Sexism in the Anarchist Movement

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Feedback from the Anarcha-feminist Conference
An Interview with American Anti-Fascist Michael Staudenmaier
News, Reviews, Letters & more...
Greetings Dissident...

Welcome reader to the grand slapping new and beautified 8th edition of Dissident Voice, possibly the last for quite some time.

Back at the end of 2003 when the first issue of imminent rebellion appeared its mission was to encourage and foster community and communication amongst anarchists and radical sympathisers by providing a space for participation, creativity and analysis. Since that time we have been fighting the good fight (and it has been a fight) getting people to write in particular, but also for donations and subscriptions and mutual-aid in other forms.

While funding and creating Dissident Voice has placed a lot of strain on the edcollective, we’re not the kind to piss and moan about our problems. We don’t mind however, letting other people do it for us. This is an excerpt from a communiqué put out by Black Flag, as they faced their own imminent dematerialisation:

“This lack of participation is, I fear, a common problem with anarchist journals and papers. While many people are happy to consume a product (in the shape of a paper or journal) and complain about what it does or does not carry, fewer seem to be willing to get involved in actually producing them…

This should not be the case as this consumerist mentality is totally against what anarchism stands for. Anarchism stands for mutual aid, participation, “doing it yourself”. That should mean that anarchists should get involved in their media, whether it is selling it on demos or getting it into shops, writing reports on what they are doing or contributing articles on current events or anarchist theory and history.

And so for financial reasons, issues of time and, most of all, a lack of copy (the whole purpose of Dissident Voice being to provide a space for this) we will be taking an extended break. No doubt, we will be back in some form or another, but this will be further down the track and perhaps after certain changes have been made. For now, we hope the soon-to-be-fixed anarchism website (www.anarchism.org.nz) can fulfill the function that Dissident Voice sought, and for a short time at least, achieved.

But onto this issue. Dissident Voice #8 focuses on anarcha-feminism and sexism in the movement. It covers the anarcha-feminist conference, the new anarcha-fem ‘zine “Shakti”, recent debates as well as the latest Brash-bash of solo mothers on the DPB. We hope this issue not only furthers debate but offers a few new insights as well.

Most importantly, we hope that you all enjoy this issue of Dissident Voice, that you treasure it like the little gem that it is, and no doubt we’ll see you all again at some stage...

– Editorial collective

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The moment of revolt, which means now, is hallowing out for us in the hard rock of our daily lives, days that miraculously retain the delicious colours and the dreamlike charm which - like an Aladdin’s cave, magical and prismatic in an atmosphere all its own - is inalienably ours. The moment of revolt is childhood rediscovered, time put to everyone’s use, the dissolution of the market and the beginning of generalised self-management.

– Raoul Vaneigem, The Revolution of Everyday Life
Free Trade... With State Aid

SAM BUCHANAN

Despite the continued failure to agree on new rules to increase international trade opportunities, the capitalists’ desperate search for new gimmicks to extend their profit continues.

Mostly we are now hearing about bilateral ‘free trade’ deals, with Chile, Thailand and China and other potential trade ‘partners’ (also known as adversaries).

These proposed deals aren’t really about creating a free market, heaven help the capitalists if it were! The poor dears would be cut off from the nanny state that has sucked them for so many years at our expense. In a free market the BNZ and Air New Zealand would have been left to go bankrupt, the asset stripping of the railways would have continued until the last spare wheel had been sold for scrap and Jim Anderton wouldn’t be able to hand tax dollars over to big businesses in return for vague promises to create a few jobs.

What follows is an entirely capitalist argument. My point is that ‘free trade’ as proposed doesn’t even follow the principles the capitalists claim to believe in.

There are a few inherent problems with the ‘buy from whoever does it cheapest’ principle as there are things one doesn’t want to be dependent on the goodwill of a seller to be able to buy. A country may decide it wants to be self-sufficient in basic food stuffs, for example. That champion of free trade, the US government, loves to lecture the world on how trade promotes freedom and democracy, while embargoing anyone it doesn’t like. The European arms industry is set to lose its US market, on ‘security’ grounds, if it goes ahead with plans to resume exports to China. Free trade advocates are generally happy to relax their principles when it comes to crucial things like weapons, while insisting that luxuries like food and water can be left to the great green god of the market.

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However, the general concept of buying things somewhere else can make cheaper or better isn’t always a bad one. Some things just aren’t available everywhere. If you want to buy particular minerals, you are going to have to get them from somewhere that was lucky enough to have the things lying around in the ground minding their own business until someone comes to dig them up. And pinot noir grapes certainly seem to grow better in Marlborough than most other places.

However, note what the above examples have in common. These are basically things that depend on the natural environment, which does vary extensively from place to place. Most things traded are human created – manufactured goods, services and money. There is little reason to trade in such things since they can be made or provided where they are needed and don’t need to be moved around the world. The reason they are traded to such an extent isn’t a result of a free market, but as a result of what economists like to call ‘distortions’ in the market.

For example, nobody is seriously suggesting Chinese workers are inherently better at making cheap brightly coloured plastic things than the rest of us prosles. The reason Chinese business dominates in this field is chiefly down to a repressive state that keeps wages, safety standards and environmental protection low by suppressing democracy, trade unions and any other form of activism.

It also helps that China’s state-controlled banks provide capital, in the form of loans to those business people with government connections that nobody expects to be paid back. In other words, the advantages China has as a manufactured formerly government-owned operations. The ownership of Wellington’s buses by a Scottish company, Stagecoach, doesn’t appear to have given any advantage to the consumer, and profit levels are more or less set by the level of government subsidy that can be negotiated, under threat of closing services if the subsidy fails to maintain profit levels. The supposed market only comes into play if the local government body controlling the service decides to offer the contract to a competitor. Stagecoach’s real business isn’t running a bus service; it’s convincing the council to keep giving it the contract. Not many free-market principles there.

Politically, increased trade helps the economy to look healthy, at least on the surface. Crude economic indicators such as GDP are improved; cheap imported consumer goods keep inflation (and hence wage demands) down. Cheap imports kill local manufacturing, but the simplistic tendency of both left and right to promote the unemployment rate as the only indicator of social well-being obscures the replacement of relatively secure and often well-paid jobs by lower paid seasonal and temporary ones.

Many critics of trade agreements adopt the meaningless social democratic slogan ‘fair trade, not free trade’ without specifying what ‘fair’ means. ‘Fair’ could mean that producers and consumers enjoy a similar standard of living, but to its proponents ‘fair’ seems to mean ‘slightly better than regular capitalism’. Products transported by flag of convenience ships with Third World crews and sold in Western supermarkets by non-unionised staff on minimum wages are labelled ‘fair’. Fair for whom?

In a very different world, trade, probably on a relatively small scale, could be a helpful tool for improving our lives. But trade between different parts of the world can’t be fair when people are constrained by regulation of trade unions and industrial action, by the monopolisation of capital and land, and by the constraints on democracy that are all essential parts of modern capitalism.
The Freedom Shop – 10 Years On

The Freedom Shop is still open 10 years on and still lives on Cuba Street. The shop has moved premises and is now at 166 Cuba where it feels good, looks great and is open 6 days a week.

The new location has The Freedom Shop sharing a large space with an internet cafe, a soon-to-be juice bar and a multipurpose, entertainment, performance, skillsharing, work space…. these are all separate businesses which create a new and exciting space.

At the moment the books are selling well and we have a large order of really excellent books on its way from AK Press. Also arriving soon is a healthy dose of quality writing from Aotearoa. The Freedom Shop also sells booklets, zines, badges, t-shirts, patches, and music.

Yep, the freedom shop will turn 10 years old on the 1st of May which is no small feat for a not-for-profit, volunteer-based collective, let alone something that is as much work as running a bookshop. Lest we forget let’s take a look at where it all began...

Some time around 1981 a German couple began selling NORML propaganda from a building at 272 Cuba St (for some reason only on Sundays) then later on, like the early 90s, some other NORML people joined them and started opening the shop irregularly about three times a week. Around this time the anarchist group called the Committee for the Establishment of Civilization (CEC) who had a reasonable book/booklet collection started doing irregular stalls at various events. One of the CEC members, George van den Hoeven, kept talking about opening an anarchist bookshop, so someone approached the NORML people and soon after Anarchist Books moved in alongside NORML on the 1st of May 1995. It is not clear to me if the name The Freedom Shop came before or after the anarchist books moved in but either way the name has stuck.

Anarchist books cleaned and fixed things up in exchange for rent then sometime soon after NORML started moving out.

For almost the entire life of The Freedom Shop there has been a core group who keep the shop alive and well and a broad base of volunteers staffing the shop coming and going. The people who I associate the most with the shop are Mary Patterson, George van den Hoeven, Lyn Spencer and Ross Gardiner, who were all there from the beginning (at least three of them) and who gave it their all for considerable stretches of their lives. The shop has always been run by a collective, and at the moment has roughly 18 active members.

The last few years have seen The Freedom Shop battle with the evil road-building slum-lords Transit, the National Front and the dreaded leaky roof (a serious problem when you’re a bookshop).

Special thanks to everyone who helped build the new shop and all those who have the courage, determination, and cooperation to work with and support collectives.

