every desire of every human being on earth. There was at hand the immediate potential of abundance — enough bread, clothing, housing and even luxuries for everyone. His view was not that the condition of abundance had been attained — far from it — but that through the labours of our predecessors, we had now the productive capacity to conquer the natural causes of scarcity, and that only social obstacles now stood in the way of realising the long sought goal of human history: well-being for all.

Along with the programme of expropriation, there were a few other conditions for achieving abundance: that everybody should pitch in and work; that the different devices of underproduction now used to manipulate markets be stopped; that barriers that inhibit the development of our physical production capacity be removed; and that the surplus consumption of a few classes of society be stopped. (On this last point, it is important to note the emphasis on luxury in the book, especially in the chapter called "The Need For Luxury". Certainly the luxuries most often mentioned are the arts, sciences and athletics, and that is because Kropotkin's own tastes ran in those directions; but he clearly means to include items of clothing, wines, and all the rest of what most people mean by luxury. The heading of luxury also embraces leisure time, and the provision that nobody need work more than about four hours a day. So when Kropotkin speaks about eliminating surplus consumption, and also about converting energies away from the production of frivolous and useless luxury items, it would be wrong to think he was instituting austerity, a disciplined form of consumption. Thus it is not that a beer-drinking working class will do away with the liqueurs and champagne now enjoyed by the wealthy. The kind of luxuries Kropotkin thought had to go were those that depend upon the power of mere fashion and chic. The world of fashion bestows

the semblance of value on many so-called items of luxury, but it is sustained by envy, and this kind of waste will be gladly abandoned by those who now indulge in it and seek out restaurants *because* they are expensive.)

The condition of abundance that is within reach is the condition where, for every person's needs and desires, there is a supply sufficient — and then some. If we call a supply adequate where there is no need or desire that cannot be satisfied, then the abundant exceeds the adequate by a discernible amount. Where a supply is adequate, everyone's need and desire can be satisfied if nobody takes too much, but that requires a procedure for allocating the goods. This could be a rule of justice that everyone is supposed to follow, or it could be more formalised than that, a procedure for enforcing the rule of justice, and an official body appointed for seeing that the procedure is followed in every case. But where a supply is abundant, in the sense I mean, then even if everybody takes all he wants, there will be some left over. Now that is only an objective description of abundance, but we have to bring in a psychological factor too. The host of a party might calculate the amount of food he would need to supply for there to be an abundance, but when we want to consider the behaviour of guests at a party, we have to bring in a psychological factor. A true abundance of food at a party is a supply that is not only more than enough for all, but one which anyone can see is more than enough for all. Where the measure of excess is such that everyone can see there is more than enough for all, each person can be assured that he will have enough no matter how much the others eat. The psychology of abundance begins from the perception 'There is more than enough for all'; that removes any fear that I won't get enough, and therefore generates the moral attitude that the others may take as much as they want. Where the genuine condition of abundance is realised — not only objectively, but perceptually and morally — it is clear that no rule of justice is called for nor anybody to enforce one. Each person can be relied on to take what he pleases. Many

(machinery, greenhouses, water layout). The annual budget obviously covers the paying off and renewal of installations. The general meeting decides on the amount of annual quota (the 'price' of vegetables and the gardener's wages. The value of the vegetables is based on the average non-organic wholesale market's prices in Geneva. The amount of goods delivered varies according to the weather conditions, but the individual share-out remains the same. In the last few years, however, members have contributed slightly different amounts according to their income and family size; each participant works out what he owes based on a scale of charges. The gardeners, who were poorly paid at the beginning now earn a salary nearer to that of the average co-op member's.

Therefore, if 'prices' and 'wages' are based on the local market, the network functions outside the market; all the vegetables are distributed — and hopefully, eaten — and the gardeners are paid their wages irrespective of what they provide (such is our trust in them...)

In fact, a few wholesale deliveries are made to other collectives and represent about 10% of the budget.

More or less regular contacts exist with other producers to complete deliveries of winter vegetables, fruit, bread, eggs, but only if their own production is comparable with Cocagne's and, that they are co-operatives, or at least non-profit and organic.

*Letter from a Cocagnard* (the first) April 1981:

"I very much liked the latest bulletin from Cocagne. However, the article headed 'Know how to Feed Yourself' irritated me a little. Biogenic, bioactive, biostatic, bioacid; I am probably in agreement... but. But it is not only food that engenders, activates or slows down or destroys life. Social relationships (producer-consumer, for example); the environment can also be biostuff or biothing. I fear that ecology is becoming too self-orientated and being used to evade social problems. Let us not give absolute priority to the navels crowning our bellies!" 'Nicolas'

- i. A change in relationship between producers and consumers.

We do not grow for unknown customers, but we can discuss our work with them, not just the vegetables and the price. Members of the co-op can see the garden, help in the production, see how the vegetables grow and observe for themselves what attention they need.

- ii. It is a plot of land the city for co-operative members — this land can be used for leisure as well as production — there few places left where adults, children and handicapped people have chance to realise what agricultural production involves.

For those who are especially interested in gardening this is a communal garden instead of a private one; or simply a place where they can camp or light a fire.

- iii. It is an alternative to the large distribution centres for at least a part of our consumer needs; a chance to eat organically grown vegetables which have flavour and are seasonal; to learn about old (or new) vegetables and to swap recipes.
- iv. To information and the possibility to write about the conditions of agricultural production, its link With the Third World etc.

“The financial difficulties of Cocagne often make us forget all those things which are, and which remain, the basis of our co-operative. With all the problems of everyday life little time is left for discussing the true problems, the nature of things as well as individual Wishes and needs...” ‘Reto’

## The Economy

To join the co-operative, each member makes a financial contribution. This starting capital makes possible basic equipment

passages in Kropotkin make it clear that he thinks expropriation will bring about the full condition of abundance which is objective and psychological at once: “There is enough and to spare... Take what you please” (p.92) We find the same idea in other places, such as the essay ‘The Commune of Paris’.

Earlier in the present book, too, we also see him reasoning from cases like the water supply of towns, or the provision of books in a library, holding that it is a tendency in modern economies and societies to provide all sorts of goods and services with no questions asked. While objective abundance alone is not a sufficient condition for people to get along without a rule of justice, and must be supplemented by the psychology of abundance, still it is a necessary condition. Without an objective abundance, people’s forbearance would really be a way of behaving civilly in unfavourable circumstances, and the secret message of Kropotkin’s theory would be one of austerity and discipline.

Kropotkin repeatedly differentiates his ‘anarchist communism’ from the programme he calls ‘collectivism’. Without worrying about who he really had in mind here, we can see that collectivism is a system of credits for work, or ‘labour cheques’, in which each would get according to his work (pp.62, 118–9, 184). Obviously, collectivism is nothing but one of the systems that embrace a principle of justice and a means for enforcing justice, and simply amounts to an interpretation of justice itself, according to which it is one’s labour that entitles one to goods. Collectivism measures a person’s deserts, and allocates a corresponding measure of goods; anarchist communism neither measures the deserts of individuals, nor puts a particular value or price on particular goods.

Now it should be a high priority to examine whether expropriation really could achieve the objective conditions for abundance, and whether it would tend to promote the psychology of abundance. If there is *any real chance* that Kropotkin is right on these points, his programme is among the really important political state-

ments in human history. But before continuing, let me deal (all too briefly) with one objection.

What about the right to property? Left-wing philosophy never begins from this as right-wing thought does, yet it must deal with the question. Proudhon, for instance, denied the right to property in the Roman sense of *dominium*, the absolute right to the use, abuse and alienation of a thing, with the right to its fruits or profits; but he did defend the more limited right to hold a thing as long as one possessed it.<sup>1</sup> But Kropotkin recognises no property rights whatsoever, not title, not possession; nor did he distinguish between categories of things in which property rights should be recognised and things in which property rights should not be. As I understand his basic attitude, it is that if the property system is the principal obstacle in the way of abundance, then there cannot be any right to property. Of the many issues that open out here I'll mention just four:

- i. It is impossible to recognise property in personal items like clothing while denying property in land or factories, because if there is to be abundance, *some* of the former group will have to be redistributed too. He makes it clear that he has no desire to take away coats (pp.114ff.); his view seems to be that almost everyone can keep such things even in the absence of a property right to them.
- ii. Property rights have often been seen as fundamental, in that if they are not safeguarded, other rights too, like personal security, will be endangered. I do not know if Kropotkin ever dealt with this argument, but it does not seem strong; it seems at best to reflect a habitual point of view in Western society.

<sup>1</sup> See his *Theory of Property* (1863–4), excerpted in *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon* ed S. Edwards (London: MacMillan, 1969), pp.124–143.

<b>Fixed Charges</b> (to be paid off in 5 years):			
Rotavator		4,000	
Cultivator		3,000	
Accessories		1,000	
Seed drills — wheels		1,000	
Additional tools		2,000	
Tunnels and frames		4,000	
Water rates, hoses		5,000	
Stakes, poles		1,000	
Wire, stakes		3,000	
Sundries		1,000	
	<b>Total</b>		25,000

Funded by 125 quotas at 50 frs.			6,250
Amortisation		5,000	
Loans		3,750	
		15,000	

Outstanding balance 10,000 fr. in supplementary quotas or loans. Reserve plus sundries and supplementary labour for installations, sheds and chicken coops — 10,000 to be raised in the form of gifts.

One Gardener, August 1980: Our cooperative must not stop halfway. For me, the co-op's aims remain as follows:

canton. It was after the first season that we set up the co-operative and started to keep accounts seriously.

<b>Budget Forecast</b> for the 1979 Season (Amounts in Swiss francs) <sup>(4)</sup>			
Annual expenses			
Rent of land		2,200	
Ploughing		800	
Manure, compost		3,000	
Seeds, plants		2,500	
Water		1,500	
Machinery maintenance		1,500	
Transport		2,500	
Wages and expenses		29,000	
Depreciation		5,000	
Sundries		2,000	
	<b>Total</b>		50,000
			= 125 shares of 400 franc

<sup>(4)</sup> **Editor's note:** the present exchange rate is 2.6SF to the £Sterling. We have not been able to ascertain as whether it was different in 1979.

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- iii. The formalistic argument, that since the state has guaranteed me this factory or land by lawful procedure, it is mine by right, is the one Kropotkin treats most often. His ever-repeated argument is that it is the labour of thousands that has constituted the items in which I claim a right; i.e. he will not recognise a legal or political abstraction from actual social history.
- iv. His own counter-attack is that the deprivations suffered by so many in a world of property are intolerable; moreover that the inequalities as such are intolerable; and that the barriers to free movement and freedom in general that this indictment *is* compelling, on the supposition that expropriation would yield abundance. If we were not prepared to say the latter, if, for instance, it could be shown that expropriation would lead only to what Kropotkin called collectivism, I personally would opt for Proudhon's position. There are great differences between the two positions, even though both have swum together in the anarchist movement. As I see the difference, it can best be put in class terms. Kropotkin's communism would build an alliance dominated by the absolutely propertyless *damnés de la terre*, but would be to draw into the communist movement those workers and peasants who owned small property or tools, for the movement would hold up the heady promise of abundance: well-being for all. Proudhon's mutualism, on the other hand, would be a movement of the propertyless *damnés de la terre* against big capital; but small property should remain untouched, because of the fear that a revolutionary elite, leading the *damnés de la terre*, would expropriate small property to have a field for their own self-interested management. Some factions in revolutionary Spanish anarchism retained this, insisting small property would be protected

from expropriation. The protection seemed necessary to the degree that abundance was not thought a realistic goal.

The example of food at a party showed how anarchy as a form of collective action can be practised when objective abundance had induced its psychological and moral consequences. But what if the problem is, not only to provide for a dozen guests or so on a given evening, but to furnish all the needs and desires from day to day of an entire city, or country, or world? Obviously no simple perception of abundance would ever be possible in this case; at best there could only be a solid conviction that abundance would be achieved day by day, a conviction that might be well founded. And it was Kropotkin's view that economic analysis *now* could *prove* that the natural obstacles to abundance had been beaten.

Therefore, the time was ripe even now to *begin* the practice of anarchy — in the conduct of expropriation itself. The social system of anarchy need not wait for the condition of objective abundance to become perceptible. An anarchic form of behaviour may be expected when people are aware of participating in a process that will certainly lead to the goal of abundance.

Anarchy — the social system at which we aim — and anarchism — the revolutionary movement to institute the system — will always be continuous with one another. The defining feature of both (what makes anything anarchical) is two-fold in Kropotkin's view, as in the view of Bakunin and others: it is a social system that is *decentralised* and *libertarian*. The first feature refers to the vesting of all political power in the communities rather than allowing there to be a sovereign power overseeing a number of communities. (The unit assumed by both Bakunin and Kropotkin was something on the scale of a metropolis like Paris or Milan, together with the surrounding province: what we might call Paris-plus.) The second feature refers to the inner constitution of the communities — that such powers as are vested in the assemblies and councils be considerably less than what we now know as *state* power. In practice, that

raising loans. If you take on employees you become dependent on them. You are tied down to your land, you have difficulty finding somebody to take over in an emergency or when you want to go on holidays or attend courses, etc. (*Bulletin*, November 1978)

*The Gardens of Cocagne* were founded in 1978 in Geneva. According to their legal status they are a co-operative, the aim of which is to provide its members with foodstuffs by the collective cultivation of the land, as well as by the development of all social, economic and scientific activities related to it.

In fact today 220 members hire three gardeners, paid monthly, to grow vegetables on some two hectares. The vegetables are the property of the consumers — they are harvested once a week, put into 220 bags (from two to ten kg depending on the season), and distributed in town at 35 pick-up points. Members pay a yearly quota and help in the garden three half-days a year. In return, they receive organic seasonal vegetables for nine months of the year. They cannot choose their vegetables each week but at the general meeting they decide on the plan as to what will be grown.

## The Beginnings

It is first of all the story of an agricultural scientist who thinks that everything could be very much simpler, who would like to farm but has neither capital nor land; it is the story of active friends who may have grand-children, all living together; the story of a town where finding accommodation and moving about is difficult, and of a nearby countryside inhabited by wealthy vine growers, of greenhouses by the square kilometre, and villas with large neglected gardens.

In the first summer there were 40 of us in the collective with one gardener who worked bits of land in several corners of the

- Why are tons of vegetables thrown away every month in Geneva?

You want to cultivate your own garden and see the food you eat grow, but that takes too much of your time, you haven't the space, you don't want to isolate yourself every Sunday, you go away on holiday at the time it is necessary to water and weed.

You go to your office, you wish the spring will not be like autumn, you want to feel the seasons even in your mouth, our seasons and not Acapulco's...

You would like to share a piece of land in the country, to extend the walls of your flat. You are interested in country matters, here or elsewhere; maybe you have heard of milk prices or quotas; you are fed up buying tasteless vegetables wrapped in cling-film; you think it's important to eat healthy, natural vegetables in which you can have confidence.

Farmers are not the only ones concerned with agricultural problems; if we disturb our ecological balance is it not also because of current agricultural methods?

## From the producer's point of view

- If you are your own boss you are quickly brought to one sole preoccupation: to make the enterprise turn over, sell each kilogram at the highest price, regardless of quality, you become specialised and you use any means to combat pests.
- If you cater for the market, you run the risk of not selling or having to sell to a retailer at a lower price; you must get to be known to 'break through'.
- If you are the sole owner of the business you take on all the responsibilities and risks. You cannot follow through new methods you are isolated in your work, you have difficulty

would mean that dealings between individuals and groups in the community would not be contracts having the force of the community to back them up. Agreements freely entered into, and freely to be abrogated, would be the mark of dealings among individuals and groups *within* communities, as well as *across* communities (suppliers in Milan, and customers in Paris), and *between* communities themselves. Anarchy is defined by Kropotkin as a system of 'free agreement', and I take him to mean above all that no body, such as the state we now know, would be the hidden third party to all agreements, enforcing them.

A merely decentralised system, without the libertarianism within, would be far from anarchy: at best it would constitute a league of city states. Such libertarianism within, where agreements are not backed up by the force of law, seems to require the same circumstances that would render a rule of justice unnecessary: abundance. I at least cannot imagine any other circumstances that would induce the widespread attitude of trust that would let people give up the code of law.

Abundance in the fullest sense includes a psychology and a morality; such complete abundance both fosters anarchist communism and is fostered by it. If these hypotheses are true, expropriation would not merely advance us on the road from individual property to collective property. Instead, it would be the absolute disappearance of the property relation; it would constitute a change in our relations not only to one another but to the animals and things that constitute our environment. Land could no more be appropriated on Earth than a territory on Neptune could be bought and sold. We would no more own a supply of fish than do the seals who hunt them. If expropriation in the strongest sense be this metaphysical change, we would note a parallel between the abundance of wheat on earth and the abundance of stars in the various galaxies. The universe itself is abundant in the primordial sense of the term.

Having now mentioned the issue that is most metaphysical, I shall conclude with greater attention to practicality. Is there

any evidence that anarchist communist expropriation will tend to promote objective abundance, with the attendant psychology and morality? The history of the revolution in Spain in the thirties allows us to answer with an unqualified Yes. Even those who are most critical or most patronising towards anarchism — whether they be of the Right or the Left — are unable to obscure the amazing feats of libertarian organisation that eastern Spain witnessed beginning in July 1936. The facts recorded by credible eye witnesses are documented for us in works by Dolgoff, Leval, Peirats, Bolloten and others, and I shall cite only a couple of tiny fragments of the record, arranged as answers to three questions. It is clear that there were *at least* 1,600 agricultural collectives, involving *at least* 400,000 people, functioning in the districts of Aragon, the Levant and Castile in mid-1937; it is clear that in Catalonia between 1936 and 1937 all industry and public services were collectivised. No doubt exists that if we consider the whole of Spain, and all kinds of enterprises, we are speaking about the organisation of *millions* of people (Leval, pp.14, 357ff.)

The first question we may pose to this record is whether this was a programme of expropriation, and one achieved by anarchist methods? Alternative explanations might be that the collectivisation was the work of some provisional government or other, or imposed by force of arms.

The fishing industry ... socialised by the CNT and UGT Seamen's Unions, was organised into an Economic Council made up of six UGT and six CNT representatives. The whole fishing fleet was expropriated. The shipowners fled. Economic inequalities were abolished. No longer did the shipowners and their agents appropriate the lion's share of the income. Now 45% of the profit from the sale of fish (after deducting expenses) went to improve and modernise the fishing industry and the remaining 55% was equally divided

## Marianne Enczell The Gardens of Cocagne

For some 12 years a group of market gardeners and consumers have run a vegetable co-operative in Geneva. Started on a modest basis, it today numbers 220 members and is operated in a semi-professional way. Here is a picture of it, as I remember it and from current debates.<sup>(3)</sup>

Why create a producer/consumer co-operative of alimentary products, when large distribution networks exist and provide you, every day, with all the fruit and vegetables available on earth, at a reasonable price?

Why cultivate 25-metre beds when machines are built to cultivate on kilometres?

Because we like doing it!

Then, from the consumer's point of view, if you buy your vegetables at the market you don't know where they come from or how they were grown.

- How much do banana pickers earn a day?
- Why do beans come from Egypt?
- Why is a fish five or ten times more expensive in Geneva than where the fisherman lives?
- Why have lorry loads of calves stuck in the Mont Blanc tunnel?

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<sup>(3)</sup> Translated from the French by Paule Pym.



gagors, and from this base it could begin to expand. By buying up properties now offered on the market, and offering them to purchasers under the sort of terms described above, the co-operative could increasingly make housing available, and increasingly cool down the market (no doubt other measures to crush speculation will be needed too). The goal — a community in which property in land would be no more thinkable than property in outer space.

## References

1. S. Dolgoff, ed., *The Anarchist Collectives* (Montréal: Black Rose, 1974)
2. Gaston Leval, *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution* tr. V. Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1975)
3. Jose Peirats, *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* tr. M. A. Slocumbe & P. Hollow (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977)
4. P. Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (London: Penguin, 1972)

among the fishermen. Before, the middlemen sold the fish in Bibao, Santander, etc., and pocketed the profits. The middlemen were eliminated and the Economic Council carried on all transactions. This exploded the lie that the workers were unable to operate industry without their employers ... Soon the CNT and the UGT municipalised housing, the land, public services — in short, everything. And society was being transformed. The ideal which both Marxists and anarchists strove to bring about was being realised by the people of Laredo ... (From *The Anarchist Collectives* Ed. Sam Dolgoff)

Some critics of the collectives (and it is significant that the most determined among them were the Spanish Stalinists who were at the same time paying lip service to the ‘achievements’ of the Collective Farms in Russia!) have declared that they were created by anarchist force of arms. Though Leval does not devote a chapter to this very important question, he does make pointed comments on the subject in the course of his narrative which I find convincing. Had the collectives in Aragon been imposed by anarchist ‘terror’ would one not expect a 100% membership? Yet in Fraga, according to Leval, ‘the Collective of agricultural workers and herdsmen comprised 700 families — half the agricultural population’. And Mintz concludes that collectivists represented 35% of the town’s population of 8,000 and that so far as his research went it revealed a maximum of 180,000 collectivists out of a population of 433,000 inhabitants in that part of Aragon unoccupied by Franco’s forces. Leval readily acknowledges that the presence of the CNT-FAI militias in Aragon “favoured indirectly

these constructive achievements by preventing active resistance by the supporters of the bourgeois republic and of fascism". But then who, in the first place, had undermined the status quo if not the officer class in rebellion against the duly elected government? In the circumstances only an academic could be shocked at acts of violence by the people or the militia against those who for generations had been the local oppressors, and exploiters deriving their wealth from ownership of land which belonged by right to the community.