– Mark Rawnsley

Knowledge is Power (or so they say)

Since the demise of the Interactive activist centre and the Kate Shepard Women’s Bookshop, the plebs in Christchurch have lacked a place to get their radical literature. But wait, it’s all about to change! Christchurch is soon to have a new infoshop, thanks to a collective of random misfits and degenerates who have banded together as comrades in arms to fight ignorance and illiteracy wherever they may find it within the dark abyss of capitalist intellectual poverty. Plans are afoot for the shop to be opened by Thursday 10th March, and opening hours will be 10-4 Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Proceeds from the sale of literature will be used to fund the armed wing of the Fantabulous Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Free 500 East-side Card-Playing Posse. As well as books, the store will be selling all the usual activist paraphernalia including patches, flags, stickers and t-shirts, in short, all of the things you need to look cool in the right circles.

Disclaimer: The authors of this text do not claim to represent the views of the bookshop collective, or to necessarily have any knowledge at all of the nature of its existence, but rumours are circulating that the infoshop can be found on the 2nd Floor at 130 Hereford St in central Christchurch.

– Dan Rae (and a 27 year old bearded male recently from Wellington who just happened to be on the couch at the time)
Bypass Destruction/Construction Begins

Construction, or rather destruction, has begun on the inner-city ‘bypass’ in Wellington. As I write this buildings are being knocked down, buildings are being moved. Te Aro is being raped by capitalists and developers.

Te Aro was mourning before work had even begun. Lobby groups gave in. Councillors reneged on promises to lock-on. The artists organised show after show of ‘We miss Tonks Ave’ photo exhibits. A pro-bypass council was voted in.

We at Anti-Bypass Action (ABA) were optimistic. This day was over due. The state had been planning this road for 40 years and were finally getting their way but people-power would rule the day. We would only have to draw on the energy of ABA’s founding days 2 years ago, when a meeting would fill the town hall. Being full of Anarchists, ABA had created a kaupapa of direct action close and was feeling confident. Te Aro would soon be behind ABA in the fight to stop this road.

As the fences started going up ABA got bigger. ABA fought off lobbyists and politicians to keep the focus on direct action. ABA encouraged affinity groups of all stripes to organise themselves and they did, spreading themselves into the community. ABA created relationships with the media and had fund-raising gigs. ABA organised marches, shouted down Transit junkets with sensible questions, tended Papatuanuku’s marches, shouted down Transit junkets with heavy with dust and tui can no longer be heard at dawn.

The wildcat collective has initiated discussions on Mayday and Anarchist participation in Peace and Anti-Racist demonstrations, as well as other topics of interest to the wider anarchist community. We have run a number of film evenings – including two films by obscure, anarchist-inspired, director Jean Vigo.

The group tries to divide its time between discussions and developing ideas and putting them into practice. A major project has been SNAP! an A3 industrial and community broadsheet that covers issues of local, national and international interest. Twenty-two issues have been produced on a nearly weekly basis. The results are then pasted and distributed all over town.

A particularly successful story followed by SNAP! was the developing campaign by UNITE! workers at Reading Cinemas to get a contract and a wage raise. Wildcat activists also supported the workers at a key picket which was instrumental in moving the bosses forward.

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We’ve also been working on new anarchist propaganda; initiating the anarchist leaflets for both the anti-racist march in 2004, and this year’s anti-war rally on March 19th. A short leaflet on anarchism is also in the works.

Wildcat are looking to the future with claws sharpened, fangs bared and a glimmer in our eyes – Watch out capitalist running dogs!

– Wildcat

Wildcat Anarchist Collective

The Wildcat Anarchist Collective has been meeting weekly in Wellington since early last year. The group came together under the working name of Class Struggle Anarchist group, with the aim of establishing an anarchist group with a solid emphasis on class politics. Although there were existing collective working on sovereignty, gender, environmental and international politics, there was no strong focus on local economics and class issues.

Wildcat emphasises that while class politics is intended to be our focus, other issues of interest to anarchists are not excluded. Over the past year there have been many topics of discussion and action including Tino Rangatiratanga, sexuality, and benefit rights.

meetings, turned up at our secret rendezvous points. A phone tree was sprouted with nearly a hundred people on it.

On the 14th of January an affinity group, comprised predominantly of Anarchists locked themselves in and onto the old cigarette and alcohol store in Oak Park Ave. An extensive network of support was there in the shape of police liaison, tripods, crowd-control and media placators.

Despite momentum increasing it felt as though Wellington was waiting for something. Inspiration maybe. We were hoping people would get behind a building occupation. We thought this would be a good way to get people involved, help them see what is possible, draw attention to past pacts and promises. We had to do something because we were going stir-crazy. That day we called the radio stations encouraging people to come down and support us. We told the press that we had the mandate of Te Aro. We talked about climate change, car culture, peak oil.

This was the biggest action to date in the campaign to stop the Wellington inner-city ‘bypass’. It was also the last.

Te Aro crumples around us. The phone tree is tattered from lack of use. The air is heavy with dust and tui can no longer be heard at dawn.

“Well, we have done all we can” the people said. “We have voted, lobbied and written letters to the editor. We have even gone on a march and maybe we pledged direct action should they try to start tearing down buildings but I don’t know...that’s all a bit...radical. We don’t want to get arrested, we have jobs, we want to travel!” I want to imagine this is what people tell themselves as they watch the buildings come down.

And ABA? What about us? Are we to blame too? Did inhibiting hierarchies form? Did we speak the wrong language? Did we have the mandate of Te Aro? And why the hell does it feel like the Anarchists have given up already???

I know. Maybe they are regrouping. Discussing, analysing strengths and weaknesses. Building, plotting. Soon they will be back with new tactics, tricks and tools. Fulton Hogan won’t know what hit them. Right? The bypass WILL be stopped. RIGHT??!

– Jakob
LISTEN ANARCHIST!

Sexism in the Movement

MIRIAM & ALI

At the anarchist conference, the Wellington @fem group held a workshop on sexism in the movement. Two hours were set aside to discuss the subject, but the womyn involved felt that issues were only addressed superficially.

Towards the end of the conference, a womyn’s-only discussion was held, in which womyn sat down and came up with a list of critiques of the sexism workshop. We feel that the issues raised during this discussion reflect some of the wider sexism present in the movement.

Here is a condensed version of the list:

• Womyn didn’t feel safe to talk about their experiences – especially around sexual abuse and sexuality.
• Womyn felt like they had to moderate what they said so that men didn’t feel attacked. Some people resorted to talking about issues very hypothetically instead of personalising their experiences.
• The emphasis was taken off womyn. There was a failure to recognise that sexism affects us more.
• Men did not respect that womyn are the experts in their own oppression and talk about the issues on our terms.
• Men only acknowledged superficial aspects of sexism, eg. womyn being relegated to kitchen jobs.
• Womyn didn’t feel that they were being listened to.
• Men attempted to rationalise womyn’s experiences, instead of acknowledging that there aren’t always logical reasons for the way people feel.
• Womyn felt that their feelings and experiences were being trivialised.
• There was a failure to discuss sexism in the anarchist movement and not just in wider society.
• Men weren’t familiar with feminist ideas.
• Many men didn’t seem interested, eg. at the childcare discussion.
• Womyn want men to come to us about solving oppression HOWEVER men need to understand that there are not always simple solutions and simply acknowledging that there is a problem is an integral part of the process.

Any discussion of sexism should start with men acknowledging that womyn are the experts on our own oppression. It’s important that men take responsibility for addressing sexism but this has to be done with a reverence for womyn’s experiences. Men should never assume that they know better than womyn how sexism should be fought. If men are serious about ending male privilege they need to begin asking womyn how we want to be supported in our struggle and listening.

We have separated this article into several sections dealing with some of the different facets of sexism and oppression womyn face in the movement.

Meetings

Meetings take up a huge chunk of most activists’ lives, so it’s important we make them sexism-free.

One important issue is that our meetings are often dominated by male speakers. Womyn don’t speak up because it doesn’t feel safe to do so. Often we are scared of being personally attacked for voicing an opinion, or feel unconfident and uneducated around other more involved men. Meetings with a competitive atmosphere are worse. To be heard, you have to be aggressive and determined, and many womyn feel that the conflict is not worth it. We have been raised by a society that values womyn who are friendly, accommodating, pretty and outgoing – but not assertive.

Meetings need to have a welcoming atmosphere, with people listening to each other and being free to speak their mind, instead of the majority of men talking while the womyn listen nicely. I have heard men treat the fact that men usually “speak first, last, and longest,” as a joke, or as a coincidence. It isn’t. At two meetings recently, an activist kept time of how long men and womyn spoke. Her results confirmed the gender imbalance we are speaking of.

One activist found that during a meeting held to talk about creating a policy for the group which had equal numbers of men and womyn attending, five womyn spoke, and ten men. The men also spoke longer and more frequently than the womyn. She compared this to another meeting held by the same group a few weeks later, where they discussed whether using certain photographs were exploitative. All the womyn spoke, as well as the men who had not voiced their opinion before.

At the first meeting, the focus had been more on right verses wrong decision making. At the second meeting, the focus was more on how people felt. The activist who reported this also mentioned that the men who didn’t speak at the discussion did not have a university education, while those that did speak generally did.

This illustrates how womyn aren’t the only group marginalised at meetings; ethnic minorities and people with less formal education are also likely to feel uncomfortable or unsafe participating when the structures are run for and by dominate and privileged groups.