Leval's conclusions on the role of the 'libertarian troops' in the development of the Aragon collectives are that they were on the whole negative (p.91) for they "lived on the fringe of the task of social transformation that was being carried out". (From Introduction by Vernon Richards in *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution* by Gaston Leval)

The evidence is that the main factor was the pressure from the people, many of whom of course had been affected by anarchist propaganda and organisation.

The second question is whether the expropriations set in motion a movement towards abundance.

It would have been surprising had the Health organisation lagged behind. In public institutions, in their clinics or on home visits, two doctors out of three accepted to practise their profession in conjunction with the municipality. Medical care was therefore virtually completely collectivised. The hospital was quickly enlarged from a capacity of 20 beds to 100. The outpatients' department which was in the course of construction was rapidly completed. A service to

of work today would be the sort that might lead to expropriation, abundance and anarchy. Of the many things that can be tried, I would like to single out just one for a brief mention, a variation on the housing co-operative. We are acquainted with the skyrocketing prices of land, especially in the big urban centres in Canada, which are putting home ownership beyond the means of middle income earners as well as low income earners, and we have reason to fear skyrocketing rents as well. The sanest answer to the hysteria that this situation is inducing, fanned by speculators, mortgage companies and newspapers, is the expansion of the co-operative sector of housing. And in particular, it may well be possible to create a new sort of structure that is more properly called a mortgage co-operative than a housing co-operative. What I have in mind is that, besides seeking to expand co-operative living, it might be possible for a co-operative to arrange financing for a property a family might buy. The family then would hold title to the property, but if they were to sign an agreement to enter the mortgage co-operative they would waive their right to sell the property later on on the real estate market, but instead would oblige themselves to sell the property back to the mortgage co-operative, and the price for which they would sell it back would be the original purchase price, plus allowance for inflation as measured, e.g., by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, not as measured by the real estate market. They would have waived the opportunity to make money through buying a house. In return, the mortgage co-operative would offer this family a far more favourable rate than they could get on the free market. The co-operative would need to be financed itself, and this, I think, could be by the same means that have allowed all other kinds of co-operatives to find financing, including the provisions whereby Central Mortgage and Housing offers beneficial mortgage rates to housing co-operatives in Canada. Such a mortgage co-operative (or for that matter, a full-fledged housing co-operative) could be brought into existence by people who already own homes too; it could buy up the mortgages now held by trust companies or mort-

activities were profitable, as was that for the production of alcohol for medical and industrial purposes. So these surpluses were used in part to compensate the deficit on the hairdressing establishments. It was also by this juggling between the sections, that pharmaceutical products were bought for everybody and machines for the peasants.

The Graus Collective gave other examples of solidarity. It gave shelter to 224 refugees who had to flee their villages before the fascist advance. Of this number only about twenty were in a position to work and 145 went to the Front. Twenty-five families whose breadwinners were sick or disabled received their family wage.

In spite of all these expenses a number of quite ambitious public works were undertaken. Five kilometres of roads were tarred, a 700 metre irrigation channel was widened by 40 cm and deepened by 25 cm for better irrigation of the land and to increase its driving power. Another channel was extended by 600 metres. Then there was the wide, winding path that led to a spring until then forbidden to inhabitants of the village. (Leval *op cit* p.102 on the Graus Collective)

Now it is true that these achievements took place while the fascists and the Republicans were fighting one another, so that anarchism could step, as it were, into a vacuum — at least in eastern Spain. It is also true that the programme, even as sketched by Kropotkin, assumes a militancy in the rural and urban working class that is only found under certain conditions — conditions that do not prevail here and now. But we know, too, of the decades of work of patient organisation and education that lay behind these events, and so the story really invites us to consider what kind

deal with accidents and minor surgical operations was established. The two pharmacies were also integrated into the new system.

All this was accompanied by a massive increase in public hygiene. As we have already seen, the cowsheds and stables were reorganised on the outskirts of Fraga. One of these, specifically built, housed 90 cows. And for the first time ever the hospital was provided with running water and the project in hand was to ensure that all houses were similarly provided, thus reducing the incidence of typhoid.

All this was part of a programme of public works which included the improvement of roads and the planting of trees along them. Thanks to the increased productivity resulting from collective work (which Proudhon pointed to as far back as in 1840 as one of the features of large scale capitalism, but which libertarian socialism can apply and generalise more effectively), there were skilled men available for this kind of work in the Collectives. The municipality under the old regime would never have been able to meet such expenditure. (Leval *op cit* p.11)

Aside from the loose use of the term ‘money’, Burnett Bolloten gives a fair general idea of the exchange system in typical libertarian communities:

In those libertarian communities where money was suppressed, wages were paid in coupons, the scale being determined by the size of the family. Locally produced goods, if abundant, such as bread, wine, and olive oil, were distributed freely, while other articles could be obtained by means of coupons at the communal depot. Surplus goods were exchanged with other

anarchist towns and villages, money (the national legal currency) being used only for transactions with those communities that had not yet adopted the new system. (pp.61, 62)

Some collectives did in fact abolish money. They had no system of exchange, not even coupons. For example, a resident of Magdalena de Pulpis, when asked, "How do you organise without money? do you use barter, a coupon book, or anything else?" replied, "Nothing. Everyone works and everyone has the right to what he needs free of charge. He simply goes to the store where provisions and all other necessities are supplied. Everything is distributed free with only a notation of what he took." (Dolgoff *op cit* p.73)

The third question is whether a corresponding psychology and morality is evident in the collectives.

In the reorganisation of labour according to the principles of freedom and cooperation there was room for everyone. Even the smallest enterprises employing one or several individuals were entitled to participate in the reorganisation of society.

Before July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936, there were 1,100 hairdressing parlours in Barcelona, most of them owned by poor wretches living from hand to mouth. The shops were often dirty and ill-maintained. The 5,000 hairdressing assistants were among the most poorly paid workers, earning about 40 pesetas per week while construction workers were paid 60 to 80 pesetas weekly. The 40 hour week and 15% wage increase instituted after July 19<sup>th</sup> spelled ruin for most hairdressing shops. Both owners and assistants therefore voluntarily decided to socialise all their shops.

How was this done? All shops simply joined the union. At a general meeting they decided to shut down all the unprofitable shops. The 1,100 shops were reduced to 235 establishments, a saving of 135,000 pesetas per month in rent, lighting, and taxes. The remaining 235 shops were modernized and elegantly outfitted. From the money saved wages were increased by 40%. Everybody had the right to work and everybody received the same wages. The former owners were not adversely affected by socialisation. They were employed at a steady income. All worked together under equal conditions and equal pay. The distinction between employers and employees was obliterated and they were transformed into a working community of equals — socialism from the bottom up. (Dolgoff *op cit* p.94)

The whole economic machine — production, exchanges, means of transport, distribution — was in the hands of twelve employees, who kept separate books and card-index files for each activity. Day by day, everything was recorded and allocated: turnover and reserves of consumer goods and raw materials, cost prices and selling prices, summarised income and outgoings, profit or loss noted for each enterprise or activity.

And as ever, the spirit of solidarity was present, not only between the Collective and each of its components, but between the different branches of the economy. The losses incurred by a particular branch, considered useful and necessary, were made up by the profits earned by another branch. Take, for instance, the hairdressing section. The shops kept open all day and operated at a loss. On the other hand drivers'

The desire to escape the noise and pollution of the towns to the fresh air of the countryside for rest and recreation persists. The modern rambling movement dates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to a time when many town dwellers were just one remove from rural life. In the early years the struggle to achieve the right to roam freely on uncultivated land was pursued with radical zeal by whatever method was to hand, according to available resources and circumstance. It included direct action as in the 1932 mass trespasses of Kinder Scout and Abbey Brook, in Derbyshire, and the series of demonstrations at Winnats Pass which followed. Many of these early large-scale protests concerned the open moorlands of Derbyshire which were so accessibly close to the massive industrial conurbations of Lancashire and Yorkshire, but throughout the county individuals and small groups were defying 'Private keep out' and 'No Trespassing' notices, despite threats from gamekeepers and warnings from the police.

By the end of the nineteenth century the numerous rambling clubs in England and Wales were the focus for such activities and after the 1914–18 war when walkers realised that most of the existing country-side amenity societies, and especially the influential Council for the Preservation of Rural England, were not particularly sympathetic to their demands the merits of forming a National Association were widely discussed. The result, against a background of accounts of walkers in the Peak District of Derbyshire being threatened with guns and revolvers, was the formation in 1931 of a National Council of Ramblers' Federations which in 1935 became the Ramblers' Association. Not all, at this time, were in favour of such a centralised organisation. Some preferred to keep to a federation of local groups. However, with the creation of a national body based in London, the campaign concentrated more on lobbying parliament and supported a series of parliamentary bills.

The route through parliament has had some notable successes including the 1925 Law of Property Act which gave public access to common land in some urban and metropolitan police districts, and

available houses, which meant that the Colony had to decide to which one to allocate the land.

There were certainly some cases where those accepted failed to live up to their promise, and contributed very little to the life of the group, while a man with little sympathy with the early ideals could turn out to be a much 'better colonist', devoting a lot of time and energy to the interests of Whiteway.

As houses came to be more comfortable and better built there has always been the possibility of some land-value being added to the asking price for a house. There has always been an acceptance of one quarter of an acre as the minimum holding, so that in many cases there is no possibility of splitting the plot even though it has been returned to the Meeting for reallocation.

The earliest houses were almost always built by the incoming settler, and were in many cases built very cheaply. As money became available they were improved or enlarged, but in most cases they were of timber.

After the First World War various surplus wooden buildings were brought to Whiteway and reassembled either as they had been or were remodelled. Many of these are still in use, and with good maintenance have a long life. One family built a small house of the local stone normally used for walls round fields, and replaced it later with a brick house. Our relations with the Planning Authorities in Stroud were good - they recognised that our standards were not the same as those in town or even in the villages, and they usually accepted the suggestions of our own planning committee.

This went on happily for years, but of recent years - since the middle 1960s - stricter building regulations generally made the erection of cheap houses much more difficult.

By this time the conduct of the meetings had also become more formal, partly due to the increasing population (which had the effect also of 'diluting' the original group of idealists). After a long and at times tempestuous series of discussions the idea was accepted to have Standing Orders to regulate the conduct

of the Colony Meetings. This was something of an echo of the tussle between the original more or less anarchistic approach and a tendency in some quarters to a more Marxist ideology. Though the whole thing went through on a basically friendly basis, there were underlying tensions which caused a few personal problems.

When the water supply came to us, there was also the question of how to pay for it. The company installing it agreed to pay for the trenches along the main roads, but the ones to the various houses varied in length so much that it was agreed by a large majority that we would all pay the same. There were, however, instances of people who, on grounds of 'conscience' would only pay for the short stretch between their home and the main.

The roads themselves were always made and maintained on a communal basis, and those who took part in all weathers worked very hard with fairly primitive tools but much enthusiasm, even the children joining in with stone hammers.

Whiteway attracted people from all walks of life, and from many parts of the world, though the original group were all from the British Isles.

Some who supported its inception were known in other circles, such as Aylmer Maude, the translator of Tolstoy, Fred, the father of Malcolm, Muggeridge (who was a fairly frequent visitor at one time) and many others: Gaspard Marin (Gassy) who came from Belgium with his companion Jeanne and her son Gustave; Marcel Morand from France, and 'Ray' Kleber Claux also from France. Theodore Michaltchev came from Bulgaria - like so many others as a refugee from military service. Hugo van Wadenoyen from Holland came to Whiteway by way of South Wales (some research on Hugo by Colin Osman has been of great help with this article. I got in contact with Colin as a result of a letter from him in Freedom asking for help over Hugo and George Davison). Francis Sedlack from Czechoslovakia has already been mentioned. He is known as a follower of Hegel; his companion, Nellie Shaw, wrote a book about him, and she was the author of a book *Whiteway, a Colony*

History is written by the powerful, so it is not surprising to find little account of active resistance to this enforced exodus, but resistance there was and occasionally accounts have survived. The first private bill of enclosure to come before parliament was in February 1710 and concerned Ropley Commons and the old dis-parked park of Farnham within the bishopric of Winchester. This was unpopular and vigorously contested and contributed to the ill will which led to raids on the bishop's deer and eventually to 'blacking'<sup>4</sup>. When Charles II enclosed Richmond Park and built a high wall around it, blocking numerous rights of way and rights of common, deprived parishioners pulled down the park wall several times and when one went to law about his rights, royalty, incredibly, lost. But this was exceptional, a victory for bourgeois commoners with money and resources not usually available to rural commoners<sup>5</sup>.

Much of what now remains of the ancient commons is the high moorland in the northern counties and the sandy heaths of the south and west, land not profitable for the new industrial farmers to cultivate. These, together with the surviving foot and bridle paths that criss-cross the English countryside are the open spaces walkers today seek to keep open in their campaign for the right to roam. But that which is left is constantly under threat: from the military who demand and take more of it for their wargames; from the new water companies who see an enormous potential profit from selling off the common land they own, to developers; from the grouse moor owners who, to protect their killing profits, try to keep walkers off the moors of northern England; and from the large scale farmers, as likely as not anonymous national corporations, who tear up hedges and destroy rights of way to create desert-like wastelands of monoculture.

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<sup>4</sup> *Customs in Common*. Thompson, E.P. (1991) Merlin Press

<sup>5</sup> *Customs in Common*. Thompson, E.P. (1991) Merlin Press

## *Harold Sculthrope*

# The Right to Roam

Only as part of a major social upheaval will the land they lost be taken back by the people. Land lost by enclosure during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to the great benefit of the Lords of the Manors and other country gentry, and of no less benefit to the new middle-class industrialists in the towns. Most of the dispossessed, men, women and children, had a choice; to starve or move to the expanding towns of northern England to be housed in appalling conditions and work for long hours with little reward in the factories and mills. For some there was not even a choice, as in the case of 389 men, women and children who in 1835–37 were moved by the Poor Law Commissioners in canal barges on a four-to-five-day journey from Buckinghamshire to work in the Lancashire factories<sup>1</sup>. Those who did stay behind became part of a whole new class of labouring poor, for who, when old age or sickness made work impossible, there was, after 1835, only the workhouse. Enclosure of land, unless agreed by all the landholders, required a private bill to parliament and the period from 1760 to 1820 was the great time of parliamentary acts of enclosure<sup>2</sup>. Between 1750 and 1845 over two million acres of common land and four and a half million acres of open fields were enclosed and the percentage of the population living in the country declined from 80 to 50 per cent<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Forbidden Land, The Struggle for Access to Mountain and Moorland*. Stephenson, T. (1989) Manchester University Press.

<sup>2</sup> *Customs in Common*. Thompson, E.P. (1991) Merlin Press

<sup>3</sup> *On Common Ground*. Reed, P. (1991) Working Press.

*on the Cotswolds* which gives a much fuller account of the origins and early years of Whiteway. Rachele Sinclair came from Russia, via the USA.

Some of these names will already be familiar to readers of *Freedom* and *The Raven*, as will also the names of my parents who took a very full part in the Colony from the early 1920s. Tom Keel!, editor of *Freedom* for many years, and Lilian Wolfe who was an enormous support to him and to the anarchist movement for half a century. One could mention many other people, and there would still be names omitted which should perhaps be included, but I must mention Fred Charles (Slaughter), well known to older generations in connection with the infamous Walsall trial. He bought one of the surplus army huts and remodelled it for his home, and little did I imagine as I played in the rafters as he worked - I was quite small - that in later years Jose and I would raise our family there.

The word 'Colony' led to all manner of stories and beliefs about Whiteway. It was obviously not a Crown Colony, so it was assumed to be a nudist one and coaches used to stop there with the driver urging people to keep their eyes open. I was even told once that the postman had to undress to deliver the letters.

The other thing that led to a lot of newspaper imaginings from time to time was that quite a number of couples anticipated the present trend toward living together unmarried. Every few years the less responsible papers would remember us and make life difficult for a time.

Those who lived there as children have an extremely happy memory of the freedom of life at Whiteway. Most adults were Auntie or Uncle and most houses were open to all, and of course the possibility of roaming freely on the Cotswold landscape was a great joy to us.

For many years a small school was run at the Colony, mainly by one Mary Robert, who was a teacher, and whose school attracted much interest even in orthodox local circles, though it was operated on what would now be called very modem lines. At first this

was held in private houses, but later when the hall was built an extension became the school. It was supported by voluntary contributions.

Mary and Basil Robert were very active in craft activities - Basil became Rural Industries Organiser for Gloucestershire and had a very big hand in reviving such activities as thatching, blacksmithing and so forth. Weaving, furniture making and sandal making were actively pursued for many years.

After the war in 1947 a Whiteway girl - Doolie, who had been a Land Girl, made use of her nursery training to run a small nursery school in the school building.

means of production be properly administered and distributed for the people". And what was the result of this foolishness — the communists robbed the workers and the peasants of their fields, factories and workshops and placed them in the hands of party bureaucrats who took the best of everything and left the producers of all this wealth with the shoddy things of life, or more often — with nothing at all! The once flourishing peasant communities and rural co-operative societies that could have formed the basis of a decentralised, egalitarian, and ecologically integrated approach to the land were destroyed by enforced collectivisation. The door of the prison cell and the labour camp being of course always open to anyone who dared whisper a word in protest against their God 'The Party'. Whether or not you agree with the economic and social goals of the early socialist movement is secondary to the fact that the socialist party in all its various manifestations — both parliamentary and authoritarian — has proved a traitor and an enemy to its practical realisation. The last-gasps of Hawke's bankrupt and hypocritical 'labour government', the breakdown of the Soviet power monopoly and the atrocities of the communist party in China all testify to this fact. Why do the Greens, at present 'ever so radical' feel that a green party will serve their interests any better than it did the once so vigorous labour movement? Free people do not need a party to achieve their ends — free people achieve it by themselves. Down with 'The Party — All Parties' and long live the social-ecological revolution. The green movement cannot make compromises with the past. This time it is not just social and economic justice which is at stake. It is the very future of our planet.



on a ballot form people are apt to become complacent (the party is seeing to it – vote and wait for the green revolution) and cease becoming actively and directly involved in the practical, local, and everyday battles. The strength of the popular green movement will be drained. Beyond this, the most ardent parliamentary reformer maintains his/her vigour only so long as there is noise and protest in the street and forest-lands to remind him/her that their goal is to ‘save the planet’ and not to please their parliamentary colleagues. Without loud protest and direct activity to spur him/her on the reformer becomes just another useless bureaucrat and a parasitic drain upon the resources of the popular green movement. Principles are always the first victims in the electoral rush for parliamentary seats.

Again, comparison with the labour movements of the past is both illustrative and instructive. The original labour movement called for equal access to the means of production, land, housing, and machinery to all those who worked them – in short it asked for the disappearance of capitalism and the capitalist classes altogether. These goals and principles were, however, talked about only so long as the workers’ movement remained in the hands of the workers themselves. In England and Australia, the labour party using the ‘eight-hour day’ campaign and other social palliatives as a spring-board into parliament, soon turned the word socialism into nothing more than a belief in a somewhat more benevolent system of middle-class corporate and capitalist exploitation in which the workers were to have higher wages, shorter hours and industrial injury compensation etc. Though his/her rations improved, the worker was to remain a wage-slave to capital and the whole point of the socialist movement was to have destroyed the master/slave relationship once and for all. So much then for the parliamentary socialists. What then of the authoritarian socialists or communists? These people were literally obsessed by the ‘Party’. They lived and breathed for it. “If only”, they argued, “the party appropriates everything can the

## *Yaacov Oved*

# **Comunismo Libertario and Communalism in the Spanish Collectivisations (1936–1939)**

When the Spanish civil war broke out on July 19<sup>th</sup> 1936, a social revolution started concomitantly. Following the collapse of the central government a political vacuum ensued that was immediately filled with spontaneous local initiatives and collective agrarian organisations. Simultaneously, collectivisation of industrial plants and urban services began. During the summer of 1936 these initiatives spread throughout all the areas that were under Republican control.<sup>(5)</sup>

These phenomena of immediate collectivisation, which entailed transformations of social relations, and the socialisation of means of production rendered a unique feature to this revolution. The Anarchists played a cardinal role in the revolution spreading a wide-ranging propaganda campaign in which articles of the anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin were very popular. There are reports telling that chapters from his book *The Conquest of Bread* were read aloud at general meetings of the newly established agrarian collectives. (Dolgoff, pp.130–133). In the winter of 1936/37 which was the climax of the collectivisation process there were already about 1500 rural collectives and in the next year, by winter 1938, the number of

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<sup>(5)</sup> Paper submitted to the XII World Congress of Sociology, Madrid, 9–13 July 1990.

collectives rose to about 2000, with approximately 800,000 people. This was an impressive phenomenon, considering the fact that the population in the Republican regions never exceeded 12,000,000 of which only about 5,000,000 were economically active. (Mintz 1977, pp.189–199; Bernecker, 1982, pp.108–111)

After the civil war there was a tendency to obscure the collectivisation, and most historians did not devote more than a short chapter to it. Recently, this trend has changed and several young Spanish historians have published a number of important monographs based on regional history. (Bosch 1983; Casanova 1985; Garrido 1979). The subject was treated better in the historiography of anarchism (James Jon, Daniel Guerin, George Woodcock, Murray Bookchin and others).<sup>(6)</sup> My paper may be perceived in this context and I intend to examine the anarcho-communist ideology and its role in formulating the utopians' plans and in preparing the foundations for the communal experiments. I would like to suggest that anarcho-communism played a cardinal role in the trend that led to collectivisation in Spain and it moulded its social and economic character, giving a unique feature to the Spanish revolution.

Among all anarchist theories, anarcho-communism had the most utopian characteristics. It differed from all other streams of anarchist thought mainly because of its emphasis on communal principles of a future society. Kropotkin, its first and foremost exponent, had started to formulate these ideas in Russia as early as 1873 in a manifesto named 'Must we occupy ourselves with an examination of the ideal future system?' In his affirmative reply he portrayed the structure of a future society, its economy, values and education based on communal principles. (Kropotkin, 1970)

However, twenty years would pass before Kropotkin was able to elaborate on his theories systematically in two books published during his exile in England: *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) and *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899). These books express most of his

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<sup>(6)</sup> See Editorial Afterword at the end of this paper.

international labour movement — a movement that was in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries all powerful in both strength and ideas but which through the intervention of 'the party' has come to be represented on the one hand by the authoritarian centralism of China and the former soviet bloc, and on the other the ineffectual and dishonest 'labour parties' in both Australia and England — neither of which have progressed the 'cause of labour' one single bit in fifty years or more. The 'eight-hour day' and all of the other concessions to labour that occurred during this century were not won<sup>(8)</sup> through parliamentary representation, rather, they were fought for with Mood through strikes, demonstrations and the picket line — every single small step in the improvement of conditions was bought by the lives of countless people throughout the world. The labour party merely gave a 'legal status' to the demands which had already been won through direct-action. Since this time the labour party has done nothing to progress the ideals of socialism. It has rather, merely made compromises with the interests of capital and has modified the real power of the organised working classes by manipulating their unions according to the interests of the capitalist classes. Every forest activist knows that it is only through the continual threat of further protest — and in direct proportion to their readiness to make such threats action — that the green movement has had any victories. Why should we now hand over this responsibility to tamed party bureaucrats? Green legislation can at best simply consolidate what has already been won and then attempt to placate the more radical elements of our movement. Besides, they can always change the laws!

The parliamentary candidate — surrounded by the paraphernalia of the media circus — stuck like a spider in its web in Canberra or Berlin, necessarily becomes detached from the everyday concerns and aspirations of the movement. Correspondingly as soon as our activity is reduced to placing an X by a green candidate in a box

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<sup>(8)</sup> **Editors' note:** It has still not been won in Britain!

party trap, we shall develop a green movement that is also a people's movement — able and willing to throw a pitchfork into the system in the most novel and unexpected places imaginable. The eco-revolution cannot be the subject of a single plan, however brilliant and inspired. It must be the constructive and destructive work of the people. 'The Planet and its People' and not 'The Party' must become the catch cry of our movement.

For sure our movement contains many eco-gurus whose egoistic desire to lead their own self-styled movement and philosophy often leads to unnecessary conflict, jealousy, and stupidity. But many, many egos is still a much surer method of achieving success, democracy, and progress than that of the One Big Ego implied in party leaders and parliamentary executive committees. Let us rejoice in the fact that a truly organic unity of our various egos can only be meaningfully achieved by the dynamic balancing of each others' differences in free and open discussion — and cannot be artificially produced by a bureaucratic smog-screen of 'party unity' through hierarchical and administrative methods. There is no 'lord over nature', no 'king of the jungle'. In a rainforest everything is adapted around everything else in a non-centralised and complex web of both co-operation and conflict — creating thereby a lasting and durable equilibrium resulting from the free and open interaction of all the various energies, habits and life forms of which any natural system is composed. Let us not ignore this fundamental feature of natural order in favour of 'centralised party' or 'administrative' order. Let the green movement remain truly green and reject such concepts of order in an organisation as are inherently authoritarian and contrary to the basic principles of harmonious stability observable in nature.

"Such idealism is fine", I hear in reply, — "... but what have you to say about the practical results to be gained from having a Green representative?" Surely by having people 'on the inside' we can achieve more than always being 'on the outside of parliament and the law'? In answering such questions it is fruitful to look at the

utopian anarcho-communist ideas, consisting of these elements: the social revolution will lead to an immediate implementation of communism; following the revolutionary stage, private ownership will be abolished and all property will belong to society at large and be at its disposal, all central authoritarian forms of government will disappear; and society will be organised in federations of integrated, voluntary communities. These communities will strictly maintain individual liberty. This was one of Kropotkin's cardinal principles which led him to define his vision as "a communism of free people, a synthesis between political and economic liberty".

The existing wage system will be abolished and instead a system of supply according to need — and work according to ability, will be adopted. Work is perceived as a person's physiological need, an expression of his many potentials. Rural versus urban, or physical versus spiritual work differentiation was to be abolished and instead various functions, abilities and qualities were to be integrated within single communities. Each and every community would be able to supply its own basic needs. Education would enjoy a special status as an integrative social element to forge a new personality that could cope with the challenges of a new society.

Kropotkin's utopian outlook was rooted in his anthropological concept of human nature, in the trends of mutual aid which he perceived in his studies of nature and history. Despite Kropotkin's agrarian affinity, inspired by the experience of the Russian communities *Mir* and *Obschina*, his approach was a modernistic one. His utopian writings extol technological progress which would provide the means for developing remote places and thus contribute to the decentralisation of production and to the establishment of independent communities that integrate agriculture and industry. (Osofsky 1979, Miller, 1976)

During the 1880s Kropotkin's reputation as the leading anarchist theoretician increased. Spain was one of the first countries in which Kropotkin's anarcho-communist theories received a wide circulation since they were translated into Spanish and published

in the prestigious periodical *Tierra Y Libertad* in the early 1880s. In the 1890s Kropotkin's ideas were already widely acclaimed by Spanish anarchists. (Alvarez Junco 1976, 360–368)

In addition to the theoretical anarcho-communism of the 1890s in Spain, there were deeply rooted communal traditions in the rural areas. These traditions were absorbed by Spanish anarchists as early as the 1870s in Andalusia, forming a mixture of millenarianism and rural communalism. The prominent Spanish jurist and sociologist Joaquin Costa, (born 1846 in Aragon) pointed to this fact in his book on agrarian collectivism (*Collectivismo Agrario en Espana*, Madrid 1989). And so did later the historian Juan Diaz Del Moral in his book *Historia de las Agitaciones Campesinas Andaluzas* (1967). These traditions enhanced Spanish anarchism with a distinctive flavour and provided the background for the establishment of anarcho-communist trend in it.

In 1911 a General Federation of Anarchist Unions (CNT) was established in Spain. The federation was mainly nurtured on two sources, on one hand anarcho-syndicalism that was anchored in the urban labour unions and on the other hand, on traditional agrarian communalism integrated with theoretical anarchist concepts in the spirit of Kropotkin. This unique integration between syndicalism and communalism was explicitly expressed for the first time in the resolutions accorded at the 1919 Congress in Madrid. On a programmatic level it was decided to adopt the ideology of *Comunismo Libertario* (Libertarian Communism), a Spanish term for anarcho-communism which emphasised liberty rather than the lack of government. (Bar 1981, pp.507–8; Kern 1974, pp.21–50, Bookchin 1980, pp.258–265).

At this stage their programme did not have a significant impact because for a few years after its publication, all legal activities of the CNT were stopped during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, which lasted until 1931. After the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931, anarchism became legal once again and different

state-capitalist power-monopoly who know the price of a padlock, chain or monkeywrench better than the comfort of their own beds. Some organisations remain purely local in character whilst others cross oceans, mountains, and other frontiers assuming an international and even global identity. The green movement consists of thousands of independent and autonomous organisations and even if the Green Party were to become established it could only represent one small fraction of the organised green movement. Namely, those people who believe that the ecological revolution in all its many and varied aspects – social, economic, political, and biological – can be realised by parliamentary reforms within the present state-capitalist system.

The present diversity of groups, movements and organisations all performing various specialist tasks according to the needs of the moment and unified by a common aim of 'saving the Earth' (or at least that portion of it closest to them) represents a force stronger than any central party which will inevitably interfere with this great multiplicity of multi-layered green activism in its attempt to impose a 'party line' upon organisations which are always better left in the hands of its members. Strength through diversity and not the centralist uniformisation of the party. Leave the initiative and control entirely at the level of the individual green organisation allowing them to develop according to their own unique histories, purposes and aspirations and we shall achieve a green movement that will grow in harmony with the widely differing local problems and ecological concerns that confront our vast continent. Impose a centralist party line and we shall lose local initiative – policy and direction becoming the dictates of parliamentary intrigue in Canberra. Through diversification, autonomy and self-determination of all the great multiplicity of green organisations we shall avoid the flimsy 'unified front' of the tantalising but abstract and fragile bubble of 'the Party' and achieve true strength capable of delivering a devastating attack against all those who wish to damage the health of our living and freely evolving planet. If we avoid the

# *Graham Purchase* Green Politics or Party Politiking

## *A View from Australia*

The British Green Party decided at its recent conference to dismantle the formerly 'decentralised' nature of its party structure in favour of a more centrally dominated approach. The Green Party in Germany despite some early promise is weak and in disarray. All over central and Eastern Europe we are hearing down with the Party!! All Parties!!! — Red, Green, White or Blue. And yet in Australia we are being met with the politically and tactically inept question: is it in our interests to form a Green Parliamentary Party or not? — when evidence from all over Europe would suggest that it quite obviously is not! Let us the people of Australia take our mighty continent down the path of free federation and diversity and build upon the autonomy, independence and organisation that exist in the varied green groupings that cover our land in a complex and spontaneous pattern of multi-various local activity.

There are groups that spring up like day lilies — composed of local people trying to preserve a treasured piece of wilderness from the state-capitalist bulldozer. There are educational and practical horticultural and farming groups which aim to research and educate people about practical ecological agriculture. There are parliamentary lobbyists organisations down to groups of people who grow trees for other people to plant on their land for free. There are organisations dedicated to the disruption and sabotage of the

circumstances opened up new horizons of activities and influence for *Comunismo Libertario*.

At a time when the worldwide anarchist movement was on the decline, it began to flourish in Spain. Moreover, the Spanish anarchists believed that a social revolution was imminent and this may explain the unusually large number of theoretical publications integrated Kropotkin's anarcho-communist theories with Spanish collectivist agrarian traditions rooted in the local history of many rural districts.

It was at this point that the term 'comunismo libertario' was adopted replacing the former term of anarcho-communism and thus stressing the element of liberty rather than the absence of government. Between 1932/33, revolts initiated by anarchists broke out in the rural areas of Andalusia, Catalonia and Aragon and their revolutionary motto called for the establishment of *Comunismo Libertario*. (Malefakis, 1970, pp.288–393). The revolts failed and as a result, reaction, arrests and persecutions of anarchist militants took place during 1934/35. Prompted by the harsh treatment the anarchists were faced with the necessity to intensify their ideological activities in order to prepare a revolutionary cadre for the future challenges. Under the prevailing circumstances the anarchist circles in Spain began to discuss programs for revolutionary perspectives and two approaches crystallised:

- a. The communal approach which regarded autonomous communes as the driving force of revolution and as the core of libertarian society. This approach perceived *Comunismo Libertario* not merely as a slogan and a war cry, but as a vision of the future post-revolutionary society.
- b. The Anarcho-syndicalist approach, which perceived the syndicate as an organism that would manage production after the revolution, under self management of the workers.

The main platform for these ideological deliberations was the theoretical journal *La Revista Blanca* and the publicist who carried it was Federico Urales — Juan Montseny. His approach integrated Kropotkin's optimistic anthropological world view, and the appraisal of rural communities which he perceived to be the most suitable for the realisation of collective principles based on solidarity. Urales believed that the revolution must pass through the phase of capitalist crisis and proceed toward the renaissance of communal traditions in free Spanish villages. (Elorza 1970, pp.187–191).

These ideas were popularised in 1932 by the anarchist publicist, physician by profession, Isaac Puente, who wrote the book: *Comunismo Libertario — Finalidad de la CNT*. It enjoyed a wide circulation in 1933 and was reprinted in 1935. The book outlined a utopian plan to establish a regime of *Comunismo Libertario* in Spain. Like Urales he adopted Kropotkin's concept on human society, as having been preconditioned by nature to cooperate, provide mutual aid and solidarity. Accordingly, he rejected the idea of a revolutionary, or post-revolutionary elite which would serve as a guide to the new society. The value of freedom was of cardinal importance and equal to co-operation. According to him, communalism would be a grass roots movement, as people tend to co-operate because of their social instincts.

Puentes took into account a possibility that Spain might be the first to introduce *Comunismo Libertario* and that it would, therefore, have to withstand pressure from hostile countries. According to him, as long as the rural areas adopted *Comunismo Libertario*, thus ensuring food provisions, there was a chance to overcome the boycott. Puente buttressed his reliance on Spain's collectivist tradition and his concept was mainly agrarian. (Paniagua 1982 pp.104–110).

Kropotkin's theories, as well as Spain's agrarian collectivist traditions are evident throughout. Puente relegated an important role to voluntary and economically autarchic, socially sovereign rural organisations. Believing in direct revolutionary actions and daily independence, he extolled spontaneous local activities. He rejected

on who was developing the policy. William Morris's *News from Nowhere* can be seen as a backward looking attempt to fix a socialist utopia on the land to an echo of the old Chartist Land schemes. But for every industrial worker who looked to the land as a retreat from the rigours and exploitation of the factory, there were many others who saw the land and control of it as the key to a socialist future where city and country lived in harmony.

learnt and statements made. The dispute on the question of the inheritance of the land as the Basle Congress of the First International in 1869 may be seen as a straightforward dispute between the individualistic anarchism of Bakunin<sup>(7)</sup> and the collectivist ideas of Marx. But in British terms most of those sympathetic to anarchism, followers of Bronterre O'Brien like Harris, supported the Land and Labour League and were far away from the individualistic position struck by John Stuart Mill. Harris certainly did argue, in general, for individualism against collectivism, as Stan Shipley notes, but by the later 1870s even he was supporting nationalisation.<sup>10</sup>

A good deal may have been lost in the development of this position though. The focus on the State and the reforms and changes which could be had through it, avoided entirely the question of who had real power in society to really alter things. An organised radical minority of urban proletarians had supported moves to take the land and run it co-operatively from below. Now they were being offered the possibility of being given it from above. This was not the same thing at all and certainly not what Marx had in mind for the development of the Land and Labour League.

The political context of the Land Question as it developed in the 1870s and afterwards is also worthy of further investigation. The Land and Labour League although it had an advanced radical programme was linked most particularly with republican political principles. By the time the SDF took up the issue of the land, republicanism was very much in the background as a political idea in favour of an overtly socialist economic and social analysis. Even here, however, the emphasis could be very different depending

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<sup>10</sup> Stan Shipley, *Club Life and Socialism in Mid Victorian London*, London, 1971, p.7.

<sup>(7)</sup> **Editorial note:** Bakunin was no individualist. Malatesta wrote of him "Bakunin was an anarchist, and he was a collectivist, an outspoken enemy of communism because he saw in it the negation of freedom and therefore, of human dignity". (*Malatesta, Life and Ideas* Freedom Press p.31)

the need for any kind of leadership by 'so called architects of a new society'. His disregard for any kind of economic planning and industrial development were perceived by critics as the weak point in his Utopia. The book enjoyed widespread popularity and triggered an ongoing de-bate, also leading to disagreement among the various trends of anarchist thought in Spain. It caused *Comunismo Libertario* to become a normative principle, while the utopian programs multiplied.

The issue was widely discussed in the anarchist movement's periodicals and its literature. There were several different approaches, but all had a common denominator namely, *Comunismo Libertario* was the main target.

Between 1932/36 Puente was not alone in dealing with the image of a future society. A substantial contribution to these deliberations was done by Diego Abad de Santillan, (born in Spain 1897 and emigrated to Argentina where he played a vital role in the anarchist movement) who came to Spain in the early 1930s and was involved in various anarchist publications. The climax of these endeavours was the book — *El Organismo Economico de la Revolucion* (1936). Its uniqueness was the emphasis on modern economics and the subsequent imperative to plan and coordinate the economies as the core of the whole collective endeavour.

According to Abad de Santillan, economic localism was an anachronism and hence all the theories regarding autarchic and free communes were regarded as reactionary utopias. A central aspect of his concept was 'free experimentation', to provide a variety of societies that would develop through mutual agreement. Santillan's program tackled issues that had been ignored by Urales and Puente; in fact, he attempted to present *Comunismo Libertario* as an answer to the problems of an industrial society. (Abad de Santillan 1978).

Early in 1936 significant developments occurred in Spain. The anarchists participated in the February elections at which the Popular Front gained a small majority and managed to form the govern-

ment. This was the background for the anarchists' drive to reassess their ideological positions (including *Comunismo Libertario*) in the Congress that was to convene in Saragossa early in May 1936. Its 150 *Dictamines* included chapters that dealt with *Comunismo Libertario* as defined by local syndicates in the spirit of Isaac Puente.

The Saragossa Congress' debate on *Comunismo Libertario* took place on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Most speakers dealt with the image of a future society without going into the details of how to achieve it. Many paragraphs dealt with a description of the communes' consumer activities, the family and the status of women. Some addresses concerned free love, individual ethics, religion, rational education, art and even the rights of marginal groups such as the nudists...

However there was no mention of an organised revolutionary struggle or how to cope with production during and after the revolution. (Elorza 1970, pp.235–237). In general, one may say that at the Saragossa Congress there was a gap between the sense of approaching revolutionary events and an organised intellectual effort to prepare for it.

These decisions were unacceptable to some of the anarchists from the syndicalist wing who, during the debate, proposed to set up a committee that would examine the ways and means of realising – 'comunismo libertario'. However there was not time for further discussions. On July 19<sup>th</sup> the civil war broke out.

When the revolution broke out on July 19<sup>th</sup>, in radical and anarchist circles it immediately raised the expectations that the anticipated revolutionary situation had arrived and that *Comunismo Libertario* would materialise soon. But developments during the first weeks of the civil war showed how unprepared the CNT leadership actually was and that the extent of local initiatives preceded central instructions. (Abed de Santillan 1976, pp.370–72).

Despite deliberations on the inherent meaning of 'comunismo libertario', the convention's decisions served as an inspiration during the first months of the civil war. Propaganda pamphlets about 'comunismo libertario' were published in thousands of copies dur-

at the Basle Congress of the First International in October 1869 to focus on the question of inheritance or who held the land was to miss the point. That point was that the system which created private property in land was what needed to be opposed rather than piecemeal reforms carried out through that very system.

To conclude: what has been argued here is essentially a theoretical position which suggests further directions for research and discussion. The position which we have been most concerned to oppose is that of Gareth Stedman Jones. He argues<sup>9</sup> on the land question in the nineteenth century that "before anything further could be conceived, the whole labour theory based on natural right would have to be jettisoned". As we have shown the reality was that by the end of the 1880s, the political context in which the land was seen in radical circles had changed. The process of change had been underway from the period of re-examination of radical ideas which took place after the defeats of 1848. It concluded in the 1880s with the land question firmly in place as part of the advanced Marxist programme of the SDF. Merely because the land question is a constant feature of nineteenth century radical politics does not mean that its content remained the same.

But aside from this a considerable number of questions remain open, some, perhaps, of particular interest to readers of *The Raven*. For example a balanced assessment of the Chartist Land Plan and its role in Chartist politics, which Malcolm Chase has underlined the need for, is still awaited. Equally the blossoming of the land question of the 1880s is still very much under-researched in terms of the role it played in the development of socialist and anarchist ideas at that time. More particularly, perhaps the key to the late nineteenth century land debate, the argument between individualists and collectivists, is still very much under-explored. With recent developments in Eastern Europe it has, of course, a strong contemporary echo. There are however no simple political lessons to be

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<sup>9</sup> Stedman Jones, *op. cit.*, p.157.



bourgeoisie, *nationalisation of the land* [being] the *starting point*. Eccarius has been appointed active secretary [in addition to Boon as *honorary one*] and is being paid for it.

Marx was careful to stress the significance of the demand for Nationalisation of the Land as a specifically proletarian demand which broke completely from radical thought. Quite what the significance of this break was can be seen by the hard work which other radicals did to oppose it.

On the face of it the Land and Labour League and the Land Tenure Reform Association were saying very similar things and contained amongst their supporters a number of radicals who were quite happy to co-operate on many issues such as educational reform or the ballot.

The programme of the LTRA issued on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1870 under the 'chairmanship' of John Stuart Mill made a number of very radical statements indeed, although unlike that of the Land and Labour League, they all applied specifically to the land question. This was the first important difference. For the League the question of the land was a key to a wider political programme. For the LTRA it was an end in itself.

The first three points in the LTRA programme focused on quite specific reforms around the abolition of the law of Primogeniture and removal of 'legal and fiscal impediments to the transfer of land'. The aim was to strike at land controlled by inheritance and to provide a free market in land. The other six points were of a more general radical, political nature. These included the promotion of Co-operative Agriculture by purchase of land by the State; the acquisition of land on a similar basis to let to small holders; plans to bring waste land under cultivation and a ban on any land currently held by the State or Crown passing into private hands.