Childcare

Childcare is another important issue that is often overlooked. It is seen as the parents’ responsibility to look after their child/ren, so many mothers (as well as fathers and other guardians) are excluded from meetings and events. Mothers of young children in particular find if difficult juggling other commitments while needing to care for their child/ren.

It is difficult for us (the authors) to write too much on childcare since we don’t have children ourselves. We do, however, recognise that not many events are child-friendly, or make specific arrangements for children. Meetings usually take place late at night, and babysitting is expensive. Who will put the kids to bed, and look after the younger ones? One Wellington group dealt with this by always holding meetings at the house at one parent – but it is also important not to assume that this will always be the solution. We need to work with and listen to parents to ensure we are doing all we can.

Childcare

Meeting womyn’s needs for childcare is an important issue. We feel it is important for the group to ensure we are doing all we can to create a policy for the group which has equal numbers of men and womyn attending, five womyn spoke, and ten men. The men also spoke longer and more frequently than the womyn. She compared this to another meeting held by the same group a few weeks later, where they discussed whether using certain photographs were exploitative. All the womyn spoke, as well as the men who had not voiced their opinion before.

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Another issue is that childcare isn't seen as important in activist groups. Can you imagine meetings where people who volunteer to stay at home with the children during demos are valued just as much as those who speak to the media? Can you imagine men being the ones to stay at home for a change? If we are serious about making anarchism a reality, then perhaps we should, because raising children is the responsibility of the whole community.

**Sexual Oppression**

Sexual abuse and sexual harassment are huge and extremely urgent issues that the anarchist community have failed to deal with appropriately. You would have thought that this shouldn't even be an issue in a community dedicated to liberation and equality, but unfortunately it is, and we should all be furious about it. One of the main problems is that there is a lack of understanding of just what constitutes abuse and harassment and how it should be dealt with. Another problem is nobody is talking about these issues, or working out ways to resolve and prevent them in the first place.

**Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is essentially any form of sexual attention that is unwelcome and offensive. This includes unwanted touching (such as kissing, hugging, pinching, etc) and sexual innuendo. It is often dismissed as a harmless joke, or as part of somebody's personality, but it is actually very serious. Sexual harassment can be the result of deliberate actions to maintain power-over, or alternatively of well-meaning but unexamined actions by some men. It can make womyn feel stressed, humiliated, angry, upset, helpless, frightened, or simply so fed up that they want to drop out of the movement and/or avoid certain activists.

Sexual harassment is unacceptable, and should not be trivialised or dismissed. Keep in mind that just because you don't find somebody's behaviour offensive, it doesn't mean that others will also be comfortable with it too. Spaces need to be created within our movement for womyn to speak up if they are being sexually harassed. People need to know that they will be taken seriously when voicing concerns about sexual harassment. There seems to be the impression that false accusations are common. They aren't. In fact, 95% of men who have been convicted of rape in a court of law, where all evidence undeniably points to rape, still deny responsibility for their actions. In cases of acquaintance rape, the situation gets even messier. We would like to point out that by assuming the rapist is innocent until proven guilty is essentially assuming that the survivor is guilty (of lying) until proven innocent, and this is at the very stage where the survivor will be needing the most support.

**Rape and Sexual Abuse**

We are incredibly angry that womyn have to be dealing with rape and sexual abuse in our movement. These issues, more than any other, have not been talked about and they are not going to go away. Two situations have surfaced in anarchist circles last year, and while this article is not going to discuss the individual incidents, they brought up a number of points that seem to be obvious, but apparently aren't.

The most important thing is to support (and believe!) the survivors of rape and sexual abuse. There seems to be the impression that false accusations are common. They aren't. In fact, 95% of men who have been convicted of rape in a court of law, where all evidence undeniably points to rape, still deny responsibility for their actions. In cases of acquaintance rape, the situation gets even messier. We would like to point out that by assuming the rapist is innocent until proven guilty is essentially assuming that the survivor is guilty (of lying) until proven innocent, and this is at the very stage where the survivor will be needing the most support.

Disbelief from other activists can/will cause secondary wounding, which is often as bad as, if not worse than, the original trauma. If we want a movement that is safe for womyn, supporting the survivors of rape is the least we can do.

We can't fit a discussion on the processes that need to be implemented to fight the rape and sexual abuse into this article; we simply do not have the space. Hopefully new writing will address this in future. Until then, please TALK about these issues, support survivors and educate yourself.

**Challenges for the Future**

- Listen to womyn
- Become more aware of the gender balance (of lack thereof)
- Pay attention to who talks in meetings
- Ask parents what support they would like from you
- Talk about sexual abuse and support survivors
- Read up on feminism (some suggested resources are below)
- Pay attention to your own behaviour. How are you contributing to sexism?

**Resources and Suggested Reading**

It is important to become familiar with feminism and anarcha-feminist ideas. We suggest you start by checking out www.anarcha.org.

For those without internet access, we suggest you read 'Untying the knot,' ‘Anarchism and Feminism,’ ‘Quiet Rumours,’ and other @fem booklets. There are also a lot of feminist journals and books in public libraries – it’s a good idea to get acquainted with feminist theory.
A MODEST PROPOSAL
FOR PREVENTING THE CHILDREN OF POOR PEOPLE
IN NEW ZEALAND FROM BEING A BURDEN TO THEIR PARENTS OR COUNTRY, AND FOR
MAKING THEM BENEFICIAL TO THE PUBLICK

R.E. COOK & MATT RUSSELL

It is a melancholy state of affairs when those who are enticed to make the perilous journey to God’s Own are obliged to endure the sight of streets (urban, suburban, rural or otherwise) crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags and importuning every Good Tourist for alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in finding a way to supplement the meager provision granted to them by the State, in order to give some sort of sustenance for their helpless infants: who as they grow up either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to join the United Soviets of Australia.

I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and infrequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the Queendom a very great additional grievance; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children beneficial to the publik, would deserve so well of the publik as to have her/his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professional bludgers and ancillary beggars; it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them as those who demand our charity in our State. For these insights, I have none other than the honorable Dr. Brash to give thanks, and if I take the liberty of expanding upon his innovatory ideas, it is only with the intention of making the honest principles latent in his philosophy more readily apparent to the those unfortunately less educated citizens of the nation.

Dr Brash is, undoubtedly, a paragon in the arena of organization, and a much honored disciple of both the Churches Human Rationalism and Rational Humanism – and here I will humble myself to simply extrapolate from his already much disseminated thesis perhaps a more materially advantageous solution in avoiding so many burdensome births on the hardworking taxpayer, and a method from extracting some collateral benefit from this perennial scourge that can be enjoyed by all the very best and productive elements of the Queendom.

I have been assured by a very knowing American friend of my acquaintance in Auckland, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children. Infant’s flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March, and a little before and after; for we are told by an authoritative author, an eminent physician of Remuera, that fish being a prolific diet, there are more children born in Maori principalities around the inception of Autumn than at any other season; therefore, reckoning every Autumn, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of brown infants is at least 1 in 3 in this kingdom; and therefore it will have one other universally agreeable advantage in significantly lightening the overall tincture of skin within our fine colony.

I have computed the charge of nursing a state beggar’s child (in which list I include the spawn of all southerners, students, immigrants and about four-fifths of our brown brethren) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutrition. Thus the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants; the mother will have eight shillings net profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child. Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flay the carcass; the skin of which artificially dressed will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

The addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barreled beef will be assured, the propagation of swine’s flesh, and improvement in the art of making good bacon, so much wanted among us by the great destruction of pigs, too frequent at our tables; which are no way comparable in taste or magnificence to a well-grown, fat, yearling child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a lord mayor’s feast or any other public entertainment. Our local Butchers will certainly not be left wanting; I rather recommend buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as is done to preserve tenderness when roasting pigs.

Doubtless, when underway, such an equanimous system of production and consumption would have innumerable economic, cultural and social advantages, many of which I am forced to omit, through respect of brevity.

Firstly, The poor will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to distress and help to pay their landlord’s rent, unable to earn through whatever deficiency of personality or moral-
ity, and money a thing unknown.

Secondly, whereas the maintenance of an hundred thousand children, from two years old and upward, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a-piece per annum, the nation’s stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, beside the profit of a new dish introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the Queen-dom who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture.

Thirdly, this food would likewise bring great custom to our hospitality industries; where the diners will certainly be so prudent as to procure the best receipts for dressing it to perfection, and consequently have their houses frequented by all the fine gentlemen, who justly value themselves upon their knowledge in good eating; and a skilful cook, who understands how to oblige his guests, will contrive to make it as expensive as they please.

Fourthly, this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards or enforced by laws and penalties. It would increase the care and tenderness of mothers toward their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the public, to their annual profit instead of expense. We should see an honest emulation among the married women, which of them could bring the fattest child to the market. Men would become as fond of their wives during the time of their pregnancy as they are now of their mares in foal, their cows in calf, their sows when they are ready to farrow; nor offer to beat or kick them (at least too frequently) for fear of a miscarriage.

And if the number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed, and who, through no fault of their own, cannot breed or rear children and therefore cannot elevate themselves from their socially parasitic position. Personally, I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known that they are every day dying and roting by cold and famine, and filth and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected, and will continue to do so. Certainly, there are many avenues for expediting this process, but a methodology better left to the experience and knowledge of the common social policy maker.