Each point of the programme no doubt attracted support from a radical constituency. But as the supporters of Marx had argued

ing the autumn months. They served as an ideological and programmatic model for hundreds of small communities which declared their intent to establish 'Comunas Libres' in the spirit of 'comunismo-libertario'.

The reorganisation of independent communities during the first months of the war is hard to understand unless one takes into account the impact of the anarcho-communist utopian vision. It entailed the abolition of private ownership of the means of production; the introduction of local work tokens instead of money; the requisition of large private estates that belonged to enemies of the Republic and which, combined with the small-holder's land, were used to establish collective farms; the organisation of communal work-units in various branches; the abolition of salaries which were replaced by 'family wages' thus implementing the principle of 'for each according to his needs'; the integration of agriculture and industry; free education, patterned on Francisco Ferrer's rationalist schools for all.

It was a type of social revolution following in the spirit of Kropotkin's utopian vision and Spanish 'comunismo-libertario'. There was some uncertainty as to the ways and means of achieving it. Countless debates over the utopian program led to disagreements, compromise and a pluralistic attitude. Puente's model was not adopted by the entire Spanish anarchist movement. Besides the followers of 'comunismo libertario' there were syndicalists who rejected it. Moreover this was a chaotic period which required improvisation and many different forms of organisation. Some communities preferred other forms of cooperation rather than the collectivist way of 'comunismo libertario'.

It soon became evident that the implementation of a libertarian community utopia throughout Spain, had not yet been sufficiently prepared. The first sign of this awareness was the fact that the word 'collective' was preferred to 'commune' thus expressing the anarchists' low expectations and their doubts as to the implementation of an all-encompassing 'comunismo libertario'.

It should be noted that after the outbreak of the civil war, the revolutionary process called 'collectivisation' described a reality in which there were different forms of social and economic organisation, from cooperatives that integrated private farms with collective cultivation, to integral libertarian communism in which everyone handed over his entire property. The anarchists' leadership use of the term expressed a willingness to postpone their immediate aspirations of anarcho-communism and to enable other forms of cooperation to exist simultaneously, even granting them a 'freedom to experiment'. (Bernecker 1982, pp.86–90; Tiana Ferrer 1988, pp.32–41).

Most rural collective villages were established in Aragon during the first five weeks of the revolution. From there the movement spread to Catalonia, Levant, Andalusia and Castile. In the winter of 1936/7 out of 1500 agricultural collectives in the republic, 450 were in Aragon, comprising 300,000 people, about 70% of the entire population and 60% of the cultivated area. (Prats 1938, p.89). Moreover in Aragon the anarcho-communist trend had a vital impact on modes of collectivisation and therefore I have chosen to focus on it and review some developments in the Levant where the process of collectivisation continued until the fall of the republic.

The fact that the revolution broke out in Aragon and rapidly took root there, could be explained through a variety of factors: the collapse of Aragon's central government provided a suitable back-ground for a wide-ranging social experiment; the multitude of relatively isolated small villages, the lack of transportation and mobility and above all, the power of the CNT on both banks of the Ebro, even before the civil war, contributed to the revolution's success.

The ideals and slogans of *Comunismo Libertario* had been voiced during the 1932/33 unrest when the anarchist militant elements thrived. (Carrasquer 1985, pp.13–28; Casanova 1985, pp.33–39). Prominent among them were circles of young anarchists: *Juventud Libertaria* who reacted to the government's

Friday 1870 to see the first stirrings of what is the modern British left.

The League had been established at three meetings held at The Bell, Old Bailey on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> 1869. According to Royden Harrison the organisational impetus for its formation came from the O'Brienite National Reform League. But the focus was for an organisation which would go much further on Land Nationalisation and Republicanism than existing organisations such as the Labour Representation League would.

The Programme of the League was as follows:

1. Land Nationalisation
2. Home Colonisation
3. National, Secular, Gratuitous and Compulsory Education
4. Suppression of Private Banks of Issue. The State only to issue paper money
5. A direct and progressive property tax in lieu of all other taxes
6. Liquidation of the National Debt
7. Abolition of the standing army
8. Reduction of the number of the hours of labour
9. Equal electoral rights, with payment of Members

Marx wrote to Engels about the formation of the League on October 30<sup>th</sup> 1869 in the following terms:

The creation of the Land and Labour League, [incidentally directly inspired by the General Council], should be regarded as an outcome of the Basle Congress; here, the workers' party makes a clean break with

stitute, Doctors Commons in London on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1855,<sup>8</sup> on Land Nationalisation it is unlikely that he had Spence particularly in mind. Murray was still raising the same demand 30 years later when he was a well known member of the SDF.

On Saturday April 16<sup>th</sup> 1870, *The Times* devoted its second leader to a demonstration held the previous day, Good Friday, in Trafalgar Square. The demonstration had been called by an organisation about which no history books have been written and little documentary evidence remains: The Land and Labour League. *The Times*' Editorial concluded:

...we have no desire to charge these Good Friday speakers with anything worse than ignorance, but such ignorance, uncorrected as far as we can see by a single voice at the meeting is lamentable in the extreme and would go far to prove that an Education Bill is really the greatest need of the day.

Yet the Land and Labour League, as it is likely *The Times*' Editorialist knew all too well was neither naive nor ignorant. It was in fact an outcrop of the English section of the First International. Marx claimed paternity but it also had within it a wide variety of opinion from secularist radicals like Charles Bradlaugh to anarchists like Dan Chatterton, who owned the League's journal *The Republican* and many followers of the theories of the old Chartist leader Bronterre O'Brien. It was a potent mix indeed, and as *The Times* recognised a potentially threatening one.

The land question had become central to a sea change in far left British politics which was to lead, within 15 years, to the rejection of the radical liberalism taken up 10 years earlier after the final collapse of a national Chartist centre and the birth of Marxist and anarchist currents which have continued in their influence to the present day. It is possible therefore in that demonstration of Good

<sup>8</sup> *The Reasoner*, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1855.

oppression by fostering a counter culture. They organised evening classes, lectures, discussion groups in which they envisioned a communal future based on anarcho-communism.

The oppression of 'the two black years' (1934/35) led to an arrest of the older activists who were soon replaced by young local members of the *Juventud Libertaria*. (Kelsey 1986, pp.66–69). Abad de Santillan mentioned them in his book *Por que perdimos la Guerra*, a personal account written right after the civil war,

They (the young activists) began to act spontaneously... without waiting for the leadership's directives... Most of them were simple villagers who had earlier absorbed various revolutionary ideas... After the Congress of Saragossa they took upon themselves most of the activities in the rural areas. (p.115)

When the contact with Saragossa (the capital of Aragon) was cut after it had fallen, republican Aragon developed a dependence on Barcelona in Catalonia. The region was on the front and the anarchist militia, comprised of CNT activists from Barcelona and Catalonia, enlisted. They attempted to free Saragossa and re-establish contact with the County Basque. Although they failed in regard to Saragossa, Eastern Aragon fell into the hands of a republican militia prompting the CNT activists to start a social revolution and establish collectives in Aragon.

Historians would disagree as to the amount of coercion used by anarchist militias to achieve their aims. Eventually it has been consented that compulsion did indeed play quite a role. Nevertheless, it can not be an exclusive explanation for the collectivisation. Formally the principle of voluntary incorporation into *collectividades* coexisted side by side with private farmers. Moreover, in many areas that were far from the front, collectivisation was widely adopted, without having any militia troops around, for example, in the Levant.

Generally, collectives tended to have local characteristics and there were many differences. Testimonies abound, with different descriptions of the enactment of collectives. In 1979 Ronald Fraser collected and published testimonials about the Spanish civil war in a book called *Blood of Spain*, which obviously show the different attitude: the memories of Angel Navarro, a small holder from Alloza, are of special interest. He admitted that there was a climate of fear and uncertainty and that the main concern was to avoid bloodshed.

“We agreed to collectivise — simply to ensure that lives were spared...” As to the procedure by which it was carried out, he tells that “...a village — assembly was called... They (the militiamen and the CNT representatives) have come and told us that other villages have collectivised and they want everyone to be equal.” The CNT representatives had stressed that no one was to be maltreated, and had suggested how to organise the collective. Eventually Navarro admitted that...“once the work groups were established on a friendly basis everyone got on well... there was no need for coercion”. And he concludes saying “A collective was not a bad idea at all”. (Fraser 1979, pp.358, 360)

A serious problem was the internal contradictions between the anarchists’ ideals and their actions during the war, in regard to force and coercion. CNT leaders admitted that: “... compulsive collectivisation ran contrary to libertarian ideals. Anything that was forced could not be libertarian...” Forced collectivisation was justified, in some libertarian eyes by “the need to feed the columns at the front... One must remember that a war was going on and that coercion was not always to be avoided.” CNT activists realised that *Comunismo Libertario* couldn’t be established without force as long as the people are not convinced of its justification... Altogether, there was great confusion among the CNT militants. In their own words:

have sounded the same whether they were made in 1790 or 1870. Jones argues that “there was no disagreement between (Feargus) O’Conner and more socialistic Chartists about the identification of the land as the centre point of a Chartist social programme”<sup>7</sup>. He notes that one of the leaders of left Chartism, George Julian Harney, followed Spence in calling the land the ‘People’s Farm’. He always focused on the aristocracy and land rights rather than on the mill owner. There was, for example, no call for workers’ control of the factories. In fact, however, the 1842 General Strike and the 1853/4 Preston Lock Out did focus specifically on the factory owners. Here though the preferred manner of expressing a desire for an alternative mode of production to prevail was the call for co-operative enterprise.

Certainly the Chartist Land Plan may be seen as looking back to a non-existent golden age of land rights. But recent work, again by Malcolm Chase, has shown that it was heavily supported by factory workers who saw self-sufficiency on the land as one way of escaping from their exploited position. In such circumstances the demand and desire for the land while Utopian was grounded in some degree of reality. It was realisable for a minority and the Chartist Land Plan did set up moderately successful colonies around London. The principle at work was closer to Owenite Socialist ideas of cooperation than support for a return to rural idiocy.

Moreover the alternative strategy, that of land nationalisation by the State began to emerge at the same time. It is simply to miss the point to argue, as Stedman Jones does, that demands for land nationalisation in the 1880s were no different to those made by Thomas Spence. The context in which Ernest Jones called for land nationalisation in the 1851 Chartist Programme was that of providing a blueprint for a social democratic State, of change from above. Equally when the Chartist Charles Murray spoke at the Literary In-

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<sup>7</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, *Language of Class*, Cambridge, 1984, p.155.

dency to foreshorten the timescale over which this switch took place. It was quite possible for large factory units to be decisive in the economy without the economy itself becoming fully industrialised overnight.

This meant that even for the most urban and proletarian of factory workers the land still had a real significance. Equally, as the formation of the Agricultural Workers Union indicated the position of agricultural labourers was itself becoming proletarianised. By the mid 1850s Marx was arguing that the significance of the ballot in England was quite different to that in France, as the proportion of two thirds of the population who were peasants was reversed in Britain in favour of the proletarian. Of necessity this balance of class forces began to place the land question in a very different context from that which it had had even twenty years before.

Chase indicates how central a role the land could play even against the background of people who had now become firmly integrated factory workers. He argues that the land was “as logical and integral a part of popular politics as machine breaking, trade unionism or the demand for universal suffrage”<sup>6</sup>. Agrarian ideas were, in this sense, central to the development of the industrial working class, forming part of the backdrop against which they defined their new existence.

This, however, is a contentious argument. Gareth Stedman Jones in his essay ‘Rethinking Chartism’ suggests a continuity of radical demands on the land question from Spence through to those followers of the theories of the old Chartist leader Bronterre O’Brien who joined the Social Democratic Federation almost a century later. However Jones’s argument on the linear development of the Land Question, as with his analysis of Chartism in general mistakes form for content. Formally, calls for the land to be given to the people, its rightful owners, or for no property in land, may

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<sup>6</sup> Chase, *op. cit.*, p.6.

...We were attempting to put into practice a libertarian communism about which, it’s sad to say, none of us really knew anything...

...All this had been talked and written about, but it had been no more than slogans until then... (Fraser 1979, pp.349–351).

Some admitted that

Without realising it we had created an economic dictatorship! It went against our principles... We did not want to impose a dictatorship, but rather to prevent one being imposed upon us... Someone has to be responsible for giving orders, things couldn’t work simply with people doing as they wanted... (Fraser, 1979, p.357)

Sometimes collectivisation was adopted enthusiastically, especially if there existed a core of local anarchists who co-operated with the farmers in the area. Whenever there was no such core, coercion was an inevitable outcome of the circumstances. The rapid and spontaneous process led to variegated forms of collectives, from total communes to cooperatives, in which private property was maintained. In some of the collectives people had to hand over their property, while in others this was not obligatory.

One should bear in mind that in Aragon, which was very close to the front, collectivism was introduced under war conditions. They had to start from scratch in the material as well as the social sense. The organisers had to provide solutions to daily problems without having any preparation. In fact, most of them were villagers or agricultural workers who had no experience in any official capacities before the civil war.

In a soul searching article written at a later stage of the war Diego Abad de Santillan admitted that many mistakes were made by CNT activists and remarked:

They lacked all professional preparation for the constructivist tasks ahead... in many cases anarchist activists had to fulfil public offices without any formal education... we wasted intellectual energy discussing how to prepare for the revolution instead of how to cope with constructive tasks... (Abad de Santillan 1976)

And in spite of this they managed to improvise and were successful in several areas.

Aragon farmers, who were generally considered as individualists that adhered to their plot of land unexpectedly displayed a large measure of adaptability to the new way of life. By joining a collective many of the farmers raised their standard of living and turned towards modern mechanised farming. In addition the collectives provided jobs for everyone, including women and old people, thus abolishing coven unemployment on the small farms. (Prate 1939, pp.89- 128)

During 1937, it became evident that in Aragon agriculture had prospered. According to official data, wheat crops were 20% higher than in the preceding year. During the same period, in Catalonia which had not collectivised to the same extent, crops were lower. It transpires that the introduction of a rationalised work organisation, mechanisation and fertilisers, had contributed to the success. There were also beginnings of experimental farms to foster cultivation and animal husbandry. (Thomas, pp.253–255; Casanova 1985, p.195; Bernecker 1982, p.256).

Notwithstanding collectivisation must not be assessed via economic data only. The experiment's short duration and the prevailing circumstances of war, make such an assessment futile. Moreover, they did not merely aspire to achieve economic success, but rather to establish a new society.

One of its outstanding aspects was the abolition of money. This policy was not anchored in a financial theory but rather on a moral

to that considered here. As or more important for our argument was the continued influence that Spencean ideas had in radical circles in different periods and contexts throughout the nineteenth century.

The period after 1880 when the land question opened out into general political debate may be seen as a result of the pressure which had been agitated on the issue in the previous two decades. A considerable amount of this had to do with the Irish dimension to the Land Question which is another under researched and neglected area. The great fear was that the Irish and English Land Questions would become linked and it was one which, from time to time was partially realised. The sheer scale of political agitation on the Land Question after 1880 prevents consideration in a brief article. As important, however, we are concerned here with how the land moved from being a backward looking radical demand of the 1830s to the ultra progressive radical issue of the 1880s. It is the process rather than its conclusion which focuses our concern here.

It may be taken from the above that it is often forgotten how central the land was in mid nineteenth century radical politics and, to take matters further, in the lives of ordinary people at this time. Malcolm Chase has argued that "The tendency among English social historians until recently has been to concentrate upon those reactions to industrialisation which most evidently prefigured concerns of the present... From this perspective the land question can seem irrelevant, and working class absorption in it even mildly embarrassing".<sup>4</sup> Yet in 1851 8,936,800 people were defined as living in rural areas as against 8,990,809 in urban areas.<sup>5</sup> — In the same year 21.5% of the employed population were shown as working in agriculture. While not wishing to deny the centrality of the switch to industrial factory production and the rise of a working class that this entailed in nineteenth century class relations, there is a ten-

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<sup>4</sup> Chase, *op. cit.*, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Howkins, *op. cit.*, p.7.

agenda. This is one of the most important and most unasked questions of nineteenth century radical history.

The central focus for the question comes in the late 1860s and early 1870s around two organisations: the Land Tenure Reform Association and Labour League. The first sought to reform the legal situation on land ownership; the second called for nationalisation of land. The first as Royden Harrison makes clear in one of the few books to touch on the question<sup>1</sup>, wanted to change the position of rural labourers. The League meanwhile focused on the position of urban workers. This split focus was the dividing line between old and new radical values and views of the land. Yet, as Harrison emphasises, the division was by no means as clear cut to the participants at the time.

It is not the purpose here to consider the land question in the nineteenth century in general. This would be a valuable project indeed, and one which, it might be hoped, would be taken up, over time, by the recently published *Rural History Journal*. The existing texts are comparatively sparse, with only two books, both published in the last five years by Malcolm Chase<sup>2</sup>, and Alun Howkins<sup>3</sup>, attempting any significant overview of the question, (Chase for the first half of the century and Howkins for the second). The land has been and remains an unfashionable neglected topic in left and socialist historical endeavour. Social historians have done somewhat better but, perhaps by the very nature of the genre, have not focused on the key political elements of the land question.

The central focus has been on the work of the early radical Thomas Spence and the period after 1880 when the land became, perhaps up to 1914, and possibly afterwards as well, a central political issue. Spence may be characterised as the original land nationaliser, albeit in a rather different, (pre-working class), context

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<sup>1</sup> Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, London, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Chase, *The People's Farm*, Oxford, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, London, 1991.

attitude and symbolism of the aims and values of their revolution. Fraser, in the above mentioned book, quotes a villager from Mas de Las Matas... "Money was immediately abolished. All produce from collectivised land was to go to 'the pile' for communal consumption... We thought that by abolishing money we would cure most ills. From early age, we had read in anarchist thinkers that money was the root of all evil. But we had no idea the difficulties it would cause..." (Fraser, 1979, p.354)

All collectives modified the wage system and material benefits. In September 1936, most introduced family wages as a pragmatic means to apply the communal principle. Accordingly, the head of a family received an amount of 7–10 pesos daily, his wife 50% and any additional family member 15% etc. This money could only be spent on consumer goods thus preventing the accumulation of capital. In February 1937 food coupons were introduced throughout the Aragon collectives. (Thomas, pp.259–260; Mintz pp.120–2, 139; Bernecker 1982, pp.180–8)

An important innovation was the collective work organisation that had been adopted in most collectives. Everybody, with the exception of pregnant women, was expected to work. Most worked from dawn to dusk. There was a trend of maximum involvement for all as well as a decentralisation of authority. Work groups of 5–10 people were established and current issues were discussed by them. Most collectives adopted a system of rotation in regard to popular jobs. Daily reports were required and workers were transferred from one branch to another according to need. Industrial plants were integrated within the economic system and thus a symbiosis between agriculture and industry emerged. (Carrasquer 1985, pp.143–146).

The collectives adopted a system of direct democracy. The general assembly, which convened once a month, served as prime authority. Autonomous committees were in charge of economic and community issues, and were elected immediately. During the early months there was no evidence of an emerging bureaucracy. This

was prevented by adherence to the egalitarian principle and the absence of privileged officeholders. At the beginning central members did not receive any material remuneration for their labours and enjoyed special status. Secretaries and treasurers received the same salary as production workers. (Carrasquer 1985, pp.171–186)

Despite the war and work efforts, members managed to find time for educational and cultural activities. Every collective had a cultural centre where people of all ages would gather to listen to lectures, meet socially or celebrate certain events.

The anarchist movement had a long tradition of educational activities, ever since Francisco Ferrer had established rationalist schools, with modern teaching methods, in Barcelona early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As soon as they could, anarchist began to establish educational institutions in all collectives. They introduced free education for both sexes up to the age of 15, thus preceding the national school system. Schools, which had formerly been a rarity in the rural areas, were now an integral part of the countryside.

The anarchist tradition fostered a type of *Obrero Consciente* farmer who learned reading and writing as a means of expressing himself and of understanding the world around. This motivated many labourers and farmers to get an education without actually having gone to school. (Tiana Ferrer 1988, pp.193–202; Carrasquer 1985, pp.129–137).

The collectives fulfilled an important role in pioneering health and welfare services. Health care was everyone's concern — and everybody's right. Medication was free as were dispensaries and the local doctor's services. Several doctors even joined collectives and participated in community activities while attempting to improve preventive medicine.

One of the most impressive aspects of the collectives was the care for the sick, the invalids and the aged. Despite the short time at their disposal several succeeded in establishing old people's homes and hospitals that served the entire area. Hospitals were established where none had ever existed. In addition, health

**Keith Flett**

## **To make that future now**

### *The land question in 19th century radical politics*

The question of the land still has a resonance in contemporary politics. Arguments about subjects as apparently diverse as housing policy and hunting often have distant echoes of the land question. Occasional Editorials in the *Daily Mirror* and the views of Tony Benn and the *New Left Review* can be more specific. The continuing existence of an English Monarchy and Aristocracy suggests, from their viewpoint, a continuing set of relations on the land which date back to pre-industrial times.

One does not have to take this analysis too seriously, (it is often used by the Labour Party as an excuse for supporting industrialists) to understand that the land was a question of central political importance in the century.

There are two dimensions to the land question in the nineteenth century. First, that of the agricultural labourers themselves who from the last armed rebellion on English soil at Bessenden Wood in Kent in 1838 to Joseph Arch's Agricultural Workers Union tried to control the means of their existence. Second, that of the urban proletariat, many of whom in the Victorian era were first generation factory workers from the land. They saw a return to the land or control of it as a key political demand.

The key problematic in this article however, is how the land question moved from one of being a backward looking Utopia to one of the most progressive and radical demands on the political



I strongly believe that it is impossible to understand the passions, the emotions, and the real issues that touched the lives of Civil War participants without consulting the press.

How right he was and how wrong are the historians who rely on the empty utterances of the politicians – including the anarchists and syndicalists turned politicians.

One has not waited for historians to ‘reveal’ the ‘failures’ of the anarchists and the syndicalists in the Spanish Civil War. Had they followed Bollothen’s advice and read the anarchist publications at the time they would have seen that worldwide the anarchist press was critical of the compromises and at the same time unable to provide practical assistance for them to fight on two fronts. Apart from these reservations, we think that Yaacov Oved’s paper does recognise the originality of the collective movement in Spain in 1936–1939, and for interested readers there are still a few copies of Gaston Leval’s *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution* (FREEDOM PRESS, £8, hardback) and many other Freedom Press Distributors tides.

committees helped members to reach specialists in the large cities. (Carrasquer 1985, pp.160–169)

In the Aragon collectives there ensued a process of women’s liberation. Apparently they enjoyed the same status as men and they were relatively independent. Women now enjoyed an option to work outside the home or in it; many volunteered to do community work in addition to seasonal jobs and their chores. This contributed to their sense of being equal partners, yet former traditions tended to hamper the full realization of equality. For example when family wages were fixed, women received less. Feminist anarchists protested against the gap between an egalitarian theory and a reality in which women were binded by their household chores. (Casanova 1985, pp.59–60; pp.198- 202)

Six months after the revolution, Aragon collectives still had no co-ordinating federation. By January 1937 it had become evident that some collectives were affluent while others were not. They claimed that it was imperative to establish a co-ordinating federation to direct new collectives and make them more equal.

The Congress of the Collectives’ Federation convened in Caspe on February 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 1937. It was attended by 600 delegates who represented about 300,000 members from 500 collectives. This was a most impressive number if one takes into account that the entire population in the republican sector of Aragon was about 500,000. In fact, the Congress, which founded the Aragon Federation of Collectives, represented a majority of the population. (Casanova 1985, pp.178–185, Santillan 1975, pp.117–121). It decided to foster collectivist propaganda; to establish experimental farms and technical schools; to abolish the internal use of money; to introduce mutual aid among collectives, such as lending out machinery, and assisting with work. None of this materialised because hostile clouds were massing on the horizon.

In the winter of 1937, the collectivist movement in Aragon was at its highest, but it had become harder to expand. Republican institutions had been established and there was no longer room for local

initiatives. The parties that had formed the coalition of the Republican government were not well disposed towards the collectives. The communists, who feared the radicalisation of the countryside because of global political considerations, were hostile. Under the minister for agriculture, Uribe, a communist, the collectives' development was affected, and *colectividades* of Aragon were the target of harassment. (Bernecker 1982, pp.138–51).

Following the events of Barcelona (May 1937) the government of Largo Caballero was replaced by Juan Negrin's and the internal struggle against the anarchists and their stronghold in Aragon was intensified. In August a battalion under the communist Enrique Lister was transferred to the region and ordered to abolish the Aragon defence council and the anarchist collectives.

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, the action began. The Aragon council was dissolved and its anarchist members arrested. It was replaced by Jose Ignacio Mantecon, who was appointed governor general by the central government. Immediately he ordered Lister's brigades to start actions against the collectives. A third of all collectives were affected; about 600 office-holders were arrested, some executed and others exiled never to return to the region. The governor appointed committees to manage the communities and to abolish their collective framework. Land cattle and machinery were to be returned to their former owners. Those who were responsible for this policy, were convinced that the farmers would greet it joyfully because they had been coerced into joining the collectives. But they were proven wrong. Except for the rich estate owners who were glad to get their land back, most members of the agricultural collectives objected and lacking all motivation they were reluctant to resume the same effort in the agricultural work. This phenomenon was so widespread that the authorities and the communist minister of agriculture were forced to retreat from their hostile policy. (*Colectividades*, 1977, pp.314–331; Mintz 1977, pp.180–183)

Thus the crusade against the collectives ended on September 21<sup>st</sup>. Through the widespread reluctance of collectivists to co-

in July, 1936, was followed by a far-reaching social revolution in the anti-Franco camp — more profound in some respects than the Bolshevik Revolution in its early stages — millions of discerning people outside Spain were kept in ignorance, not only of its depth and range, but even of its existence, by virtue of a policy of duplicity and dissimulation of which there is no parallel in history.'

To my protests at the exclusion of this brief chapter the author generously replied: "I am in total agreement with you that it was a mistake on my part to eliminate the opening paragraphs that appeared in *The Grand Camouflage*. Whenever I get a chance to revise the book again I shall restore those passages." And his reason for wishing to do so is significant: "for I have since learned that even though they were written twenty years ago people, on the whole, are still unaware of the unparalleled revolution that took place in Spain".

That journalist-historian kept his word. This new 1075-page History — it's more than a history — introduces Part I with that very paragraph which surely sums up the forgotten, but 'unparalleled' revolution of our times, with all its mistakes, which have been pointed out not only by Bollothen but by the anarchists such as Peirats and Leval.

Bollothen has an excellent piece of advice for the academics who feed on each other for their histories. He points out in the Preface to this third and definitive edition that:

Above all, this work reflects the extensive use I have made of Spanish Civil War newspapers and periodicals. Unlike those historians who do not appreciate the value of using newspapers as a primary source,

## An Editorial Afterword

Our interest in publishing Yaacov Oved's paper is that it is based on the published works of 'several young Spanish historians', though curiously he adds that the subject was treated better in the historiography of anarchism! He names Joll, Guerin, Woodcock, Bookchin 'and other'. Surely Gaston Leval and Augustin Souchy not to mention José Peirats, the historian of the C.N.T. who all participated, or observed, the struggle at first hand – and who have recorded what they saw, *when it happened*, are more worth considering, including their conclusions, than say Hugh Thomas who only 'discovered' the collectives in a *new edition* of his massive history and who Yaacov Oved uses as one of his sources!

And last but not least, though Burnett Bolloten is included in the bibliography there is not one reference to this, the most important history, now in its third much enlarged edition, too important and detailed to summarise in a sentence. (*The Spanish Civil War – Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, £50)

In the Notes to a Bibliographical Postscript in the third edition of FREEDOM PRESS' *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution* (not included in Yaacov Oved's Selected Bibliography), the author wrote of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Bolloten's *magnum opus*:

One chapter from the original edition has been omitted [in the second edition] though it hardly filled a page. Yet it seemed to me at the time that it was one of the most important statements in the book and endeared the author to me from the start. The paragraph read: 'Although the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War

operate with the new policy it became evident that most members had voluntarily joined the collectives and as soon as the policy was changed a new wave of collectives was established. However, the wheel could not be turned back. An atmosphere of distrust prevailed between the collectives and the authorities and every initiative was curtailed. Eventually collectivists resumed work but unfortunately had to bring in their harvest under Franco. By March 1938, republican Aragon had fallen and the collectives had been dissolved.

Aragon collectivisation was abolished because of external factors, yet symptoms of weakness had already been evident earlier. These symptoms appeared simultaneously in all the regions where collectivisation had been introduced, but were more evident in the Levant, where collectivisation continued until the fall of the republic in March 1939. Therefore we can use it as a relevant example for the trends that started but had not developed in Aragon.

In spite of limitations and difficulties the Levant experienced an increase in the momentum of collectivisation and by 1937 there were about 400 collectives. In the early months of the revolution, collectivisation proceeded chaotically because several opposing elements were active at one and the same time. Different places adopted different norms and procedures and neither the syndicates nor the government introduced a general program. After an initial 'confiscation fever' (Noja p.30), they resumed cultivation and most governmental factors as well as the CNT and UGT tended to ignore differences and co-operate. (Bosch 1983, pp.236–244; Noja 1937, pp.40–52)

Generally, one can divide the CNT collectives in Valencia into two groups: those affiliated with the radical revolutionary trend which aspired to *Comunismo Libertario* and others that belonged to heterogeneous groups. There were less of the former than in Aragon. Having emerged in a few communities during the early months of the revolution, they existed only for a short while and were gradually replaced by agricultural collectives whose mem-

bers belonged to the CNT. They adhered to the syndicate which formed a comprehensive social and organisational unit and ignored all state institutions. (Bosch 1983, pp.243–253)

The moderate means adopted by the anarchists were a kind of ‘pragmatisation’ of ‘comunismo libertario’. It was an attempt to achieve economic efficiency and provide for the war effort while adapting their ideal to the prevalent situation. They did not regard compromise as a deviance from their principles, but as a temporary measure required by circumstances. Victory over fascism, was all that mattered at that stage. The collectives could not maintain their independence and had to adapt to governmental dictates in order to be legalised. They had to act according to norms and sets of rules imposed by the government agencies and all local initiatives were stifled. Instead, the collectives were integrated into the regional economy and thus lost their autonomy and economic uniqueness.

Local monetary notes became less popular and official money was used again. Family wages lost their importance as a means of implementing the communal principle. Most collectives reintroduced wage differentiation and people started to be paid according to their ‘social contribution’, their profession or their job rather than according to their needs. The change was a result of pressure of professional workers inside the collectives. Late in 1937 committee members already received four times as much as agricultural workers. The 1938 Valencia congress discussed the abandonment of family wage as an exclusive system and recommended the integration of family wages with professional grades. There was also a difference of 5–10 pesetas in wages paid in the different entities according to each collective’s material circumstances. (Mintz 1977, pp.350–1; Bernecker, 1982, pp.187–88)

The growing differentiation between affluent and poor collectives signified a severe deterioration. In 1938 many anarchists criticised the emerging ‘neo-capitalism’, due to the collectives’ different points of departure. Some had started on rich estates, productive land and high income produce, while others were poor to begin

41. Tiana Ferrer, Alejandro, *Educacion Libertaria y Revolucion Social 1936–1939*, Univ. Nacional de Educacion a Distancia, Madrid, 1988.

Yaacov Oved is connected to Yad Tabenkin, Research Centre of the United Kibbutz Movement, and the Department of History of Tel-Aviv University, Israel.

28. Maurice, Jacques, 'Problemática de la Colectividades en la Guerra Civil' en *Agricultura y Sociedad*, 1978, Ministerio de Agricultura.
29. Miller, Martin A., *Kropotkin*, University of Chicago Press, 1976.
30. Mintz, Frank, *La Autogestion en la Espana Revolucionaria*, La Pigueta, Madrid, 1977.
31. Noja Ruiz, Higino, *Labor Constructiva en el Campo*, Ediciones Libre Studio, Valencia, 1937.
32. Osofsky, Stephen, *Peter Kropotkin*, Twayne Publishers, 1979.
33. Paniagua, Xavier, *La Sociedad Libertaria*, Critica, Grijalbo, Barcelona, 1982.
34. Peirats, Jose, *La C.N.T. en la revolucion espanola*, Ruedo Iberico, 1971.
35. Pratts, Alardo, *Vanguardia y Retaguardia: la guerra y la Revolution en las Comarcas Aragonesas*.
36. Simoni, Encarna y Renata, *Cretas. La colectivizacion de un pueblo aragones*, (1936–37), Centro de Estudios bajoaragon, 1934.
37. Sonadellas, concepcio, *Clase Obrera y Revolucion Social en Espana 1936–39*, Zero Zyx, 1970.
38. Souchy, Agustin, *Entre los compesinos de Aragon*, Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, Barcelona, 1937.
39. Souchy, A. and Folgare, P., *Colectivizaciones*, ed. Fontamara, Barcelona, 1977.
40. Thomas, Hugh, 'Anarchist Agrarian Collectives' in *The Republic and the Civil War in Spain*, ed. Raymond Carr.

with and deteriorated rapidly. According to these critics: "Instead of solidarity and mutual aid, collective selfishness prevails and the poor collectives are exploited by the richer ones". (Bosch pp.280–82; Broue 1972, pp.162–66. See also *Archivo Historico Nacional – Salamanca* P.S. [M] Carpeta 2467)

In January 1938 the CNT's economic plenum convened in Valencia to discuss economic issues and the war effort. Following a year and a half of war there was a tendency to adopt a 'realist' and reformist ideology. A demand to co-ordinate war economics was voiced and the CNT and the UGT grew closer to one another. Representatives criticised the collective selfishness of members who managed the collectives, the deterioration of the anarchist ideals into a new kind of capitalism; and the lack of solidarity between the Valencia collectives. Apparently, they had not succeeded in overcoming the former stage of improvisation. (Mintz 1977, pp.202–220; Bosch pp.196–98)

After the plenum session it was evident that the CNT had changed and begun to avoid traditional communal anarchism. Talks of a union between CNT and UGT indicated the rapprochement between these syndicalist organisations. They agreed on economic targets and the adoption of governmental demands in regard to the war effort. Various anarchist papers published a great number of complaints against what they termed the dictatorship of committees that intervened in individual affairs and laid down arbitrary limitations. In general assembly notes there is mention of sanctions against indecent behaviour, non-participation at assemblies and particularly against people who did not come to work without a valid excuse ... Although this seems to have been sporadic behaviour, it points to a regression from early puritanism. In general, one may deduce that anarcho-communist collectivisation was constantly deteriorating.

Anarcho-communists in Spain attempted to establish a society of autonomous collective communities that were united in an alternative federative bond. They were to form the nucleus of a fu-

ture model society, one that would expand to include society at large after the revolution had reached its final stage. Achievements were very far from their original targets. At most they established anarcho-communist cells which struggled to survive in conditions of a civil war and were faced with the hostility of warring sections. They were forced to compromise in order to survive and this, naturally, affected their anarcho-communist characteristics. In fact, *Comunismo Libertario*, which had served as an inspiration for the starting stage, gradually lost its meaning in the process of realisation.

During the three civil war years, the 'comunismo libertario' movement withstood numerous trials and challenges. It achieved merely a partial and limited realisation in the social revolution, involving only certain parts of the rural communities and none of the cities. The people were not ready. Most of the movement's office holders were farmers and union functionaries with limited education. Furthermore, the best qualified among them were drafted into the militias and had to be replaced by young and inexperienced members. Having to cope with daily burdens, their ardour diminished and they were mainly busy solving practical and pragmatic problems. Eventually, they had to adjust to state instructions which led to a gradual regression from the communal structures. Co-operation was reduced; family-wages were abolished; the salary system was introduced; solidarity and mutual aid were curtailed and wide gaps opened up between rich and poor collectives. Throughout the entire process the anarchist movement was forced to compromise and did not attempt to put pressure on recalcitrant peasants who wanted to renew the cultivation of their individual farms. All initial cases of violence and enforcement, which had occurred during the first stages, were criticised and steps were taken to reduce them. This was due to the anarchist concept of voluntary organisation.

There were no attempts to cope with the problems of the implementation on a theoretical level and the second year of the civil

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war could be regarded as a series of delaying actions of retreat. Nevertheless, even if achievements were merely a pale shadow of the anarcho-communist utopian vision, they expressed anarchism's inherent power even in poor and war-stricken districts. If one takes into account the prevalent war conditions, one can only marvel at the collectives' achievements in realising what may be termed 'constructive anarchism' in spite of all the trials and tribulations.

Despite its failure to materialise in practice via collectivism, anarcho-communism enhanced it with a vision and with social content that gave a special aspect to the revolution in Spain's rural areas. It inspired the thousands who participated in it, with an uplifting ideal. None of the other partners in the collective experiment in rural and urban Spain had insisted on integrated communities; none had been spiritually and practically inspired by a utopian vision parallel to the one which the proficient libertarian anarchism had been propagating during several years before the outbreak of the Civil War. Many testimonies have remained and all tell about the atmosphere of enthusiasm and of a dreamlike experience. Many have attested that in spite of cruel hardships, "those were the best years of our lives", and have insisted that they would willingly repeat them once again. (Bosch 1983, pp.378–379; Carrasquer 1985, pp.217–294).

The Anarchist collectives in Spain existed for a short time. The oldest and most stable of them lasted two and a half years before they were conquered by Franco's army with the fall of the Republic. Although they were short-lived, they had a unique historical significance. It was the first attempt in modern history to establish a society run on anarchist principles which was broadly based in terms both of territory and of population.

Formerly, there were only sporadic attempts to form small anarchist communes in France, USA, Brazil and in Russia during the first years after the Revolution. None of these attempts can be compared with the Spanish episode: not even the anarchist regime

which existed in the area ruled by Machno in South Russia during the Revolution (1919–1920).

The Spanish anarchist communes had no predecessors to imitate, since they rejected in principle the example of Russian *kolkhoz* and *Sovkhoz*, considering them as activated by political and bureaucratic mechanisms. They also ignored the anarchist and socialist communes which existed in the USA and there were no links at all with the socialist kibbutzim in Palestine, being remote both geographically and ideologically. Therefore no patterns of external inspiration could be traced.

This was a unique implementation of what could be denominated as Constructive Anarchism, manifested in a wide ranging attempt to apply Anarcho-Communist principles within a system of rural communities. In spite of the uniqueness of the phenomenon and its originality there were elements which could be bases for comparison with other experiments especially in the manifestation of communal life. These included the reorganisation of society in an integral communal system involving production, consumption, education, cultural life and even personal familial and public morality. Although the anarcho-communists' ability to achieve their utopian vision was not put to the test in full, within the limited boundaries of the Spanish experiment some cardinal problems of communal realisation were exposed, such as:

- the divergence between the utopian vision of free and voluntary communes and the enforcement attempts made by the militias during the first stages of the civil war.
- the establishment of social units that were expected to create a new world without being able to receive proper professional and educational preparation.
- the discrepancy between the principle of rewards according to needs as conceived by the ideology and the pragmatic

wish to encourage people with ability to achieve more by granting them bonuses.

- the appearance of contradictions between rich and poor collectives and the manifestations of 'collective capitalism' in the relations between the communities.

It should be taken into account that in the complex reality of the civil war, the anarcho-communist utopia in Spain suffered from an erosion via compromises and a constant retreat from its integral principles. The process of erosion had started in the early days of the second Republic, ever since the utopian vision was turned into a factional debate.

The settlement of the disputes between the different concepts required compromises. Thus on the eve of the war, at a stage when the struggle for realisation was just beginning, only a vague vision of '*comunismo libertario*' remained, instead of a clear-cut plan of action. On the other hand, the anarcho-communist achievements, though meagre and short-lived, did not have to cope with the cardinal problem of Utopia, namely: it was not led to distort the ideal by using force to achieve it. Despite compromises which curtailed its impact, the spirit of utopia was left intact as a normative ideal, a ray of hope for the future. The civil war's end, which led to the fall of the Republic, truncated the experiment of collectivisation and with it the unique historical opportunity of testing 'constructive anarchism' on a broad scale.

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For clarity, some acronyms were given footnotes showing what they stand for.

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following the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 national parks and a network of long distance footpaths were created. The opening in 1965 of the first of these paths, the Pennine Way, owed much to the previous efforts of Tom Stephenson. Tom was born in 1893 and started work at 13 as a labourer, working 66 hours a week in a calico printing works. A member of the Independent Labour Party and a pacifist, he ignored his army call-up papers in 1917 and as a result was twice court martialled, sentenced to hard labour and spent two years in prison, some of it in the company of Sidney Silverman. This criminal record lost him his scholarship to London University to study geology but diverted him into a life-long campaign for walkers' rights. A full account of this can be found in Tom Stephenson's autobiography *Forbidden Land: the Struggle for Access to Mountain and Moorland* published in 1989 shortly after his death.<sup>6</sup>

The parliamentary path to the hills dates back to 1884 when James Bryce MP introduced an 'Access to Mountains' bill. Neither this nor any of its successors got very far, opposed as they were by the powerful landowners lobby, until the introduction in 1939 of another 'Access to Mountains' bill. This was received with jubilation by those who inexplicably thought that the bill which had been repeatedly rejected by parliament during the past 50 years would be successful. but this time they were right, right except that when the 'Access to Mountains Act 1930' did reach the statute book in 1940 it had been "so mauled, mangled and amended by parliament as to become a monstrous unrecognisable changeling, not an access bill but a landowners protection bill".<sup>7</sup>

They did not give up. In 1979 an 'Access to Commons and Open Country' bill was introduced but not debated due to objections and when it was reintroduced the following year with the comment

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<sup>6</sup> *Forbidden Land, The Struggle for Access to Mountain and Moorland*. Stephenson, T. (1989) Manchester University Press.

<sup>7</sup> *Forbidden Land, The Struggle for Access to Mountain and Moorland*. Stephenson, T. (1989) Manchester University Press.

that “men only want the same rights as their Lordships’ grouse except that they did not want to be shot at”<sup>8</sup> it did not get a second reading. A 1982 ‘Walkers (Access to Countryside)’ bill suffered a similar fate.