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

What anarchism means to me...

A regular column for people who label themselves as anarchists to explore what anarchism means to them on a personal level, what attracted them to anarchism and what their plans and hopes are for the future.

On 20th July 2001 23-year old Carlo Giuliani was murdered by a cop during the protests against the G8 summit (the Group of Eight (G8) is the coalition of eight of the world’s leading industrialized nations) in Genoa (Italy). Like Carlo, I am part of the movement of movements. The anti-capitalist movement that believes in autonomy and self-determination. A movement that accepts different tactics to create a better world.

A movement which fights dams in the Narmada Valley (India), smashes banks in Seattle (USA), protests against prepaid water meters in Soweto (South Africa), attacks fortress Europe in Kundizice (Poland), forms a human peace sign to show its opposition to the invasion of Iraq in McMurdo Station (Antarctica), sets up a tripod in Te Whanganui-a-Tāra to stop the construction of a motorway (Aotearoa) and runs a bakery on the outskirts of Buenos Aires collectively (Argentina).

I came to Anarchism through political activism. Seeing the global leaders coming to town. Living in an alternative village (barrio) for a few days. Experiencing huge meetings where everyone is using hand signals and consensus decision making. Trying to stop the talks of the CEOs and warmongers of this planet. Taking the media-focus back to the streets by attacking the red zone.

And then… Having endless arguments with my parents about veganism and the state. Running up and down the streets of my town armed with a megaphone. Having a go at the lovely Marxists. Talking bullshit on a sunny Sunday afternoon. And…

Well, there’s all the Resistance going on in my life. Resistance to capitalism and the state, resistance to authority. Reading about the autonomous movement of Argentina made me realise that my Resistance is somewhat pointless if I don’t get stuck into making something of my own at the same time. Fighting the system by attacking it and attacking it again by creating something. Making the alternative normal. Like, becoming the media. Eating the silver beet I planted myself. Doing a shift in the local infoshop. Getting involved with a union as a volunteer. Taking the power back.

While globalisation has given us capitalism at its worst, it has also given me the chance to realise that our movement is global. And maybe that’s the special thing about being an anarchist today - to know that there are people out there, all over the world, involved in the struggle for a world of peace with justice and self-determination. A movement of movements.

Well, the future is bright. The revolution can come by about any minute and surely it will.

Carlo Vive!

– smush
Breaking the Ice: Anarchist Men and Sexism in the Movement

ERNESTO AGUILAR

In “Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left,” Sara Evans writes in painful detail about the mistreatment of women in political movements. Her narrative is a sober reminder that sexism within movements has been going on for years. Today we have many ongoing dialogs about sexism in the anarchist movement. Most are led by women, and they have created a space in which to engage constructively. Anarchist men are unfortunately often silent on the issue of sexism and gender inequity in our movement. As a male in a visible position, I’m both at fault for not being more outspoken on it, and for being sexist and wrong on many occasions. Without honest and self-critical efforts by men, efforts for change could be for naught, because we are part of the problem. I write this in hopes that other anarchist males take it upon themselves to act on sexism and gender inequity and make both priorities.

In the days Evans writes about, many mistakes were made in focusing on individual lifestyles rather than structural issues. These days, we make some of the same errors. In my opinion, this discussion is positioned around three points: 1.) understanding that the debate over sexism and issues related to female-male relations isn’t so much a debate about actions, but legitimacy; 2.) understanding that all men are responsible, and that we need to be forthright in admitting our mistakes as a matter of political, rather than moral/personal, principle; and 3.) understanding that anarchist women and men must take an active role in shifting the dispute beyond individual-based ‘accountability’ and toward a community-based system of restorative justice.

My hope is to help add to the discourse that many anarchist sisters are leading, and encourage other men to take an active role.

Legitimacy: Kind, not degree

In his book “Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America,” Kristian Williams writes a powerful statement about police misconduct which, in reality, sums up the true divide between abuse generally and institutional definitions. “In non-totalitarian societies, authority exists within carefully prescribed, if vague (one might suggest, intentionally vague), boundaries,” Williams writes. “Action within these limits is ‘legitimate,’ similar action outside of such limits is ‘abuse.’” The difference between legitimate (acceptable) use of power and illegitimate abuse, Williams concludes, is of degree, rather than kind.

Right about now, women reading this may be catching the implications. Some women know of male comrades who’ll wrangle over the nuances of their actions, rather than the overarching dilemma, and the even weightier factor of men’s complicity in it. Men know of it too! Even among the most advanced polemics related to sexual assault among activist circles, the focus is on individual abuses rather than at legitimacy, an institutional look at the question, its perpetrators and collaborators.

I’ll stop right here and say I use the word ‘institutional’ not to imply the state, but which is not regarded as sexism. By no means do I posit that gender inequity or violence within the anarchist movement are less important but I believe the anarchist movement may be all too concerned with individual actions, rather than seeing the individual actions as part of a much more insidious sphere of influence, which most certainly includes what women of color and poor women face every day but which is not regarded as sexism.

Unconscious, uncritical acceptance of dominant culture ideas, to which sexism and gender oppression are intimately linked, are important as to how the anarchist movement formulates solutions. Individual liberty and expression are maintained as core values – women should have space for their anger and men should be checked, for example – but we rarely analyze how what happens relates to Third World women or the capitalist system at large. We dissect the degree of the abuse (personal crime), but not the kind (gender oppression). Early anarchist feminist pieces like “A Message to Anarchist’ Men,” and “Then Some” and “What it is to be a Girl in an Anarchist Boys’ Club” are typical of the individualizing of experience. Much of the conversation treats the individual as central to the experience, with short shift.

The false conception anarchists have now is that the personal is not political, but individualized: people move by their singular steps. This is, in fact, lifestylist that removes revolutionary or anarchist political context.
given to a much more pervasive systemic issue. Certainly, I don’t wish to be insensitive to supporting anarchist sisters in dealing with individual men -- the web of gender oppression isn’t showing up at meetings to be an asshole nor does it cajole women for sex, obviously -- but I want to remind anarchists of the problem with individualized, Western/European concepts of freedom and liberty, and their contemporary incarnation as battering rams against community and radical politics.

Though there are indubitably folks seeking to connect the dots, for the most part, I forward, instances of movement-connected gender-based exploitation are legitimizing and tolerated by our anarchist movement. In many cases, men still look at these as just women’s problems, for which they don’t need to be concerned, or feign off personal responsibility without critical thought. They don’t need to be concerned, or feign these as just women’s problems, for which they were inferior, but because the state and male beneficiaries of power had many tools in place that thwarted their rising. The personal as political was a tool for breaking state power, and keeping each other accountable to the broader circle.

The false conception anarchists have now is that the personal is not political, but individualized: people make individual choices through individual values and we respond to them appropriately, or win victories of the personal as political.” As an anarchist, hearing this liberalized version of what radical feminists long before us fought hard to clarify is embarrassing to me. The personal as political concept was originally developed by the feminist milieu as a way of understanding that the reasons we face personal hardships are a direct result of the state. Women aren’t disempowered, feminists reasoned, because they were inferior, but because the state and male beneficiaries of power had many tools in place that thwarted their rising. The personal as political was a tool for breaking state power, and keeping each other accountable to the broader circle.

Legitimacy is the key here. How is gender oppression defined by everyone in a community? What is accepted? What is not? Why is the low-level abuse and mistreatment tolerated or accepted and, in some cases, defended or avoided by men? How do the women and men involved, subtly allow low-level gender-based abuse to go on? How are our solutions focused individually? And what are we accepting of the dominant culture’s norms that we fail to be conscious of? Herein we’re going at more than just sexism and gender inequity, but the legitimacy of gender oppression and the socialization that imbues it.

Community-wide, we need to look at the intricacies of our institutions. As individuals, especially men, we need to move beyond understanding abuse as an individual issue, but an institutional one -- not for purposes of shifting the blame, but as one where such actions reflect a responsibility, or lack thereof, to our politics. That understanding should not obscure the need for men to be responsible for themselves, as part of the larger picture.

Responsibility: The personal is not political
You’ll notice I tend to speak on politics first, rather than morals. In a capitalist system, anarchists should be skeptical of morals. The same leaders who present themselves as pious followers of the Lord are the same ones slaughtering Black and Brown people around the world. Morality is a commodity aimed at manipulation. Unfortunately, a few of us fall prey to it. For instance, it pains me to hear people equate lifestyle choices or public discourse on private lives as an extension of “the personal is political.” As an anarchist, hearing this liberalized version of what radical feminists long before us fought hard to clarify is embarrassing to me. The personal as political concept was originally developed by the feminist milieu as a way of understanding that the reasons we face personal hardships are a direct result of the state. Women aren’t disempowered, feminists reasoned, because they were inferior, but because the state and male beneficiaries of power had many tools in place that thwarted their rising. The personal as political was a tool for breaking state power, and keeping each other accountable to the broader circle.

The false conception anarchists have now is that the personal is not political, but individualized: people make individual choices through individual values and we respond to them appropriately, or win victories by their singular steps. This isn’t so much a contradiction in the “personal as political” debate I outlined earlier, for anarchists understand that simply changing behavior does not do away with power relations. Still, acknowledgment is at the heart of so many of our politics -- we want our grievances looked at or we create scenes as spaces where our ideas can be seriously discussed. Avoiding or minimizing such a serious issue as sexism betrays the need for solutions. In order for anarchist men to take the next step in this discussion, it’s important we acknowledge we can, have and do make mistakes, again as a matter of political principle.