The latest attempt is in the form of a ‘Ramblers Manifesto, Action for the Countryside in Parliament’ issued by the Ramblers’ Association which “urges political parties in Britain to support action which would enable people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to gain access to the countryside for peaceful recreation”. The 14-point programme includes a demand that footpaths and other rights of way be cleared of obstructions and properly maintained; that new paths and parks be created; that there should be an established right of access on foot to mountain, moor, heath, and other open country and, in particular, to the one million or so acres of common land that remain. Sadly, except for the references to National Parks “there should be more of them” and a demand that the spraying of harmful pesticides over public rights of way should be stopped, this manifesto would not have seemed out of place a hundred years ago.

A glaring omission from the manifesto is any reference to the continued incursions of the MOD<sup>(9)</sup> on to common land. There is thus no apparent support for the campaign against Charles Windsor who, as the landowning Duke of Cornwall, has recently agreed to let the military carry out artillery and mortar firing for a further 21 years on 20,000 acres of Dartmoor, much of it common land, or to South West Water’s intention to give the MOD nine more years of use to over 2,000 acres of South West Dartmoor for ‘dry training’ (not lethal, but noisy).<sup>9</sup> No support either for the local inhabitants’ complaint that the hills around Coulport in Scotland, near

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<sup>8</sup> *Forbidden Land, The Struggle for Access to Mountain and Moorland*. Stephenson, T. (1989) Manchester University Press.

<sup>9</sup> *Open Space* (1992) Vol. 24 No 3

<sup>(9)</sup> Ministry of Defence

the Faslane nuclear submarine base, once open walking country, are now closed off and used as vast underground munitions stores.

If the story of the parliamentary pathway is mostly the story of bills thrown out, delayed interminably or emasculated, this is no more than an anarchist would expect, but this is not to dismiss the Ramblers' Association as having failed. Apart from the practical service it provides for in 87,000 members it is a democratic organisation with much grass roots activity by its individual groups that has maintained a tradition of radical opposition to the attempts by the powerful land-owning Interests to keep the land for themselves. At the local level it has had many successes: land previously closed by the owner is now walked on and footpaths blocked by a farmer are soon reopened.

Supporting single issue pressure groups like the Ramblers' Association is often criticised by anarchists as being too reformist, even trivial, diverting time, energy, and resources from the work for a more fundamental change in society, but such activities, particularly when they involve direct action by small groups at a local level, can be useful political activity complementary to more revolutionary action. It is certainly considered political by landowners and campaigning for access to the land is hardly trivial.

*Jonathan Simcock*  
**A Journey Through  
Contemporary Land Use**

My journey to work on foot and by rail from Belper to Nottingham City Centre offers a brief view of a wide variety of land use, both urban and rural. Walking down to the station you can see over the traditional small manufacturing town of Belper, which once produced textiles, famous name fireplaces such as 'Parkray' and manufactured Thornton Chocolates. Now half the textiles factories are gone and the remainder are struggling to survive. Only Glow Worm Ltd. remains as a manufacturer of gas central heating systems; 'Thorntons' is moving to a 'greenfield site' in Alfreton. Across the valley is a hill, The Chevin, with some moorland and woods, much used by locals for walks.

As the rail line heads south we pass the essential service which makes 'civilisation' possible here in Belper, the sewage treatment works, and on through Stevenson's 19th Century tunnel to Duffield — a local upmarket commuter village where 1500 out of 2000 electors vote Tory. They have a way of life typical in its way. Upmarket pubs and restaurants, a Golf Club, a Squash Club, a Tennis Club, a local ex-grammar school which aspires to be the local 'snob' school — and expensive cars parked in the drives of big expensive homes.

On into Derby and aside from the large council housing estates and the private housing estates of 1930s, 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s build there are a few parks and green spaces but there is much more acreage in the vast area of derelict land, especially near the rail-

way. Derby in the south has much space given over to Rolls Royce and other industry but the engineering sector, 'BREL'<sup>(10)</sup> and Rolls Royce, are busy only in making workers redundant.

As the line sweeps west it passes alongside the A52 and some new developments on reclaimed land; a Sainsbury's Superstore; a hotel complex in process of construction. Then out of town past more council estates at Spondon, past the tourtaulds Acetate Plant' with its frequent stink, to the Trent Valley where 6 or 7 power stations lie on a 50 mile line from east of Birmingham to Trent Bridge on the west side of Nottingham. Clouds of steam rise to the heavens alongside less visible pollutants and fumes of CO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub> etc. There are several gravel pits nearby at Attenborough where anglers can testify to the warmth of the water even in winter. The pits are given over to nature, anglers and sailing boats of a local Club.

Through Long Eaton we pass over another vestige of nineteenth century capitalism — the Erewash Canal. This has been reclaimed for ordinary mortals by a string of narrow boats; quite a few house boats among them. Leaving Long Eaton there is a large acreage of allotments — immaculately laid out, maintained and productive, figures busy hoeing and digging morning and evening as the train passes by.

The journey into Nottingham passes through leafy spacious fashionable suburbs — past wide expanses of industrial estates, some tidy, some filthy, dealing in metals recycling and a thousand other trades. We pass more stretches of urban wasteland — in the speculator's phrase, 'ripe for redevelopment'. As we glide into the Centre the Castle sits high on its rock. The fashionable Victorian streets lie to the north west, and lurking on the flat, the impoverished depressed deprived inner city area of the 'Meadows' which nevertheless is intensely alive.

Inner Nottingham is being cleared up, built on and made into yet another plastic tourist/shopping/showpiece, with modern

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<sup>(10)</sup> British Rail Engineering Limited

'cobbles' in the traffic free zones, some pavement artists, buskers, but mainly shops by the hundred; shoppers by the thousand. The 'Broad Marsh Centre' and the 'Victoria Centre' modern shopping malls are temples to that act of worship we call shopping.

Everything here in the landscape and townscape, all the way from Belper, is for sale; homes, land, services, water, gravel, grazing and agriculture, sports clubs, roads and rail. Access to it and use of it for production and leisure (with a few exceptions; public footpaths, rights of way, allotments, commoners rights) is determined by rights of ownership, property and money. Profits, not needs, rule land use, urban and rural.

## *Richard Harris*

# **Green Anarchism**

Green anarchism starts with the idea that the technological society with its cities of millions of inhabitants are not workable. Europe and the USA rely on third world resources, and to keep this situation governments sympathetic to the 'Old World Order' are kept in power. Puppet regimes are supported by aid packages, education, technical and military assistance, and weapons. The situation is not much better here, where the colonisation of the third world is mirrored by the creation of an underclass as a sump for cheap labour and as an incentive to those in the middle-class to keep on the treadmill while the whole is enforced by the ideological colonisation of the mind by the media.

Cities enable the system to keep people together for social control. They provide the appearance of a world of affluence with their shopping arcades and supermarkets with full shelves. They also produce alienation on a grand scale. The cities rob the surrounding countryside, and this robbery also works on a global level. Agricultural workers are forced to subsidise the cities by producing food for them. In the former USSR we see the start of the breakdown of this. People working on the land no longer see why they should produce for others, and are starting to take back control of their land.

In Russia the problems for the cities have been made worse by years of bureaucratic incompetence and corruption. The system of distribution is breaking down. For all the surpluses of the EEC, we too are starting to get problems, for example BSE and nitrate in the

soil, caused by the over intensive exploitation of resources. In the third world, governments imposed by the west are losing control, and the increasing hopelessness of the debt crisis will force rural populations to take back control of their land.

We can expect the west to try to enforce its domination, so it is quite possible that we will have other Gulf Wars. But Vietnam might be a better analogy, the more dispersed the opponents of the west are, the more likely the west is to lose. The system will find itself fighting on two fronts, for all the resources it wastes on foreign wars the weaker it will grow domestically.

This trend will come to Britain. As the government loses its grip, no-go areas will develop in isolated areas. The cities will collapse. Estates built in the 1960's are already turning into urban wastelands. The rich will retreat into their areas while the rest of the cities will rot. The economic crisis will further weaken their position. Public utilities will collapse. With the structure of the cities breaking up, together with the loss of resources from the third world the cities will be unable to feed themselves, and many will leave. (The industrial revolution in reverse.)

What will come out of this? Well, in the first instance, chaos. The state will break down, and tribes of scavengers will flood into the countryside. Warring factions will fight with each other to dominate areas where there is food. Without the industrial base, technology will wither. The people who will survive will be the ones who are able to feed, clothe, shelter and defend themselves. Society will start to rebuild itself, but it will have to be a radically different sort of society. Rather than a world based on mass-production for others, alienation and exploitation, Green Anarchists see the future world as one which draws from our own resources rather than one which takes from the resources of others. We must produce the things we need for ourselves on a small scale without taking more from the earth's resources than we put back. We want to try to bring about a society without alienation, guided by mutual respect.



reciprocity so often entails non-kinsmen and above all why it is so highly variant in its expression or so central to some cultures and so marginal to others (such as Western cultures). That demands a cultural, not a biological, answer.

***Harold Barclay***

Edmonton, Alberta. February 1992.

Cities of millions of inhabitants are too large — we need to function at a much smaller scale. Communities need to be no more than village sized, less than 500 people. (The highest number of people you can know.) These people will make and grow everything they need themselves. With this self-reliance they will not need politicians hundreds or thousands of miles away, nor will they be dependent on political or social structures like the DSS<sup>(11)</sup>. They will not have outsiders telling them what to do or what to think. Without the domination and control of technology over them they will be free. With this small scale, the anonymity of the cities which enables crime to take place will be abolished. In the cities possessions, and this gap between the rich and poor, are a motivating factor in crime, as even quite a senior policeman pointed out only recently. With only the bare minimum of material goods we will be less likely to steal. The fact that everybody is known, and has self-respect, and is respected in turn, with a proper function as part of society will reduce and eliminate this alienation and make crime unlikely.

With their self-reliance, and the capability of defending themselves, the small community of the future will be free, and will keep that freedom.

Green Anarchism is a call to abandon the materialistic and self-destructive philosophy of capitalism. Green Anarchists are in a direct line with Winstanley and the Diggers, or the nineteenth century utopian religious communities. It is a call for 'a free society in harmony with nature'. Already several communities have been started up, no doubt others will follow as the strength of the idea is seen. We will be building the new society out of the ruins of the old. The continuation of capitalism is not an option — we must abandon consumption *now* before it destroys us!

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<sup>(11)</sup> Department of Social Services

## *Stephen Cullen*

# The Highland Land War

On the 25th July, 1970, a memorial cairn was unveiled at Colbost Hill on the Isle of Skye. The legend on that cairn reads: 'To Commemorate the Achievements of the Glendale Land Leaguers, 1882-1886', and it marks area of the celebrated 'Battle of the Braes', where the crofters of Glendale fought a pitched battle with police over the issue of land. The Skye protests were only part of a widespread movement that covered most of the Highlands and Islands, and that lasted long after the implementation of the 1886 Crofters' Act. The Highland Land War saw the mobilisation of the community in rent strikes, land raids, and deer killings. The perceived threat to 'law and order' was so great that the government despatched gunboats, marines, soldiers and extra police to the area. But the solidarity of the Highland community, including its expatriate members in Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, was such that only the creation, and favourable operation of, the Crofters' Commission was enough to undermine the protest. However, a substantial proportion of that community, the cottars, were left unsatisfied by the 1886 Act. The cottars' struggle was for land itself, but once their erstwhile allies, the crofters, had achieved their primary aims of tenure and fair rent, the cottars found themselves alone to continue their land struggle. Similarly, the Crofter MPs, returned as genuinely popular representatives of the people in the 1885 and 1886 General Elections, had, by 1892, lost themselves in the mire of parliamentarianism, taking the remains of the popular movement into the Liberal Party. Action through parliament proved, in the

example, aggressive tendencies. What is far more important is the way these tendencies are expressed and that demands a cultural explanation. (pp. 95-97).

I have some additional comments on Gibson's piece.

Gibson accepts Derek Freeman's critique of Margaret Mead's researches in Samoa without pointing out that there are a number of Samoan specialists who are critical of Freeman's analysis.

Kropotkin accepted the theory of unilineal cultural evolution which was first elaborated by Lewis Henry Morgan. This doctrine of a universal evolution of all cultures through a set of fixed and well-defined stages is largely discredited today.

Kropotkin may have committed the error of overgeneralising about so-called 'savages' as being peace loving, but Gibson goes to the other extreme of overgeneralising about their warlike characteristics. Since warfare is a cultural phenomenon it is highly variable in its occurrence.

While Kropotkin wrote about mutual aid, modern anthropologists deal with a good part of this phenomenon under the heading of reciprocity, a topic Gibson scarcely considers, but one which is essential to the understanding of the issues he raises.

Gibson says neither Bushman (San) nor Eskimos (Inuit) had means for storing excess wealth. The Bushman did not need to store excess wealth. They collected fruit, nuts, berries and roots from their surroundings according to a schedule which ensured continuing access to such resources throughout the year. Meat in some form was generally always available particularly as they shared their kills. The Eskimos traditionally dried fish and meat. They buried fish to decay and maintained ice cellars for frozen fish and meat. But lack of means storage does not explain reciprocity. The point is that reciprocity is a characteristic of every human society and as Gibson says it incurs a moral debt. From a sociobiological point of view I suppose reciprocity would be explained as a derivative of the altruistic gene. But that does not explain why

seem to suggest that they may have some broad genetic basis. At the same time whether or not there are one or more genes for altruism or other similar behavioural attributes and what type of gene they might be remains purely conjectural since no one has as yet isolated them. Secondly, even if there were such genes, we still could not say that they in any way explain how it is that we have such a myriad of varying expressions of, for instance, altruism in the human species. We cannot in other words reduce the observable human behaviour to a biological explanation. Genetics may be the foundation stone, but it is the historically derived and learned ideas – culture – which creates the complex edifice which thereby allows us to understand the variety of human behaviour around the globe. We require the concept of culture to explain how it is that altruism can be expressed in such a multitude of forms.

Finally, sociobiologists place great emphasis on their 'explanation' that traits persist because they have survival value for the species or for certain gene combinations. But what really does such an explanation tell us? I believe that sociobiology betrays the same problems as the older and largely discredited functionalism. That is, the 'explanation' is not only reductionist, but also an *ex post facto* or 'after the fact' argument. And it is above all a circular argument, a trait survives because it persists. Among other things, we are offered no account as to why in a given case any one of several alternatives might not be just as viable since such an account would not be a biological-genetic one, but a cultural historical one. At the same time it adds little to our understanding to observe that humans have, for

end, to be no real answer, and landless ex-servicemen were, in the late 1940s, still being imprisoned for land seizures; whilst ownership patterns in the 1990s are little changed from those of the 1880s.

By the early 1880s conditions in the Highlands and Islands were extremely difficult. The legal rights of crofters and cottars were almost non-existent; housing conditions were appalling; the East Coast fishing, on which many depended to supplement the meagre living on crofts, was depressed; and the entire community suffered from landlessness and congestion. The latter problem affected both crofters and cottars alike. It is difficult to be precise about the exact differences between these two groups, but G.B. Clark, a leading campaigner in the land struggle, defined them as: "the crofter is a small farmer who may live partly by the wages of labour, the cottar is a labourer who may have some share in the soil". Generally speaking, the crofters were in a better economic position than the cottars. However, that was only a relative measure, for the average crofter had access to only one to four acres of arable land, along with a part share in hill pasture, held in common with other members of the township. Under normal conditions that would have enabled a crofter to support some two to four head of cattle, and about fifteen sheep. The poverty of the crofters meant that they were unable to undertake improvements of their arable land, and that it was generally only fit for growing potatoes. Few crofters were able to live off their crofts alone, but they were in an enviable position compared with the largely landless cottars.

Working such small plots of land, the crofters were in no position to meet rent rises. There was no legal protection against excessive rent rises, nor did crofters enjoy any security of tenure. In fact, following the Clearances and the establishment of sheep farming across the region, crofter rents had played an insignificant part in the income of large landowners. Rents for crofters were usually only raised in order to provide an excuse for eviction, whether as part of a general attempt to clear more land, or as a punitive exercise in tenant discipline. Although the period of mass eviction that

had characterised the Clearances was over, evictions still continued at a steady rate, with, for example, sixty families a year being evicted from Skye in the late 1870s. There was no appeal against such evictions, and the prospect of a rent rise followed by homelessness haunted many crofter families. In addition to the complete lack of formal legal rights the crofters and cottars were subjected to continued 'petty' harassment by estate officials. For example, limits of one dog per township were usually imposed, despite the fact that dogs were vital to keep marauding deer off the crops.

Housing conditions were abysmal. Most families still lived in 'black houses', long, low buildings, without windows or chimneys, and shared with cattle. Few lived in the marginally better 'white house', that boasted a primitive chimney, small windows, and was generally lime-washed. Cottars fared even worse, many of them living in driftwood shacks on small pieces of land lent to them by their more fortunate neighbours. Uncertain of their tenancy rights, and lacking money, crofters and cottars were both unable and unwilling to improve their homes which might at any moment cease to be theirs.

The lack of land forced crofters to raise extra income, often by fishing. On the West Coast inshore fishing was normal. However, the almost complete lack of harbours and slipways, combined with the smallness of the crofters' boats, made fishing a dangerous task. From 1850 to 1885, 292 Lewismen drowned whilst fishing. The lack of safe harbours hit home in the bad winter of 1881-2, when a single storm destroyed crops and over 1,200 Skye boats. For the cottars, fishing meant the East Coast herring industry. This had proved a lucrative source of income for much of the 1870s, but by the early 1880s the herring industry was in recession, and the introduction of new payment practices meant that earnings in the 1884 season were as low as £1, and the cottars had to beg their way home.

The people themselves had a very clear idea of the causes of their sufferings. Historically, the Clearances stood as a great divide between a happy past and a hard present. There was an almost

## Correspondence

To the editors of *The Raven*:

I would like to comment on Peter Gibson's article, 'Kropotkin, Mutual Aid and Selfish Genes' and particularly the theory of sociobiology which he advocates. In my book, *Culture: The Human Way* (Western Publs., Calgary, Alberta, 1986) I wrote the following:

Since the early 1970's another theory of biological – genetic causation has become popular in certain academic circles. This orientation known as sociobiology tends to a biological reductionism especially to the extent that its less cautious protagonists see genetic programming as an adequate explanation for human behaviour.

We have noted that all humans share certain very general kinds of behaviour in common. These are universals, in other words. We note that all humans are 'social'; they can be aggressive as well as 'altruistic'. Sociobiologists contend that important features of human behaviour are genetically programmed. They argue, for example, that there is a gene for altruism and it has survival value since by altruistic acts one helps his kinsmen so that they multiply and in so doing increase the bearers of genes similar to one's own.

That certain important human behaviours are both universal and appear to have survival value would

post-war years of direct government provision for land settlement. Opponents of these officially-sponsored ventures did not hesitate to describe them as 'utopian'. Their supporters were obliged to present them as potentially viable in commercial terms. Between the two were the actual participants, living out their own aspirations for a life on the land.

universal belief that the problems of overcrowded land, bad housing, dependence on fishing, low cattle prices, and lack of security of tenure all stemmed from the Clearances. To a large extent this view was correct, and in any event it was a widespread belief. Of great significance was the continuing validity of pre-Clearance cultural values amongst the crofting community. Despite the fact that crofters had always paid rent for their land, they had never seen it as a payment for land use, rather it had been seen as a tribute to the Clan Chieftain. The land itself was seen as the property of the community at large, not the property of a single man. This view of communal land holding meant that the Clearances were seen as an illegal act, and the private property rights of landlords were similarly viewed as being based on an alien tradition.

New economic circumstances increased the pressure on crofters and cottars in the early years of the 1880s. Poor harvests, low cattle prices, the collapse of the East Coast fishing, and events like the 1881/2 storms on Skye pushed the community towards conditions not far removed from the famine years of the 1840s. The early 1880s also brought new pressures, but also opportunities, for the landlords. With the new trade in Australasian and North American sheep, landlords found that their sheep-based economy was, for the first time, under threat. Sheep prices fell, and landlords were unable to find replacements for their farmers who had gone bankrupt. But just as the wider economy threatened their prosperity, so did it provide a new opportunity, in the form of deer. The establishment of the mature industrial economy further south, in the central belt and in England, meant that a new leisured class had arisen, a class that was keen to spend part of its time in the Highlands, hunting deer. Landlords were quick to respond, and where sheep had once replaced people, so deer replaced sheep, and more people. The opening years of the decade saw a dramatic increase in the seizure of pastures, and increased numbers of rent rises and evictions, all for the extension of the deer forests. This was to prove the catalyst for the land war.

Although the early 1870s had seen isolated resistance to evictions, like that in Brenera on Lewis, in 1874, the Leckmelm affair of 1879 set the pattern for the war itself. The attempts of Alexander Pirie to turn his estate near Ullapool into a deer forest, evicting crofters in the process, quickly became a cause célèbre that held public attention for most of the year. This time the resisting crofters had a new ally in the shape of the Federation of Celtic Societies, that linked expatriate Highlanders in Glasgow, Edinburgh and London into an effective national voice for the crofting community. Pirie was forced to abandon his plans, only to try again in late 1880, when he faced the same opposition, and was forced to abandon his plans permanently. The pattern had been set, effective and united resistance to rent rises and evictions by the crofters themselves, combined with political pressure in key cities, especially London, by a politicised cultural movement.

A tour of Skye in 1881 by John Murdoch, a leading land campaigner who had links with the successful Irish Land League, and owned the campaigning *The Highlander* paper, seems to have helped galvanise Skye crofters into action. In February 1882 crofters there began the Braes rent strike, and made demands for the return of grazing land that they had previously had access to. Lord Macdonald's attempt to break the strike by attempting evictions led to confrontation, when 100 men met the sheriff's officer and burnt the writs. This event was followed by the arrival of Sheriff Ivory, 50 Glasgow police and 19 Skye police. Their attempt to take arrested men from the Braes led to the violent clashes celebrated as the 'Battle of the Braes'. The 'battle' was covered widely by the press, and the Highlands and Islands suddenly became newsworthy. The success of the Glendale protesters acted as a spur for others throughout the region, and, fearing a general rent strike throughout Skye, the Lord Advocate appealed to London for military aid, which, at that stage, was not forthcoming. A potato blight and crop failures drove many into declaring rent strikes in the winter of 1882/3, simply because they could not pay.

in 1905, Rider Haggard, the novelist and agricultural reformer, was commissioned to report to the government on land settlement ventures. He was equally impressed, commenting approvingly on what he saw as the "kind but strict discipline" with which the colony was run, and explained that:

A man is raised in his grade if he works well and satisfactorily and his general conduct and character and conduct are proved to be good. If he is raised to this higher class dormitory he is also raised to a higher class dietary and receives food of rather better quality and more ample in quantity.<sup>38</sup>

At the further end of Essex, at Boxted, north of Colchester, the Salvation Army was enabled in 1906, to institute a different kind of land settlement as a result of a legacy. The site of 400 acres was divided into eighty plots averaging five acres. The intention was to provide a house on each with initial capital, manures and seeds, as well as tree-fruit and soft-fruit. A successful grower from the Vale of Evesham was one of the first settlers and it was hoped that his expertise would inspire others who were "all agriculturists, or connected in some way with the land; 40 per cent, however, though country-bred, are coming back from town life", according to Louisa Jebb, reporting in 1907. She explained that "The distribution of the produce will be made an object of special attention. A society of the growers will be formed, and the produce will be collected, graded and distributed as a whole".<sup>39</sup>

By the time of the first world war, almost all these communitarian aspirations, from the most anarchic to the most regulated and authoritarian, had come to an end. Twenty years of much-publicised experimentation provided the background for twenty

<sup>38</sup> H. Rider Haggard, *The Poor and the Land* (1905) p.128, cited by Jan Marsh, op cit, p.129.

<sup>39</sup> Louisa Jebb. *The Small Holdings of England* (London: John Murray, 1907)

onment, drunkenness, beggary and brothels, thousands of drowning souls are being rescued by the officers of the Salvation Army. The lighthouse represents the City Colony, to which these persons are taken and offered temporary shelter and training. They are then sent to the broad and leafy Farm Colony, occupying the central place on the page, there to work, according to the legend, in its 'Villages, Co-operative Farms, Mills and Factories ... far away from the neighbourhood of the public house'. From Whitechapel-by-the-Sea' and other nearby ports, the rescued proceed to the Colony Across the Sea, pictured somewhat remotely on the edge of the chart but promising 'on the one hand, plenty of work, and on the other, abundance of food'.<sup>36</sup>

Part of the money that flowed in was spent by the Salvation Army on the purchase of three vacant farms in Essex, at Hadleigh between Benfleet and Southend, where land prices were at their lowest. There were three thousand acres sloping down to the Thames. Down on the rough grazing on the riverside, a brick-works and kilns were established, and on an adjoining site was the settlement for inebriates. When another Booth, the celebrated social investigator Charles Booth, visited the place, he reported that "On one hill-side, beautifully placed, is the poultry farm with over 1,500 head of poultry, some of them prize birds ... In other parts of the estate are the fruit gardens and orchards, the vegetable grounds ... The industrial buildings include a well-appointed cow-shed with accommodation for 100 head, piggeries and stores ... There were in residence 250 colonists, and employment could be found for fifty more without further outlay."<sup>37</sup> Ten years later,

<sup>36</sup> Jan Marsh, *op cit*, p.127.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Booth, cited in Peter Keating (editor) *Into Unknown England 1866-1913, Selections from the Social Reformers* (Fontana, 1976) p.112.

In response to these pressures, the government announced, in February 1883, the setting up of a Royal Commission under Lord Napier.

The setting up of the Napier Commission did nothing to stem the tide of protest. The immediate response of Highlanders in London and Edinburgh was to set up the Highland Land Law Reform Association (HLLRA), whilst crofters and cottars began land raids. For example, Milvaig crofters and cottars occupied the Waternish farm in early 1883, and successfully drove off a police assault on their new land. The HLLRA was very active, sending lecturers throughout the region to speak to the people, whilst the crofters and cottars themselves set up the first Highland branch of the association in Glendale. By the end of the year the Home Secretary, Harcourt, had agreed to dispatch gunboats and marines to the Western Isles; they arrived in the new year.

The Napier Commission reported in 1884, and was judged unsatisfactory by the crofters and cottars. Instead, they adopted their 'Dingwall Programme', calling for a land court to oversee a compulsory redistribution of land to crofters and cottars. At the same time, the HLLRA agreed to stand candidates at the forthcoming general election, in which many crofters would, for the first time, be eligible to vote.

The period from 1885-1888 saw the high watermark of the land movement, but it was also a period in which the previous solidarity of the campaigners began to crack. The HLLRA was successful in the December 1885 general election, sending four Crofter MPs to Westminster. By then there were 90 Highland branches of the movement, with a membership of over 10,000 crofters and cottars. The Liberal government had tried to introduce a Napier-style bill, but had collapsed before it was passed. This added further impetus to direct action protest in the Highlands and Islands. In the winter of 1885/6, all of the north-west of the region was on rent strike, acts of intimidation against those suspected of not being pro-HLLRA were frequent, and the destruction of landlords' and

crofters' property by HLLRA supporters was widespread. Responding to the election of the Crofter MPs, and the violence, the new government passed the Crofters' Act in 1886. Despite the establishment of a Crofters' Commission to adjudicate in fair rents, the Act was widely condemned for not tackling the twin problem of overcrowding and land hunger. In response to the Act the HLLRA conference at Bonar Bridge in September pledged to continue the fight for the compulsory break-up of sheep farms and deer parks in order to provide land for crofters and cottars.

But this proved to be the swansong of the movement (now renamed the Highland Land League). The government began a new campaign of law enforcement in the area. This was opened with the arrival of 50 police, and 250 marines on Tiree to arrest eight crofters, five of whom were sentenced to six months each in Edinburgh. By December 1886, even Skye had been quietened by the strong military and police presence. Further, the operations of the Crofters' Commission proved to be more favourable than the crofters had imagined, thus driving a wedge between the previous crofter/cottar alliance. The first Crofter Commission rent adjudications were made in January 1887, reducing rents by 30% at Waternish, and 20% on the Macleod estates. Within the HLL a new struggle had begun, with a faction, led by Angus Sutherland, trying to deliver the movement into the hands of the Liberal Party, something that he eventually succeeded in doing. But conditions were still desperate for the crofters and cottars. That desperation drove them to mount the 'Great Deer Raid' on Park, Lewis, in November. In three days the crofters and cottars killed large numbers of deer, thus showing their preference for land for people, rather than deer. All this was reported by journalists of the *North British Daily Mail*, who accompanied the men. Lewis now took over the mantle of the leading area in the protest, with Lewismen being involved in a vicious clash with Royal Scots, Marines and police in January 1888, when 14 men were arrested. However, Lewis apart, it was clear that other land raids were almost without exception the work of the landless

Green identified the difficulty that besets every small grower, whether individual or collective: that of effective marketing. "I was shown how the system of co-operative distribution in sending away the produce of all in bulk to market had been perfected, so I was told, 'up to the last button'; but what was the use of that when the produce was sent to Covent Garden on the chance of what it might fetch? ... In many instances produce hardly covered the cost of carriage ... Co-operation merely perfected a method for making the fortunes of Covent Garden salesmen. This might have been avoided had co-operative distributors come to the rescue of co-operative producers." He concluded that: "The administration of these smallholdings, and the care taken in the education of the children in the splendid open-air school, is all admirable. Mechanism here seems faultless; but somehow one cannot help feeling that the spirit of associated labour is lacking."<sup>34</sup> The venture was eventually broken up into individual holdings, but a visit seventy years later found that "Today the landscape of Mayland is still predominantly one of nurseries and smallholdings with a large number of glasshouses, the legacy of Smith and Fels. There have been few external changes to Smith's house 'Homestead', and on the roadside can be bought fruit and vegetables from the formerly hostile soil."<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile yet another best-selling book with a different standpoint was advocating the resettlement of the empty countryside. In 1890, William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, published *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, a devastating account of the condition of what he called the 'submerged tenth' of the urban population. He included a coloured folding picture to illustrate the way out through land settlement. As Jan Marsh describes it:

From a turbulent sea at the bottom of the picture tossing with the evils of homelessness, starvation, impris-

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, pp.261-3.

<sup>35</sup> Dennis Hardy, *op cit*, pp.118-9



went ahead with the purchase of the 600-acre Nipsells Farm at Mayland, close to Thomas Smith's land, with the aim of providing a 'long-term opportunity' rather than 'short-term relief. Who could he have found better qualified than Smith to manage this enterprise?

So Thomas Smith became 'supervisor of the Fels Small Holdings, Manager of the Fels Fruit Farm, Windmill Nurseries and French Garden'. He retained his socialist sympathies and contacts - his second book was dedicated to Fel's efforts to break down the monopoly in land - but his comrades in the original venture had long departed. The Tolstoyan journal *The New Order* attributed its failure as a co-operative venture to pre-occupation with material circumstances ...<sup>32</sup>

A smallholding advocate, F.E. Green, reported in 1912 that it had not succeeded, "but then who could expect to find a French garden situated four and a half miles from a railway station a commercial success?", and he found that most of the smallholders were deeply in debt to Mr Fels:

Many of these settlers came from Woolwich and other urban districts, and yet one cannot lay the blame altogether on the unfitness of the men. In my opinion, Mayland should never have been cut into five-acre fruit farms, but rather into thirty or forty-acre stock-raising holdings. A life which presents to the townsman six months of digging heavy, dirty land, unrelieved by any other winter occupation, is a sore test to the most ardent of earth lovers.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Dennis Hardy, *op cit*, p.118.

<sup>33</sup> F.E. Green, *The Awakening of England* (London, Thomas Nelson, 1912) pp. 258-60.

cottars. The crofters had been split from their allies in the struggle against landlordism. By the end of September the worst of the unrest was over, and the military were withdrawn from the region, even from Lewis.

In addition to the operation of the Crofters' Commission, the government began a policy of investment in the infrastructure of the region, allocating £61,500 for such work in December of 1890. But that, of course, did not address the cottars' need for land. Cottars occupied the derelict township of Ornsay, and continued to destroy fences and dykes, especially on Uist. However, the land-hungry cottars could expect little assistance from the HLL, which had become merely a part of the Liberal organisation in the region, whilst its leading lights stood as various HLL/Liberal candidates in the 1892 general election. The HLL finally split, and the two most radical leaders, G.B. Clark and D.H. MacFarlane, attempted to revive the old HLLRA. But in 1895 the HLLRA was forced to cancel its annual conference. The crofters, with their new tenancy laws, had abandoned the movement, and the cottars were left completely isolated, and still land-hungry. Sporadic cottar land seizures occurred in North Uist, Bornish and Ormaclett in 1901, Tiree and Vatersay in 1902, and again in 1906 and 1907 when crofts were built by the land raiders. The pre-war Liberal government did attempt some legislation aimed at helping the cottars, but the House of Lords killed all attempts at settling the cottars' grievances, and industrial and urban concerns had greater claims on the Liberals. Even the establishment of the Board of Agriculture, and the Scottish Land Court failed to meet the hopes of the landless that land would be compulsorily transferred on a large scale to those that needed it - something that no government contemplated. The Board was empowered to create new crofts, but its slowness in doing so led to a fresh round of cottar land raids in 1913 and 1914. For the cottars, little seemed to have changed.

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higher the price. Smith therefore steadily moved to cultivation under glass, producing strawberries, lettuce, tomatoes and even melons — all crops whose wholesale price was good even with small quantities. Gradually he acquired the knowledge and skill to make his holding into a thriving business. Later he published handbooks on intensive cultivation, although the picture they give of a scientifically managed market garden with intensive manuring, acres of cold frame, carefully regulated cloches and a large packing shed is perhaps not the pastoral image Smith or others had before them when setting off back to the land.<sup>30</sup>

But it was exactly what Peter Kropotkin had in mind, with his faith in intensive horticulture and his preference for the combined efforts of independent families. When Smith wrote a manual on what was known as *French Gardening*, which appeared in 1909, it had an introduction by Kropotkin.<sup>31</sup>

Smith's rare success attracted the attention of an American philanthropist, Joseph Fels, founder of the Fels-Naptha Soap Company. George Lansbury had drawn him into collaboration with the Boards of Poor Law Guardians in London, under the provisions of the Unemployed Workmen's Act, which granted government money to various local unemployment committees to enable them to find work. With his aid Lansbury set up 'labour colonies' at Hollesley Bay in Suffolk and at Laindon in Essex, where the work of 200 men, Lansbury claimed, "turned what was derelict land into orchards and gardens". Lansbury and Fels were preparing further schemes when a change of government early in 1906 brought a new president, John Burns, to the Local Government Board, who forbade the investment of public money on schemes for the resettlement of unemployed men on the land. Undeterred, Fels

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<sup>30</sup> Jan Marsh, *op cit*, p.116.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Smith, *French Gardening* (London, Utopia Press, 1909)

The same year that saw the instigation of the Clousden Hill colony, inspired by a book, witnessed yet another Essex venture, similarly the result of propaganda from the political left. Robert Blatchford had started the socialist journal *The Clarion* in 1891, and between 1892 and 1893 he serialised in it his *Merrie England* which, published as a book, sold nearly a million copies in the next few years.<sup>28</sup> Blatchford called for a revival of small-scale horticulture and included an idyllic description of a family living in rural bliss on three acres in Essex. This induced a Manchester printer, Thomas Smith, to change his occupation and to move with his family in 1895 to eleven acres of heavy clay at Mayland, near Althome, and to advertise for fellow colonists.

Although it was known locally as the 'new Jerusalem' the community achieved little success in its early days, either as an agricultural or as a socialist experiment. Smith himself was new to the land, and most of the early settlers came from urban occupations (clerks, schoolmasters, shop assistants, engineers and warehousemen). For a while Smith returned to Manchester to supplement his income, and from time to time took other jobs locally in Essex ...<sup>29</sup>

Jan Marsh, in her study of the 'Back to the Land' movement, contrasts Smith with other would-be land colonists, for his pragmatism and resourcefulness. He did not feel compromised by getting outside employment, and was also capable of learning from his experience:

The most profitable produce at Mayland was tomatoes and other salad vegetables, and the earlier the crop the

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<sup>28</sup> Publishers' Introduction to the new edition of Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England* (Brighton, Journeyman Press, 1976)

<sup>29</sup> Dennis Hardy, *op cit*, p.115.

## *Bev Nichols*

# Nature Conservation as a Land Use

In modern Britain nature conservation is thoroughly embedded in the political system as a legitimate land use in its own right, and has to compete for space with modern agriculture, urban sprawl, industrial development, road construction, and even recreation and tourism to find full expression. Nowhere is this competition felt more keenly than in the over-developed south-east of England. But throughout the land the identification of good wildlife areas and their subsequent protection by various means exercises the minds and pockets of government, voluntary organisations and individuals. From an anarchist perspective it is clear, however, that centralised government and the policies and structures it adopts cannot maintain the natural quality of the land, and in that context others are doomed to failure.

## A Cultural Imperative

Nature conservation may be defined here as the maintenance of the diversity of species and habitats. One argument which has long been rehearsed in support of this effort, by generations of 'environmentalists' and more recently by the Green movements, is that we are dependent on our natural environment and as we destroy it so we destroy our own capacity for life. It is an argument not unfamiliar to anarchists, for whom sustainable living within the con-

straints of ecological systems, to use the modern idiom, has long been part of our philosophy. That dependence is clearly demonstrated in tribal cultures, where all the resources for living are derived directly from, say the rainforest which they inhabit. But in the simplified ecosystems of lowland England it is more difficult to demonstrate. It is surely nonsense to suggest that as a result of the extinction of the Large Blue Butterfly or Bog Orchid our life support system will collapse around us.

There is, however a stronger argument; one which has been consistently underplayed in order to find a rational, scientific reasoning for the diversion of government money towards nature conservation. That is, that we feel it is somehow *right* to conserve nature, that we simply *like* to see the flowers, birds, insects and other wildlife which inhabit these islands, and that our lives would be poorer in their absence. Whether this is considered in the context of deep philosophy or superficial amenity, there is undeniably a strong cultural imperative for the safeguarding of what is often called our 'wildlife heritage'. That imperative has impressed itself upon the legislature to an extent almost unparalleled in any other European state.

## Statutory Accommodation

The focus for the British government's effort in nature conservation is the notification of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). This designation, applied to the most important wildlife sites in the country, has been in existence since 1949. However it was not until the passing of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and its subsequent amendments that SSSIs were afforded greater protection, and the selection procedures were made more rigorous. Before April 1991 SSSIs were administered by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC). This quango achieved a quite outstanding measure of success, despite lumbering under the weight of bureau-

The Clousden Hill venture aroused enormous interest and a stream of visitors from far and wide, and suffered, just as Kropotkin had feared, an embarrassment of recruits, all of them anxious to change the rules: "day after day was spent in framing sets of rules",<sup>25</sup> wrote one colonist, Frank Starr, who was probably a subsequent influence on Allan Clark's efforts to set up a land colony at Daisy Hill, Poulton-le-Fylde, near Blackpool. At one stage a group of Tolstoyans arrived and insisted that working collectively was an impingement on individual freedom. They finally left for Canada. Frank Kapper had a genius for publicity and continued to spread an absurdly rosy picture of the success of the colony until his sudden departure in 1897 to start another colony near Rayleigh in Essex.<sup>26</sup> Its modern historian Nigel Todd has striven to separate fact from fantasy in the story that ended with the bankruptcy in 1902 of its successor, the Clousden Hill Co-operative Nurseries. In his view, the real hero was William Key, its astonishingly tolerant benefactor, who was, by 1911, busily involved in Tom Mann's campaign for industrial syndicalism and workers' control of industry. Todd reaches a benign conclusion about the venture. Among other incidental benefits:

It confronted the co-operative movement with a need to look again at its own fundamental principles. It provided a focus for an anarchist movement struggling to defend libertarian ideas against the deadening grey-ness of labour bureaucracy and the reduction of political philosophies to lifeless dogmas. And it made some people happy for at least part of their lives. All in all, it was not a bad balance sheet.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Salveson, 'Getting Back to the Land: The Daisy Colony Experiment' in *Labour's Turning Point in the North-West 1880-1914*, North West Labour History Society 1984), pp.31-36.

<sup>26</sup> *Reynolds Newspaper*, 17th October 1897, cited by Todd, *op cit*.

<sup>27</sup> Nigel Todd, *op cit*, page 53.

Kapper and Key. 'Your scheme undoubtedly has several points, which undoubtedly give it more chance of success than most previous experiments'. He then praised the 'wise decision of starting intensive culture under the guidance of experienced gardeners'. And he suggested that successful communities should be located near to the colonists' home area to avoid social isolation, and that barrack-like living conditions should be avoided in favour of combined efforts by independent families. Colonies should also reject internal authority structures.<sup>23</sup>

Kropotkin's letter to the founders of the Clousden Hill colony raised an issue of enormous relevance for community ventures: the situation of women. It was important, he wrote, to

do all possible for reducing household work to the lowest minimum ... In most communities this point was awfully neglected. The women and the girls remained in the new society as they were in the old — slaves of the community: Arrangements to reduce as much as possible the incredible amount of work which women uselessly spend in the rearing-up of children, as well as in the household work, are, in my opinion, as essential to the success of the community as the proper arrangements of the fields, the greenhouses, and the agricultural machinery. Even more. But while every community dreams of having the most perfect agricultural or industrial machinery, it seldom pays attention to the squandering of the forces of the house slave, the women.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Todd, *op cit* p.19, Citing Kropotkin's letter, published with his permission in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 20th February 1895.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

cratic legislation, advanced not least through the enthusiasm and commitment of its individual staff members. Nature conservation was placed firmly on the political agenda in both national and local government.

The approach of the NCC was, at times, inevitably confrontational, forced by the opposing pressures of restrictive legislation, continued industrialisation and state funding of agriculture and forestry, and the laissez-faire attitude to development in the countryside which reigned supreme during the Thatcher years. This approach won few friends amongst farmers and landowners, but it was in Scotland that resentment ran deepest. Here the small but wealthy and influential landowning elite of the large Scottish estates was continually aggrieved at the relative success of the NCC in forcing major issues.

One such issue was the afforestation of the Flow Country in Caithness and Sutherland, a vast area of peatlands of immense conservation value, some of the best parts of which were disappearing under government grant-aided blanket planting of alien conifers. Finally, in a scheme hatched between the incumbent 'environment' secretary Nicholas Ridley, the Scottish Office and landowning Scottish Tory peers, the NCC was split. Since April 1991 the NCC's functions have been carried out by separate country conservation agencies, named English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, and the Countryside Council for Wales.