I began my own journey on this issue by acknowledging my own failures in gender politics, of being disrespectful to women and of getting involved in ways I shouldn’t. Such a revelation is not easy though! I made excuses, blamed others, justified it, dismissed people’s criticism, or just minimized it by saying we all ‘make mistakes.’ It wasn’t until I was willing to say there’s a difference between making mistakes and being selfish and self-centered that I saw how much we as anarchist men need to do. We are all indubitably struggling to live out our politics, but that’s not a defense to being backward politically. It is formidable; anyone who has been touched by capitalism’s individualistic themes believes they have a right to say and do as they please, without make individual choices through individual values and we respond to them appropriately, or win victories from anything, because by design it’s focused on individual morality, rather than political vision.
Concern for how it affects others. Anarchist men need to be reminded that such is only a lie aimed at upholding the dominant culture's values, and undercutting anarchist notions of community.

It’s vital for women and men to understand that accepting responsibility is not a guilt-trip deal, but a matter of political responsibility. Among the great failures of the fashionable ‘post-left’ anarchist theory is the implication that individuals have no commitment to supporting and growing with each other. In “Post-Left Anarchy: Leaving the Left Behind,” Jason McQuinn argues that the “autonomous individual is the fundamental basis of all genuinely anarchistic theories of organization,” and, though he also supports concepts of transparency, “no rule and no ruler both mean there is no political authority above people themselves, who can and should make all of their own decisions however they see fit.” Anything that falls outside the realm of one’s own decision, it’s connoted, is an unwelcome advance to which no struggle should be invested. What I suggest is that individuals exist more richly with communities, and that they directly and indirectly benefit emotionally, politically, socially and materially from them. More conspicuously, in gaining benefits, people form communities and have a stake in said associations. Men who violate unspoken community values of respect for women or who collaborate in making such acts invisible need to understand their responsibility to a community, and the damage such acts do to the sense of ownership among members of a community.

**Revolutionary accountability**

The anarchist notion of community needs to balance individual needs with our political directives. If we’re anarchists, our objective should be to challenge state power in all its forms; what happens in our communities is an extension of our confidence in our politics, and our politics (by extension, ourselves) are constantly something we should self-examine and critique. My primary criticism with how sexism, sexual assault and so forth are dealt with in move-

ments is a fundamental misunderstanding of what we want to build as a movement and what values we want to convey. It’s central to understand that simply refusing to call the police isn’t particularly political (save for protecting men from prosecution). What needs to happen is a basic change in how we understand the society we as anarchists want to create.

Among the most ambiguous words among anarchists is ‘accountability.’ Accountability, at least in an anarchist sense, implies a community responsibility and a mutual effort to resolve conflicts. Account-

ability, as it is now translated into specifics and implemented, is individualized by incident and doesn’t seek to build a political culture against sexism, perhaps indicative of the lack of a cohesive political culture among anarchists as a whole.

Anarchists need to grow the definition of accountability from away shame, punitive action and expulsion to a vision where communities encourage and support women in healing and men in living lessons within the contexts of their lives. There is great power in shame -- shame for women in speaking out and shame for men in their acts -- and I want to talk about moving beyond shame and the past to solutions. Clearly, my goal is not to patronizingly say ‘forgive and forget’ because closing the door on exploitation is a long process. Yet I believe our current accountability models address an instance rather than build a community ethos from which we can grow. As bell hooks remarks in “All About Love,” communities are families; where the power of a community and of gender as a central organizing point must be key to resist power systems. We’re not doing that now, in my opinion.

There are many dynamic community solutions of addressing accountability. One of the most popular of those models is restorative justice, a system that emphasizes healing the wounds of victims, offenders and communities caused by antisocial behavior. By no means perfect, restorative justice seeks to identify and take steps to repair damage; actively involving all those involved, and shifts the emphasis of response to actions from state-mediated mediums to the community.

Contrast this form of accountability with what we see in many scenes. Here, acknowledgment and responsibility are stressed first, rather than shame-based reaction. Defying power means understanding our own power to change the dynamics. Before seeking a new system for coping, men need to understand the contemporary, feminist-constructed definitions of sexual assault, violence, sexism and other forms of gender-based oppression. Men also need to be agreed that such topics are serious anarchist and community issues, and that public discourse about these concerns are among our top priorities which women and men must make honest efforts to undertake. In addition, men need to see gender-based oppression is multi-faceted, and that it’s not supposed to be normal or acceptable in anarchist circles or in egalitarian sexual relations; this means obvious instances (insults, harassment, violence, rape, assault) and subtle actions (romantic/sexual overtures, exclusion, disrespect, blame) must be agreed as unacceptable as a community-wide norm. Finally, men must make a political commitment to support women who.
seek solidarity in what they face.

Like many solutions, restorative justice is an evolving theory, which permits us to help shape an explicitly anti-authoritarian tendency. Balancing power is among the greatest challenges for anarchists in this regard. Add to that fair representation among offenders and victims and their defenders, which can turn potential healing into confrontations and silence. Within each complication is bound a series of Western assumptions of justice, especially due process and trial by jury. Restorative justice seeks to avoid, in the words of advocate John Braithwaite, “adversarial legalism,” where offenders and victims are removed from the process.

Visioning restorative justice and community takes a few of the components listed here. Care and commitment to change as a political priority must be part of it. But it starts with all of us.

Onward
So, how do we get there?

Much of that is a conversation anarchist circles need to have in an organized, open and patient way. On a larger scale, it will take a shift in how we think about gender in the movement, and how our personalization to everything must evolve to incorporate the political. While we need to individually see why morality is such a strong pull, anarchists also need to grasp its cultural currency today, and endeavor for real consensus about the definition and elimination of assault, violence, et al. as a political aspiration.

Anarchists need to grow the definition of accountability away from shame, punitive action and expulsion to a vision where communities encourage and support women in healing and men in living lessons within the contexts of their lives.

On a smaller scale, it will take men individually to take it upon themselves to work on sexist behavior, as a means of solidifying our anarchist sensibilities. I must strongly caution that I do not believe, just because men must take on gender issues as a means of making anarchist ideas stronger, that men should lead or be at the center of the struggle. Anarchists should grasp this principle as a matter of respect. When we begin talking about anything, anarchists tend to get ahistorical; we forget to seek out the work of those before us, or today’s fights by those affected. In this case, many feminist women, long before us, have written and lived powerful, dynamic theory from which we should be inspired to learn. Women today are also setting powerful examples that could reshape our vision.

On a personal level, I’ve learned how important it is to express empathy with people who have been victims, even if I am sometimes working on how to express myself well and be sensitive to the implications of my own errors. I confess I have a lot to learn, and I try to not handle criticism in a defensive way. I’ve also learned I need to be willing to call attention to myself and share my personal experiences, even though it may be tough and not too flattering, in hopes of generating awareness to sexism. Such has been part of a deeper political discovery that my personal comfort is far less important than the anarchist struggle to which I’ve committed my life.

I’ve learned pointing out that I do these things is not for recognition or praise, but because, as a matter of political commitment, it should be part of my daily routine, as it should be for all men. I recognize, as a male, am still a work in progress in terms of sexist socialization, and my political practice regarding gender equality isn’t where it could or should be. I also make an effort to remember not to use such facts as excuses for slacking off or minimizing the impact of errors I make.

I respectfully disagree with some writers who articulate that men, especially men who may not have the most politically correct practice, have no role in formulating solutions around this issue. Part of the problem with such proclivities is the value judgment inherent in indirectly or intellectually disallowing participation. And who’s to say the anarchist or even feminist body politic (both extensions of whiteness, in varying degrees, since their inception) has all the complex social, cultural, ethnic and practical solutions? In considering and defining our community culture related to gender, we need to be inclusive to differing cultural perspectives and visions for a liberated future.

I further disagree that the lightning rod for discussion needs to be who talks over who at a meeting, or who’s confrontational with police at a protest. Although it’s valuable to point out problems, to me, these criticisms avoid the real question of how we develop clarity in our politics, organizing methods and tactics. I know those theoretical discussions aren’t as sexy or dramatic as bad behavior, but they’re truly more important. Merely eliminating chest-puffing or “manarchy,” as one collective termed a laundry list of troublesome actions, doesn’t fundamentally move us toward freedom. I believe fighting gender oppression requires the respect of a wider talk about our politics.

My hope is that this article serves as an effort to support the courageous anarchist sisters leading up this struggle. I don’t want to imply I have all the answers, or even go for that very male activity of ‘solving’ problems. Still, I hope these ideas contribute to the ongoing systemic look at gender oppression; of men’s failures and political vigilance; and of the amazing work by people of color in addressing oppression. I encourage anarchist men to think about these obstacles. If I’ve learned anything living as a Latino/indigenous man in Occupied Amerika, it’s that, for all the clutter about fighting the good fight, most dudes are reluctant to be the first one to speak up on a thorny subject. I searched high and low for pieces by anarchist men on sexism in our movement. Guess how many I found? I want this piece to break the ice. This movement cannot advance without action. Understanding sexism as a political priority in our work against this oppressive system is only the beginning.

Recommended Reading for Anarchist Women and Men
Heather Ajani, “Hearts Spark Arson,” Our Culture, Our Resistance
Anonymous, “Interviews with Panther sisters on women’s liberation”
Pip Cornell, “Rafting in the Cascades: A true story about confronting sexism”
Chris Crass, “Going to places that scare me: Personal reflections on challenging male supremacy”
Sara Evans, “Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & The New Left”
Bell Hooks, “All About Love” and “Feminist Theory: Margin to Center”
Butch Lee, “Jailbreak out of History: a biography of Harriet Tubman”
Carol Pateman, “The Sexual Contract”
A: Sure. My name is Michael Staudenmaier. I’m an anarchist from the United States and anti-fascist. I’ve been involved in a wide range of anarchist and specifically anti-fascist stuff over the years, including in particular Anti Racist Action, which is sort of an amorphous network of different groups all across North America that believes in direct action against fascists. And so that has been my main outlook for anti-fascism, although the particular Anti-Racist Action I was involved in, in Chicago, has been kind of dormant for the last year. So, on that front I’m not necessarily the most current person.

That’s my easiest version of my background. I’ve written about fascism and anti-fascism as well. So I can tell you some stuff that might be interesting. And I’m working on this essay for this book on ‘Anarchism in an Age of Globalisation’ which will be specifically about emerging fascisms and anti-fascisms in a globalising world.

A: For me the most important thing about fascism that I think a lot of people miss whether they are liberal or radical politically, is the notion that fascism is on its own an independent threat to the capitalist functioning of the world. And so in that sense I often think it is useful to think of a three cornered fight both historically in the 1920’s and 30’s and also today and in the future. Capitalism is the 800 pound gorilla in the room and then in one corner you have a fascist movement and then in a third corner you have an unfortunately very small right now, anti-fascist and anarchist etc. radical left movement. And in that context I view both the Left and the fascists as being potentially revolutionary and interested in radically restructuring the capitalist system. It still runs the show but has to deal with both of these.

In a current context one thing I think is very interesting is that this point in time is perhaps the first time since the 1930’s and 40’s – since World War II – where capitalism in most of its forms on a global scale views people that are fascist as a greater threat to capitalist hegemony than it views the radical left. In the U.S. certainly, fascist organisations have taken far more state repression in the last 5 years than anybody other than, say, the Moslem Left in the U.S. They are the only other faction that’s taken as much state repression. That shows that in the U.S at least, groups like the National Alliance which is the largest fascist group in the U.S. with probably around 2,000 members, groups like that are coming in for a lot more attention from the state than any piddling little anarchist group is. Even though there are in amorphous terms probably 10,000 anarchists in North America, they are not organised the way the fascists are. So anyway, that three cornered fight is one key element of how I understand fascism.

Another would be to say that the ideology of fascism has historically been aligned with a sort of hard-line social conservatism. We talked earlier a little bit about the sexual obsessions of fascists, and one phrase I have used before is ‘atrophied patriarchy’ both in personal life and in the macro scale of politics. That this is a man’s world and it’s a straight man’s world in particular. That foregrounds the politics of the fascists and on top of that there are all sorts of other things that come and go. Historically white supremacy has been a key element of fascism but I’m not convinced that it’s always been the case and I’m definitely not convinced that it’s going to be the case in the future. In fact the essay I’m writing is largely about fascism in Latin America. Its not white fascism in Latin America, as much as things that look like fascism looked in Europe but in a context of Latin America where white supremacy is structured very differently. But you know there have been things like my brother’s book on the Green wing of the Nazis and the discussion we had earlier about ‘Nazis organising around ‘support’ for the Palestinians. Things like that which are frighteningly close to traditional Left positions are now also positions taken by some Nazis but their spin on it is that we need a more authoritarian, a more oppressive, a more patriarchal society to deal with these problems and if we had that then everything could be fixed. To me that sort of repressive authoritarian patriarchal structure is the crux of what fascist ideology is about.
I want to make it clear that I’m unorthodox in some ways at least in the U.S in terms of how I think about what fascism is now, as being different from what it was before. I think a lot of people are still interested in thinking of the Nazis as being primarily brainless thugs who are led by Hitler-loving freaks. I think that was not necessarily ever really true and I think its even less true now as time goes on. If you look at a lot of Nazi websites people like Metzger are much more interested in trying to make linkages with the legacy of somebody like Che Guevara than they are with Adolf Hitler. To them Hitler was, you know, maybe this interesting historical figure but he is useless now as an organising tool. And the Nazis are nothing if they are not serious skilled organisers, at least in the U.S. I don’t know if that is true here.

So in that context these people are saying “What are the things we can organise around?” and now in the U.S and on a global scale, you can see organising around issues like Israel-Palestine. It’s a key one and it creates all sorts of interesting alliances and sort of strange bedfellows, because you have a situation where a lot of fascists in the U.S. came out more or less in support of the September 11th attacks, saying you know the World Trade Centre was the capital of Jewish economic control of the world and it’s a good thing that they all died. That also sort of provides some convenient linkages with groups like Al Qaida to the extent that Al Qaida is a functional group any more. Groups of that sort are, I think, more akin to sort of an historical legacy and trajectory of fascism than they are to simply some very conservative Moslem theocracy. They have that element as well, but I think groups like Al Qaida are forward looking organisations at the same time that they are sort of nostalgic for the past. That is another key element of how we should understand fascism. This sort of dialectic between nostalgia and progress. That they are very nostalgic for this vision of an old world but they also know that on one level that old world cannot be re-created. We can’t go back to it and we have to move forward with that as our vision, towards this sort of authoritarian, patriarchal, repressive society.

And I think that the hope for a militant anti-fascism is precisely the allure of freedom as a concept, the allure of cultural variation as a practice, the allure of foods of various ethnicities, music from various backgrounds, things like that. I think most people in the world are more interested in that or it’s a more attractive concept in life, than the concept of repressive, authoritarian, patriarchal rigid society. And that I think is what anti-fascists really have to build on, that notion that there is a cultural battle being fought in addition to the occasional military skirmishes in the streets when you have demos. And I think anti-fascists really have to focus on that, the cultural end of things as well. Making sure we are building a culture out of anti-fascism that is inclusive, that is welcoming, is positive in its outlook, that’s not built exclusively on sort of anger and rejection and hate. Although those elements also have their place.

Q: So do you think that’s being successfully done at the moment?

A: Not nearly as much as I would like to see. In most places in the U.S. anti-fascism is sort of a sub-cultural phenomenon in the punk scene, often in the hip-hop scene in the U.S. and also in the skinhead scene to the extent that still exists. It does in some places in the U.S. have a sort of Left and Centre skinhead system, it’s separate from the Nazi skinhead system.

But to me that’s the great problem with anti-fascism on a world scale. Everywhere that I look, everywhere that I know about, anti-fascism is largely split into two camps. One is politically bankrupt because it is specifically liberal and says what we need to do is stop fascism by reinforcing liberal institutions in the First World by voting Democratic in the U.S. or by buying more, you know consumption and voting are the main elements there. The other version of anti-fascism is a very limited and marginal militant anti-fascism, which has the right ideas and has usually a very good practice, but is so marginalised that it doesn’t know how, at least yet in most places, to reach out and build cross cultural alliances, how to build a popular culture that says this is something open to everyone, you don’t have to wear a black mask and carry a baseball bat to beat up skinheads in order to join.

That doesn’t happen enough in my opinion, but there are definitely glimmers of hope in lots of places. I think more and more are realising if anti-fascism is going to be successful it has to be revolutionary. That is liberal anti-fascism is never going to stop fascism because fascism breeds on the resistance to the same capitalist system that the Left is also built in resistance to. So it has to be revolutionary and it also has to be cosmopolitan and open rather than being narrowly sub-cultural and you know “Fuck off if you don’t like our music or dress like us” or whatever. And so I don’t see enough of that, but its there in bits and pieces in different places.
Stitchin', bitchin ... and ending patriarchy

PIP'S PERSPECTIVE

From the 1st - 4th February, anarcha-feminists from all over Aotearoa gathered at Marama-iti for a marathon of meetings, workshops, skill-shares and delicious meals. The Stitch 'n' Bitch will hopefully be the first of many regular national conferences at which womyn can get inspired, recharged and organised for regional anarcha-feminist activities.

Our experiences at the anarchist talk-fest in Christchurch last year prompted a re-realisation for many womyn that we need to be organising separately around feminist issues, as well as getting together to socialise and support each other. The organisation of the Stitch 'n' Bitch was a fairly hurried and haphazard affair driven by the feeling that "we really need to do something". We’re taking stumbling steps at the moment, but the anarcha-feminist dragon has been snoozing a while and is just lumbering to her feet again.

Among the things drawing her from her cave are the recent revelations of rape and sexual abuse in our community. We were lucky to have at the conference two womyn who have been involved in dealing with a sexual abuser in Wellington. They explained to us the process their group has been through and provoked lengthy discussions about how we can best protect our community, support survivors and deal with rapists.

It was good to finally talk about these issues in a relatively safe and respectful space. However, these conversations took us right into the sexist heart of darkness and we did struggle to find ways of talking which were emotionally safe but not ridiculously abstract. We also felt stretched between wanting to find solutions to these problems and needing to provide a space for women to talk about their experiences, a process which is at the heart of feminist politics in any case. It was obvious that too few opportunities for this exist, and one of the projects to come out of the conference is plans for a support group for survivors of rape and sexual abuse.