While this may superficially appear as a success for devolution and the break-up of a large bureaucracy, the reality is that the scheme was designed specifically to weaken nature conservation effort. Furthermore, the division of research into nature conservation along borders not recognised by nature is nonsensical. A year on it still remains to be seen whether the new councils can match the influence of their predecessor, particularly in Scotland. The signs are not all good.

Despite the split, the SSSI system remains largely unchanged, although each of the three country agencies is keen to present far

more of a listening ear to their various friends and detractors. There are now around 5,300 SSSIs in Britain, covering around 8% of the country's land area down to the low tide line. A fair proportion of this area is accounted for by a relatively small number of large sites, such as The Wash, Abernethy Forest and the Dyfi Estuary which each cover many hundreds of hectares. The vast majority of sites, however, particularly in lowland England, are quite small, representing the fragments of decent wildlife habitat which are left once modern agriculture and development have taken their share of the land.

SSSIs are selected on the basis of their representativeness of good quality wildlife habitat, or for their concentrations of particular plant and animal species. Frequently, of course, individual sites meet both these criteria. Only the best sites are selected, and together they represent the minimum area required to adequately conserve Britain's flora and fauna. Owners and occupiers of land of SSSI quality are notified of the fact, and given a list of operations, such as ploughing and draining, which if carried out might damage or destroy the wildlife interest. They must then consult with their conservation council, should they propose any of these operations, or face prosecution. All owners and occupiers are bound by this, whether they are private landowners, voluntary nature conservation groups, local authorities or government departments. Not surprisingly many landowners see the SSSI designation as an unwarranted interference and threat to their livelihood, rather than a badge of merit in recognition of their good land management.

## Money for Nothing

It is on the question of threat to livelihood that the SSSI system attracts the greatest criticism, not from the farmers themselves, but from the conservation lobby. For agreeing not to destroy SSSIs, landowners are entitled to compensation payments called 'manage-

anarchists who tended to have a soft spot for the co-operatives, seeing them as in essence voluntary, open associations of consumers and producers, successfully eliminating the private profit motive but hamstrung by bureaucratic leadership.<sup>22</sup>

One of the debaters at this Congress was a London anarchist, John C. Kenworthy, urging delegates to support voluntary co-operation on the land rather than farms that just happened to be managed by retail co-operative societies. He set up a 'fringe' meeting on this theme, and there Frank Kapper met another pioneer, William Key, who had been a seaman for twelve years, a miner for eight, and a publican and part-time insurance agent for another twelve. In setting up their co-operative colony, they wrote to Kropotkin, then living at Bromley in Kent (where a Blue Plaque erected by English Heritage in 1989 commemorates his residence) asking him to act as treasurer. He replied that, "I am the least appropriate person, as I was never able to keep accounts of my own earnings and spendings" but was ready to offer the advice they had sought in a valuable statement of the standard 'mainstream' anarchist position towards community ventures:

In general terms, he 'had little confidence in schemes of communistic communities started under present conditions', preferring anarchists to conduct propaganda among the masses. Kropotkin warned about dangers posed for the venture by insufficient funds, influxes of too many newcomers at times of prosperity in the colony, any failure to appreciate the need for hard work, and frustration that might arise out of the limited social life in small colonies. Yet Kropotkin was not entirely negative. By no means should I like to discourage you and your comrades', he wrote to

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<sup>22</sup> Todd, *op cit*, pp.8-9

ward Carpenter.<sup>19</sup> Not far from his home near Sheffield, he inspired the Norton Colony established outside that city in 1896 by Hugh Mapleton. It survived until the lease expired in 1900, but is recalled by the name of the health food firm that Mapleton subsequently founded.<sup>20</sup>

In these 'Land Colonies' there were inevitable disagreements between rival versions of the Good Life. The Clousden Hill Free Communist and Co-operative Colony was established on a twenty acre farm north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1895.<sup>21</sup> Its founder was a Czech tailor Frank Kapper at a time when there was intense interest in the North East in the potentialities of communal intensive farming. Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* and his articles in the *Nineteenth Century*,

drew attention to the potential of applying artificial heating systems, greenhouses (or 'glass culture') and new fertilisers, to land cultivation. *Freedom* serialised an English translation of *The Conquest of Bread* in 1893-94, and anarchists in the North East of England were keen to get hold of copies of the book. Coincidentally, the issue of reorganising agriculture within a democratic framework was raised in the North East by the Co-operative Movement. In May 1894 the annual 'parliament' of the retail and producer co-operatives — the Co-operative Congress — met at Sunderland, and on the agenda was a special paper dealing with 'Co-operative Agriculture'. This attracted the attention of

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<sup>19</sup> For a modern assessment of Edward Carpenter see Sheila Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life* (London: Pluto Press, 1977)

<sup>20</sup> Dennis Hardy *op cit* pp.184-7. Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England from 1880 to 1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), pp.101-2.

<sup>21</sup> Described in Hardy *op cit*, pp.166-7, 180-4 and in Marsh *op cit*, pp.100-1. The fullest account is Nigel Todd, *Roses and Revolutionists: The Story of the Clousden Hill Free Communist and Co-operative Colony, 1894-1902* (London: People's Publications, 1986).

ment agreements' calculated on the basis of profits foregone. It is a form of bribery which finds no equal anywhere else in planning and development control. Property owners are not paid compensation to refrain from destroying listed buildings, for instance, nor are developers entitled to handouts if planning permission for a new housing estate is refused.

Management agreements on SSSIs are almost entirely negative, and do not actually encourage the positive management of land for nature conservation. They are also incredibly expensive, and open to abuse. One wealthy Scottish landowner bought two large SSSIs at Glen Lochay, and then presented the NCC with plans for the expansion of sheep farming and deer stalking. The final compensation claim amounted to nearly £1 million, more than the initial cost of the land! The system is about as fair as the Poll Tax, benefiting the wealthiest most and the poorest least. Furthermore, those SSSI owners who do actually wish to nurture wildlife on their land are not entitled to a penny.

The compensation principle embodied in the SSSI legislation illustrates the enormous influence of farming and landowning interest on central government, an influence which has very much guided rural policy over the last fifty years. Farmers have always been keen to present themselves as the 'guardians of the countryside' and are irritated when not acknowledged as such. It is a claim which grates the sensibilities of those of us who have witnessed the steady destruction of important wildlife habitat. The sheer scale of that destruction since 1945 is representative of the failure of the government to integrate nature conservation with other land uses: 95% of lowland grasslands, 80% of chalk grassland, 40% of lowland heath, 50% of ancient woodland. The list is as endless as it is familiar and is almost entirely due to agricultural development.

## Sectoral Policies: the Site-Based Approach

Meanwhile, government has pursued its nature conservation efforts with an entirely site-based approach, allowing a spatial separation from other land requirements, taking little account of the economic and natural environment in which those sites are found. This accords very well with the overall direction of land use policy in this country which is acutely and explicitly sectoral. Agriculture, forestry, transport, rural development and nature conservation are neatly parcelled, with responsibility divided between ministers. Policies are drawn up and implemented with little or no co-ordination between them, existing in parallel but never integrated.

The question must arise, is the long term survival of our flora and fauna (and environmental quality generally) sustainable under a site-based approach? The answer must surely be no.

In ecological terms, good wildlife habitat which is preserved as islands in hostile surroundings is vulnerable to the effects of that hostility, and to biological fluctuations which cannot be buffered. Clearly the smaller the site, the more deleterious those effects will be, and many SSSIs are indeed very small. In the lowlands good wildlife habitat may only be found in islands, but in the uplands the definition of what is 'good' and what is not is far less distinct. Thus to protect a site with arbitrarily defined boundaries, while allowing all manner of land practices around it, makes little sense. Furthermore, the ecological requirements of some species, such as red kites or otters, are not suited to site-based conservation.

However, perhaps the most persuasive argument against site protection as a means of ensuring conservation of species and habitats, rests in *social* ecology. In Britain, almost without exception, important wildlife habitat is a direct product of the interaction of human activity with the natural environment. Some of the best habitat is that where the human influence of past ages has been pervasive in area but limited in impact, as is the case in 'traditional' land management practices. The resulting vegetation is described

belt, at The Chase, Ashingdon, near Hockley, led by James Evans, keeping goats and growing vegetables on his four-acre plot. Long after the community itself had collapsed, its traces remained, as it was for many decades the home of the radical publisher C.W. Daniel. In 1898 another such group bought 29 acres and three cottages for a total of £700 on a site overlooking the Thames Valley at Wickford, cultivating small plots individually.<sup>16</sup>

Several different streams of radical propaganda coalesced in these attempts to get back to the land. Apart from the Tolstoyans, there were the readers of another Russian, Peter Kropotkin, the geographer who had lived in exile in western Europe since 1876 and whose vision of an anarchist non-governmental society was linked to his faith in the potentiality of small-scale horticulture combined with decentralised industry. His two major books *The Conquest of Bread and Fields, Factories and Workshops* had been published in article form in respected journals like *The Nineteenth Century* as well as in the anarchist and socialist press long before their publication in book form, and his most famous work *Mutual Aid* was a celebration of the propensity towards co-operation, rather than competition, as the key factor in both animal and human evolution.<sup>17</sup> His influence was felt not only by anarchists, but by socialist propagandists like Robert Blatchford in London, or Allan Clark in Bolton, who laid emphasis on the fact that the land had been stolen from the people in order to enslave them to industrial capitalism.<sup>18</sup> Yet another influence was the prolific advocate of the simple life, Ed-

<sup>16</sup> Dennis Hardy, *Alternative Communities in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Longman, 1979)

<sup>17</sup> Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1906), *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (London: Hutchinson, 1899), *Mutual Aid* (London: Heinemann 1902). Modern editions of all these books are obtainable from Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

<sup>18</sup> Allan Clark, *The Effect of the Factory System* (Bolton, 1896), new edition edited by Paul Salvesson (Littleborough, Lancs: George Kelsall, 1986). Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England* (London: Clarion Office, 1893, new edition, Brighton: Journeyman Press, 1976).



It did not appear as a pathetic delusion to the variety of charitable and propagandist organisations of a century ago, advocating the recolonisation of rural England. Quite apart from the desire to stem the 'drift from the land', there was a whole movement of revulsion against the horrors of Victorian industrial society and the hypocrisies of Victorian middle-class life, reflected in the Tolstoyan, socialist and anarchist movements and the cult of the 'simple life'.

For ex-Londoners, south Essex, hit very severely by the depression in agriculture, was the obvious territory. As cereal farmers abandoned their enterprises there were endless forced sales and few buyers. Below an invisible geological line across the county is the heavy clay belt, known to farmers as 'three-horse land'. Bankruptcies hit this area first and there were often no prospective buyers, other than Scottish immigrants, frustrated in their efforts to obtain land at home, moved south, and through sheer hard work were often successful. Speculators like Frederick Francis Ramuz, Mayor of Southend, bought vast areas of south Essex where there were no other purchasers, and subdivided the land into plots advertised to Londoners as sites for their weekend retreats,<sup>15</sup> holiday homes, chicken farms, or, as a last hope, smallholdings.

Into this territory came the new utopians. In 1896 a group of disciples of Tolstoy, including his translator, Aylmer Maude, and his friend the Russian exile Vladimir Tchertkoff, bought ten acres of land at Cocks Clark, near Purleigh. They raised vegetables, planted fruit trees, and in their first year made about 7,000 bricks and built a 100-foot greenhouse, and acquired cows, goats and chickens, as well as a pony and cart to take their produce to market at Maldon, five miles away. By 1899 they were writing to Tolstoy to tell him of the collapse of their experiment. In 1897 another group of Tolstoyan anarchists settled in the heart of the South Essex plotland

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<sup>15</sup> Dennis Hardy and Colin Ward, *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (London: Mansell, 1984)

as 'semi-natural', reflecting both a natural diversity and its dependence on active land management.

The maintenance of the nature conservation value of semi-natural habitats, therefore, is intricately related to the wise management of the land resource. Wise management seeks to gain benefit from the land, without depleting the capacity of that land to give benefit, and is thus truly sustainable. For example, the commons system, which still exists in a few places such as the New Forest, allows for the grazing of animals, the cutting of wood for fuel and construction, and the cutting of herbage for stock feed and bedding. It is no surprise that many commons, with their centuries old tradition of sustainable management, now form some of the most important wildlife sites. Similarly, ancient coppiced and pollarded woodlands, with poles cut on rotations of anything from seven to around thirty years, provide a range of ecological niches not found in the plantations and neglected forests of today. Again, the immense botanical richness of hay meadows and chalk grassland is a direct result of annual mowing and grazing animals.

One thing is clear. The land management which gives rise to the highest environmental quality in wildlife terms is that where human communities are functionally dependent on the natural resources which they find around them. For instance, in one parish one might find coppiced woodland for fuel, hay meadows for grazing and winter feed, flints or stone for walls and reed for thatching. There would be no question of importing large quantities of artificial fertilisers, building materials or food. Such communities are the product of a combination of particular economic and technological circumstances which have largely been swept aside by capitalist land use policies.

Each community, each region is now encouraged and subsidised to specialise in the intensive production of that which it can produce best. The high degree of self-reliance which previously existed has thus been replaced by dependence on a few external

factors, such as international market prices. Where the functional dependence on local resources has disappeared, there has been a consequent decline both in the health of rural communities and in the wellbeing of the land and its ability to support wildlife. Those few sites which retain a semi-natural character frequently exist in an environment which is economically and ecologically hostile. The social conditions which would allow the wise and sustainable use of land have been destroyed.

## Towards Integration

What is missing from successive government policy, and indeed what it is incapable of delivering, is an integrated land use approach. It is only very recently, with the economic and environmental lunacy of existing policies all too apparent, that there has been anything like a reappraisal of direction. A proliferation of government funded schemes is testimony to this. Set Aside, Countryside Stewardship, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, to name a few, offer farmers various payments to limit production and provide certain environmental 'goods'. The irony that farmers are paid to replace hedgerows and meadows that they were paid to destroy twenty years ago has not gone unnoticed.

These schemes, however, are very much window dressing, helping to peg the decline in farm incomes, and function as an effective tool in quelling the disquiet of a politically influential minority. A tinkering with the market system and the planting of a few trees on the motorway hard shoulder are not an answer to the thorough destruction of the rural environment. With the gradual breakdown of the distinction between rural character and the excesses of urban culture in the late Twentieth Century, the policy of attempting to maintain good wildlife sites becomes even less viable.

The anarchist vision is of course very different. Self-reliant communities visibly dependent on the natural resources of their local-

tlement at the end of the nineteenth century. It was promoted in one effort after another to provide a livelihood as growers for displaced farm labourers, reformed inebriates, urban paupers, soldiers returning from the First World War, and the inter-war long-term unemployed.

Were these dreams utopian? As long ago as 1845 it had been argued that the case for allotments was "moral rather than economic",<sup>10</sup> and in his study of *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, the historian Martin J. Wiener observes that "in England the later nineteenth-century countryside was 'empty' and available for use as an integrating cultural symbol. The less practically important rural England became, the more easily could it come to stand simply for an alternative and complementary set of values, a psychic balance wheel."<sup>11</sup> His conclusion is supported by a battery of research and 'practical' proposals for agricultural reform through the creation of smallholdings "despite the lack of grassroots demand in England (such as certainly existed in Ireland) for such land redistribution"<sup>12</sup> He cites one investigator's view that the "economic case for smallholdings was weak, and that the policy was advocated and supported for social rather than economic reasons"<sup>13</sup> as well as the opinion of the sociologist O.R. McGregor that "The pathetic delusion that some sort of land settlement scheme contained the secret cure for the ills of industrial society had great survival value".<sup>14</sup>

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*and Vegetable Growing* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972)

<sup>10</sup> *The Penny Magazine*, 1845, quoted by Bridget Wheeler, 'Allotment hold' Town & Country Planning Vol 60, No 6, June 1991, pp.168-9.

<sup>11</sup> Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge University Press, 1981) p.49.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p.181

<sup>13</sup> J.R. Fisher, 'Public Opinion and Agriculture, 1875-1900.' Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Hull, 1972, cited by Wiener, *op cit*

<sup>14</sup> O.R. McGregor, Introduction to Lord Ernie, *English Farming Past and Present*, 6th edition (London 1961, p.cxxxvii) cited by Wiener, *op cit*

*Economy*, describing Flemish husbandry: "When the land is cultivated entirely by the spade and no horses are kept, a cow is kept for every three acres of land."<sup>6</sup> Collings had a winning line, immediately adopted by Joseph Chamberlain, whose *Radical Programme* declared that, "Besides the creation of smallholdings, local authorities should have compulsory powers to purchase land where necessary at a fair market price ... for the purpose of garden and field allotments, to be let at fair rents to all labourers who might desire them, in plots up to one acre of arable and three or four acres of pasture".<sup>7</sup>

The subsequent quarter of a century saw a series of parliamentary Acts designed to enable or oblige local authorities to provide smallholdings at one end of the scale, and allotments at the other.<sup>8</sup> Somewhere between the two aims: between the small tenant farmer and the spare-time vegetable gardener, was the ideal of Land Settlement, the break-down of farms or estates into a series of horticultural holdings, with a family house, or communal housing, earning a living through growing for the local market. This was, of course, a long-established commercial activity in the outer suburbs of every city, with a considerable body of expertise in the provision of every seasonal crop.<sup>9</sup> The impetus of the land settlement movement was to make use of rapid railway transport and enable new varieties of growers to win a livelihood, taking advantage of the availability of cheap land as traditional farming suffered the consequences of cheap imports of cereals and meat products.

But these physical and economic circumstances were simply pegs on which to hang a whole series of aspirations for land set-

ities, rather than on vast, moribund institutions, provide a means both for the fulfilment of human life and for the sustainable existence of other organisms with which we share our planet. That is a consistent, if not always explicit feature of anarchism, found in our ideas and action. Kropotkin provided us with his blueprint, and William Morris, though not an anarchist, suggested a close approximation of an anarchist society founded on principles of sound land management.

In formulating an anarchist approach to land use, the almost spiritual respect for nature given voice in the philosophy of Deep Ecology is as relevant as the suggested interdependence of our environment and social ecology found in the writings of Murray Bookchin. SSSIs and the other areas of land which have at least to some extent escaped the depredations of capitalist industrial society, provide reservoirs of the biodiversity on which sustainable living will depend and deserve our attention. The destruction of those storehouses limits our options for the future.

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<sup>6</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (1848)

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Chamberlain et al, *The Radical Programme* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885)

<sup>8</sup> Newlin Russell Smith, *Land for the Small Man* (Morningside Heights, New York: King's Crown Press, 1946)

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Webber, *Market Gardening: The History of Commercial Flower, Fruit*

## Colin Ward

# Colonising the Land: Utopian Ventures

If a single slogan had to be chosen to epitomise the hopes of utopian ventures in twentieth century Britain, the words would be 'Back to the Land'. This is as true of communities of production, where the intention was to practise the crafts in combination with food production, as of communities of spiritual endeavour or of pacifism, where self-support depended on small-scale mixed farming. It was even true of the aspiration towards communities of the good city, where the garden city is surrounded by market gardens and where the density of twelve houses to the acre gave "gardens of sufficient size to be of commercial value to the tenants ... and not too large to be worked by an ordinary labourer and his family".<sup>1</sup>

But in the late nineteenth century the Land Question shifted from utopian hopes to parliamentary politics. Ireland had a 'Land War', the Scottish Highlands and Islands experienced a long series of land seizures and in Wales an Anti-Tithe League widened its aims to embrace land reform. It was inevitable that some sort of parallel movement should appear in other parts of the British Isles.<sup>2</sup> In England the collapse of the 'High Farming' period of the mid-century, was followed by the agricultural depression of the 1870s, a

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice: An Introduction to the Art of Designing Cities and Suburbs* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909) p.320.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Douglas, *Land, People & Politics: A History of the Land Question in the United Kingdom, 1878-1952* (London: Allison & Busby 1976) p.40.

depression which lasted, with a few upturns until the Second World War introduced the regime of guaranteed prices. For the rural poor, the spread of the railway network, the news of better wages and prospects in the new industrial towns or in the expanding agriculture of Canada and Australia, where land was promised to settlers, were all promises of a better future. Evidence was given to a Royal Commission in 1881 that 700,000 members of farm workers' families had emigrated in the previous nine years.<sup>3</sup>

The 'Drift from the Land' was a fact of British life, and legislators promoted and protected the idea of the resettlement of the land for a century that ended only in the Christmas parliamentary recess of 1982 when the Minister of Agriculture announced the closure of the Land Settlement Association.<sup>4</sup> Does the aim of the restoration of the peasantry belong in the world of utopian communities, or was it a matter of political expediency?

Did the promoters of the ideal have different hopes from those of the people who experienced a whole series of policies towards land settlement? Were the settlers communitarians or rugged individualists? Legislators and voters inherited a treasury of quotations in the form of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* from a century earlier, lamenting that:

... a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroy'd can never be supplied.  
A time there was, ere England's grief began,  
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;<sup>5</sup>

Linked with this ancestral memory was the evocative phrase Three acres and a cow, used by the Liberal politician Jesse Collings in his land reform propaganda of 1885. It arose, perhaps from folklore, or perhaps from a remark from John Stuart Mill's *Political*

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p.41.

<sup>4</sup> The blight that settled on a grassroots revolution' *The Guardian*, 30 December 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village* (1770)