It really grieved me to see that such a huge part of what it means to be a womyn in our society is surviving sexual violence. I was really angry that so many amazing womyn had been hurt in this way, that so much life, energy and creativity has been sapped by it. At the same time, the strength with which they survive is incredible, and an inspiration we will need if we are ever to heal our world.

We also covered the herstory of Anarcha-fem in Aotearoa, facilitation, mental health, natural fertility, the zine and where we’re headed next. We ran out of time and energy for many important discussions, such as Tino Rangatiratanga, sexuality, economics, affinity groups, armed struggle... (you name it, it was on the agenda) but hopefully as we grow in strength we will be able to spend more time looking outwards.

Of course there was a celebratory side to our gathering and we had a wonderful time swimming in the sea, dancing in the rain, sitting round a fire eating choqcy bananas, doing a bit of sewing and lots of chatting with a bunch of wonderful women. It was really energising to see new faces and especially to have kids around.

We realised that having a conference mid-week is a problem for many women, and that stretching it out to 4 days didn’t help us achieve that much more. It was also really, really hot! So the next conference will hopefully be a weekend near midwinter in Papatowai or Te Utopo o te Ika a Maui (i.e. somewhere in the lower North Island), but we need suggestions and enthusiasm.

Huge thanks to Jeff and Lucy for hosting us, you have created an amazing space at Marama-iti. Also to everyone involved in organising, especially Ali and Tara for the wonderful food. And to everyone who came for making the magic of sisterhood and solidarity.
Summer’s Listens

MR STERILE & D.S. LUNCHBOX
As the summer sun streams in, nothing seems more important than kicking back, swimming, tiding the garden and all those other fun things one like’s to do. It’s a periods of rejuvenation until the grind of work, the next act of resistance, or any number of other projects that flood back in to fill in those precious spaces. We’re going to focus on those things that give pleasure, of the aural variety. New music we’ve discovered over the last two to three months. And it’s going to be mostly of the independent variety.

Now we know these kinda things can seem quite vacuous, but personally, we’re often thankful to those who can point us in the direction of some new music that is both entertaining for the body, nutritional for the mind, and sustaining to the rest. Remember, taste is always subjective, so here it goes.

Vialka - Curiosities of Popular Customs.
This is a French duo consisting of baritone guitar, drums and voice. It has an eastern European feeling, pulling in threads of many folk traditions, musically and vocally, and redirecting them through Vialka’s filter. The outcome's tight, complex songs with rapid rhythm and timing changes. Big energy beautifully executed. As well as this album, Vialka have released a mini-album titled ‘The Passport of the Bored and Boring’, beautifully packaged as...a passport, and a DVD titled ‘Everywhere and Nowhere’.
http://www.vialka.com/

The Ivytree – Winged leaves.
A stunning album that is the solo work of one Glenn Donaldson from the U.S. It’s released on the label Catsup Plate, but Donaldson is better known in some circles as the man behind the Jewelled Antler Collective, stable of lo-fi, improvisational, and field-recorded offerings and the noisier offshoot label Pink Skulls. Winged Leaves, The Ivytree’s 2nd release, is a disc of acoustic tunes gently hammered together with ambient field recordings, reverb and wash, all wrapped in a splendid package of Donaldson’s collage. Imagine 42 degrees, lethargy, cicadas fanning a heat haze your way and you get close to The Ivytree’s bliss.
www.catsupplate.com
http://www.jewelledantler.com/

Kroko – Rabia
Finish 3-piece Kroko described their album Rabia as “horror ambient grind jazz core”. Released by Australian independent label Ten-Zen-Men, Kroko release their 2nd album of what appears to be a combination of pre-recorded and live tracks. In part, it reminds me of Naked City without the John Zorn meets Spaghetti Western-Morricone references. Huge slabs of density that juxtapose nicely with moments of spacious freefall.
http://www.ten-zen-men.com
http://www.deepturtle.net/

Sage Francis – A healthy Distrust
Released on the ‘Punk’ label Epitaph (though they have also released Tom Waits and The Cramps), Sage Francis delivers a gripping album of observation and commentary via the medium of hip-hop. Now I don’t know much about Hip Hop but this album, for me, just hits the spot. Its funny, his word play is exceptional, the compositions are layered, textural and very interesting. And I’m kicking myself like a madman that I missed him when he came to Wellington recently. Can I get an encore?
http://www.sagefrancis.net/

Norman Nawrocki – Duck Work
Anarchist poet, author, performer, multi-instrumentalist, activist, whatever hat you choose this guy’s the bomb! Duck Work is Nawrocki’s first solo offering though his discography is huge. Front man for the Montreal based Rhythm Activism, Nawrocki has departed from the cabaret style of RA and in Duck Work used more pre-programmed beats mixed with his instruments of choice, cello, viola, violin, producing an entertaining yet educational, unwaveringly critical and ascorbic bunch of tunes focusing heavily on the U.S. foreign policy of current times.
http://www.nothingness.org/music/rhythm/index.html

There’s a heap of other great stuff out there, hunt down Diamanda Galas, anything by The Ex, Melt Banana, and Sabot. If the more minimal, spacious but edgy is your thing, DS Lunchbox would also suggest you go hunting for the likes of bands such as Red Monkey, Deerhoof and if you like Shellac, hunt out some early Philip Glass recordings. And lets us not forget the locals, Pumice, The Futurians, Witcyst, and all the other independent music makers who inhabit the spaces outside the radar. We end this Zapata’s Jukebox with a poem from Nawrocki’s Duck Work, coincidentally named...

WHY AM I AN ANARCHIST?
Because old age pensioner’s eat dogfood
Because single moms on welfare cry
Because politicians steal our future
Because women can’t walk the streets safely
Because I want to breathe clean air
Because Hope, Freedom & Dignity are never on special at Wal Mart
Because Capitalism is a scam

WHY AM I AN ANARCHIST?
Because I’m tired of supermarket ripoffs
Because Truth, Peace & Justice are almost extinct
Because TV & newspapers lie
Because kids go to school hungry
Because I feel unsafe around cops
Because America’s President leaves me no choice
Because Poetry & Butterflies demand equal time

WHY AM I AN ANARCHIST?
Because no one will wash the rain
Because rabbits & ground hogs are getting armed
Because two-headed chickens protest, and no one listens
Because 20 minutes of sunshine can now kill
Because rent is no longer affordable
Because we deserve better

WHY AM I AN ANARCHIST?
Because banks rob people - and it’s not a crime
Because I want to banish all cars from the City
Because they build prisons, but close hospitals & schools
Because neither the Sun, the Moon or the Stars are for sale
Because corporate greed destroys lakes, rivers & forests
Because I am not afraid to dream
Because I refuse to remain silent

WHY AM I AN ANARCHIST?
Because it’s time to shut down McDonald’s
Because I have friends who can’t afford to visit the dentist
Because one homeless family is too much
Because the State blames & attacks the poor, but rewards its friends
Because no fat cat, lying politician ever has to wait for the bus
Because I want Social Revolution, now
- Norman Nawrocki
http://www.nothingness.org/music/rhythm
a poetry of life


BARRIE SARGEANT

By the age of 27 I had taught for 6 years and was feeling ambivalent about it. I liked sharing information and helping people but hated the authoritarian and bureaucratic structures of school systems. I went home one day feeling especially frustrated. I popped on a newly purchased movie. It was called Zero de Conduite/Zero for Conduct (1933) and was just the right thing at the right time. It became one of those rare ‘before and after’ experiences. So what was it about?

The movie opens in a train carriage and we see boys playing. They return to their boarding school. We are introduced to the regime of the place. Nightly inspections occur, undertaken by the stern Deputy Principal. Anyone not meeting expected standards receives the ‘Zero for Conduct’ of the title. During the day, the playground antics of the boys are given free rein. We discover a troika of pupils plotting a rebellion. There are scenes showing the contradictory behaviour of a new liberal teacher, a lesson given by a creepy Science master and the pompous and hysterical ranting of the Principal. The revolt happens on the day V.I.P’s visit, with the officials being pelted from the roof and other boys waving a pirate flag. It ends with the ringing pelted from the roof and other boys the day V.I.P’s visit, with the officials being especially frustrated. I liked sharing information and helping people but hated the authoritarian and bureaucratic structures of school systems. I went home one day feeling especially frustrated. I popped on a newly purchased movie. It was called Zero de Conduite/Zero for Conduct (1933) and was just the right thing at the right time. It became one of those rare ‘before and after’ experiences. So what was it about?

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The movie is told from the boys’ perspective, with a genuine respect for the creativity of youth. It uses a diverse range of techniques, including animation integrated into the main action and reverse slow motion, giving it moments of both surrealism and lyrical beauty. The whole package intrigued me. I found out that its Director, Jean Vigo, was the son of Anarchist militants. The film was made (and subsequently banned for 15 years) when he was 27 and Vigo died at only 29. Given my own age and circumstances, I had to learn more and discovered P.E. Salles Gomes’ biography.

It is natural to begin a biography with a bit on the family background of its subject. Here the entire initial chapter centers on the life and political career of Vigo’s father. He was an anarchist involved in anti-militarist activism and a journalist, these efforts resulting in imprisonment and eventual murder while in the ‘care’ of the state. The purpose in cataloguing this activist career is to establish the huge emotional and creative impact his father had on Jean. In short, he worshipped his father after his death. The author does a subtle job of showing that this worship was somewhat misplaced and the chapter gives an interesting character study. Unfortunately it is marred by an assumption the reader is well versed in the politics of early Twentieth Century France. Lots of names are dropped in, but their significance is often unclear, even when context is provided. A re-working of the text or some footnotes would help a lot.

The next chapter is a description of Vigo’s own life which was also full of adversity. He was bullied at boarding school and constantly struggled with ill-health and poor finances all through his short life. Due to some lucky breaks and family contacts, Jean finally got into films. His chance to direct the full length feature that became Zero, eventually came his way via a sympathetic horse breeder with no experience as a film producer. The rest is history. I liked the way Salles Gomes keeps the focus here on the biographical elements of Vigo’s work. He was bullied at boarding school and constantly struggled with ill-health and poor finances all through his short life. Due to some lucky breaks and family contacts, Jean finally got into films. His chance to direct the full length feature that became Zero, eventually came his way via a sympathetic horse breeder with no experience as a film producer. The rest is history. 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Anarcha-feminist Renaissance Underway

REVOLTA PROFUNDO & BELLADONNA BLACKHEART

Shakti is the new zine of the Anarcha-Feminist Federation of Aotearoa, a network of active NZ A-Fems. It is the fruit of ideas that sprouted during the 2004 Anarchist Conference in Christchurch. Anarcha-Fems felt there was a lack of NZ A-Fem info in circulation, as it was 7 years since the last issue of Sekhmet (the AFFA zine from 1991-97). They also felt there was a need to build solidarity and get communication happening between radical women around the country.

The first issue was put together by the Dunedin Anarcha-Feminist group (sistahood@nihil.net.nz) utilising submissions from around Aotearoa. The next will be made by the Wellington Anarcha-Fem Posse (contact anarchazine@gmail.com – PO Box 9263, deadline 23 March, distributed in April). Later issues will be collated by various A-Fem groups around the country. It will be published bi-monthly, alternating with Dissident Voice.

The zine features a hand-screenprinted patch, and contents include the Dunedin A-Fem group, contacts for groups around the country, definitions of anarchism, feminism and anarcha-feminism, abortion, A-Fem art and performance, Anarcha-Herstory, rape and sexual abuse including what has been happening in the Anarchist/Activist community, the feminine force of Shakti, awesome photos from Camp Crusty, recommended websites, books, recipes, cool comics and illustrations.

We think Shakti could be a swift kick in the nuts of Patriarchal Capitalist society but at the moment it is more a gentle reminder of women’s continuing struggles in said society, and within the radical left. Its emphasis is not on confronting men, but rather on supporting womyn. The tone is friendly without being patronising, it’s creatively laid out, and the content and style are impressive. The rape article is especially clear and empowering. The herstory of Aotearoa’s Random Trollops theatre troupe, once quite a force to be reckoned with, made for an inspiring read. It’s great to see information on the revolutionary Lucy Parsons, but unfortunately this and an article about abortion are missing text, which is confusing. These two articles will be reprinted in full in future issues of the zine.

There has been some lively debate over the use of the name Shakti (a Sanskrit term for “power” with a long evolving history within Indian religions, Hinduism in particular) and the place of spirituality in the anarcha-feminist movement, which will be reflected on in future issues of the zine. A new name for the zine is likely, too.

So although there have been some small fuckups it’s really exciting to see this zine out, we look forward to seeing it grow and evolve into an important resource for all genders in Aotearoa and beyond.

Please note: The authors were not involved in the production of Shakti but are a part of the AFFA and will be working on the 2nd issue of the zine.

Booklet Review

**The New Bush Lawyer’s Handbook**

From The Freedom Shop.

The New Bush Lawyer’s Handbook is a basic legal guide for New Zealand activists drawn from various updated articles published in The State Adversary during the 90’s. For a short introduction to arrest situations the legal processes most faced by activists the pamphlet is pretty comprehensive. In 50 pages it covers citizen rights; arrests and the processes after arrest; trials; complaints about and legal action against the police; search warrants and trespass orders; the official information act; a brief description of police organisation, units and ranks; police crowd control and interrogation tactics and an account of the chemical weapons used by police against protestors.

The pamphlet is great in demystifying all the conveniently ambiguous charges most often brought against activists such as Breach of the Peace, Trespass, Disorderly Behaviour and Assault, which are easily manipulated by the pigs and courts to crack down on activism. An excellent chapter on the trial process will be useful for all activists who wish to avoid becoming the orthodox passive spectator in the court system and covers planning your own defence, research, witnesses, giving evidence, political defences and appeals.

The booklet is witty, clear, and a pleasure to read. It is recommended to every New Zealand activist realistic about protecting himself or herself when forced into enemy territory.
**Nostalgic Sterility**

I really love reading “Dissident Voice”, it is an awesome publication and always has valuable content.

I was a little bit sad to read the “Rhymes of Resistance or Poems of Privilege?” piece however. I know the feeling of being at an embarassingly pathetic poetry reading, and the circumstances outlined in Mr Sterile & DJ Lunchbox’s article sound like the worst. However the authors then go on to despair of a de-politicized art, poetry and music scene in today’s Aotearoa, and lament the bygone era of the politicized 1980s. I think mostly this is actually just nostalgia, and I think that those who were active in the 60’s and 70’s would have felt the same in the 80’s and 90’s. The songs cited in the article – “Riot Squad” etc were actually just about as underground in their day as something like Wellington girl punk band The Carnys’ song “Bypass my arse”, but are remembered today because they have more substance and historical importance than your average love song. The popular art and culture of the mainstream is never very political, as in our capitalist society the mainstream is utterly absorbed in materialism. Having said that, there will always be politcized people who have something important to convey through their art. For all the disappointing poetry readings you might be witness to, there will also be someone out there creating the absolutely amazing words that raise the hairs on the back of your neck and make you realize that hope is not lost!

– Penny Dreadful

**On the Question of Violence**

I was disappointed by Torrance’s advocacy of violence in the editorial of the most recent issue of the Dissident Voice, not from a pacifist angle, but from a tactical one. I think the question which needs to be asked is whether violence is going to help or hinder the anarchist movement at the present time. In my opinion, in order for any anarchist revolution to work, it has to do so as a populist movement, rather than as a tiny fraction of the population instituting a completely different ideology. Anarchy by its nature must be grassroots.

The anarchist movement’s only communication channel to the public is currently the corporate mass media. We have little to no ability to reach the public through alternative media at present. We aren’t able to express what we’re really about, so we cannot afford to disregard the impact of the only messages that people receive about us. How much more difficult will it be to approach people if, as soon as we mention ‘anarchist’, recent images of violence are the first things that spring into their heads. How much extra energy will it take to de-program these people and explain that that is not what we stand for?

Torrance seems to suggest that if protests are not helping us currently without violence, which is a subjective truth in any case, then violence is the only way to make our voices heard. Saying pacifist protesting isn’t working, so we should more violently protest, simply so we can make any kind of real impact, is not sufficient. Torrance ignores that we could instead divert the time from protesting to activities of outreach, development of alternative communications channels, and organisation of unions, etc, which do not carry that same negative message to the public that violence does.

Our obligation should be to try to bring about anarchy, not do things that socialists won’t do simply to differentiate ourselves. Being radical is only useful when it is the most effective means to further your goals. Hopefully, in the future we can communicate with the public through other, more honest channels that let us get our real ideas and ideals across, but we’re not there yet. If violence alienates the people we require to bring on board, then I believe we should heavily consider whether it’s use is appropriate. We don’t currently have the luxury of ignoring its influence on people, whom we are not yet reaching through other means. Before turning to violence in an attempt to be more efficient, more socially acceptable techniques could prove just as useful, if not more, and cause less rejection from mainstream society at the same time.

– Shawn Prest

I agree with a lot of what you say, Shawn. The editorial I wrote wasn’t in fact advocating a blanket usage of violence but rather bringing into question ideologies like “non-violence” and the way in which they control us in our organisations. We need to be critical of these ideas, particularly around issues of who gets to define what is violent or non-violent and also critical of the necessity to create such artificial binaries. We also need to acknowledge where these ideas come from and why violence is an idea propagated mainly by those with an interest in maintaining the status quo.

Violence is an inevitable part of any social revolution that seeks to take back power, and historically violence within popular movements has almost always only come about as a response to the violence of the powers-that-be. Sure, violence now could have its place in stepping up the militancy of the left, but by the looks of the left today the question of “revolutionary violence” is just a tad premature (which we no-less need to work towards!).

I take issue with an important part of your argument, though. Of course anarchism has to be based on a grassroots movement, but I don’t believe catering for the capitalist media will achieve this. Anything posing a risk to the status quo will never be portrayed in a favourable light by the media and I don’t believe we should let its demands shape our actions. But even granting you that we could be portrayed positively, grassroots support of social change isn’t going to come from ‘nice’ images of anarchists on TV broadcast to a passive audience, but from anarchists getting off their butts and organising in people’s workplaces and communities directly.

And you can be sure that if we did become effective in community and workplace organising, if we did start to pose a threat to the established order, that even this would start to be portrayed very negatively and violently. Would we then have to ditch that too?

– Torrance