

Anarchists in Social Work

KNOWN TO THE AUTHORITIES



Contributors:

- Martin S Gilbert
- Mark A Newns
- Peter Good
- John Evans
- Doreen Frampton

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ANARCHISTS IN SOCIAL WORK

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Martin Gilbert
ULVERSTON

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Anarchists in Social Work: Known to the Authorities

1. Radical Social Work
2. Anarchist Perspective
3. Empirical Accounts

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INTRODUCTION

This book contends that anarchist thought and action have at times positively informed professional social work. The introductory essay, by Martin Gilbert, outlines some ideas in the literature of radical social work, suggesting that the profession has had a radical tradition underlying its aspects of oppressive social control. Within that tradition, he contends that anarchists have made a significant, if hidden, contribution.

Martin starts by mentioning some of this theory, progressing to record how libertarian ideas and methods of working helped him to organise groups; and networks in mental health services. Martin shows the stages of such development, its pitfalls, and what can be seen as repeatable results. Empirical material is drawn on, that will be of value to social workers, as well as those who want to organise a group.

These are 'despatches from the front line'. A common motif running through all the essays here is the authors' isolation and their tenuous position within the structure, following their challenges to the hierarchy. Sometimes they are welcomed, at other times protected by sympathetic managers, mostly under threat. Martin challenges hierarchical thinking through informal work. Even during his social work training, Mark News makes a challenge to rigid patterns of thought, with his radical critique of the discipline, but found support from his tutor. Mark then goes on to similar defiance in Liverpool, West Suffolk, Stevenage and other places. He advocates a holistic approach. Peter Good's classic account of the Calderstones hospital dispute exposes the unions' / management's unspoken deal not to rock the boat, which keeps the hierarchies in place, and unchallenged. Developing the outrageous technique of 'Imaginative Industrial Action', Peter confronts their self-serving complicity and called the bluff on the union bureaucrats' empty claims to represent the interests of staff or patients. John Evans similarly brushes up against local vested interests and council nepotism. Doreen Frampton records how hierarchies and vested interests close ranks and wage psychological warfare against whistleblowers. If there is a common plea behind all the pieces here, it is for the creation of political space and tolerance for these fragile early blooms to flourish.

Martin Gilbert. Similar to the other contributors, Martin Gilbert began his involvement with anarchists via the anti nuclear bomb movement in the

early 1960s. He worked in clothing workshops and then selling soft furnishings in department stores. From '67 - '72 he lived in the USA, as a student, casual labouring, selling newspapers and working for night clubs; while contributing to civil rights and anti-war activity. He started to learn about Counselling by listening to draft resisters. He was in local authority social work for 24 years. Due to ill health he took early retirement in 1996, but has been 'climbing back' doing some agency work, and teaching. Martin has an allotment where he develops vegetables and anarchist ideas.

Mark A News practiced social work for thirty years and martial and holistic health arts, Karate-do and Tai Ji Ch'uan for the same period of time. He has worked as labourer, dish washer, factory hand, and spent most of the 1960s working in the Committee of 100, the Simon Community and East London Squatters. He is influenced by anarchist ideas and the English radical tradition. He believes that much of the current 'anarchist movement' in the UK, (a) is not anarchist, and (b) doesn't move,

He went to America in the late 1980s, working as a Blues and Roots musician, Tai Ji Instructor and radical columnist for the Casper Star Tribune, Wyoming, and as a labourer on construction sites. He began teaching Tai Ji to American 'young offenders' at Pine Ridge Hospital for human development, an approach that has now become standard practice in state of the art therapeutic centres throughout the USA. He began a campaign on behalf of Uranium miners, who didn't realise it was lethal until they started glowing.

To avoid populist dumbing down in post Thatcher's Britain, he studied for an MA in the History of Ideas, at Northumbria University and a PhD research place at Durham University where his project *The World Church of Commerce* is being transcribed into a book. He advocates creative provocation, controversy, celebration and joyful mayhem and now writes, researches, sings the blues and teaches Tai Ji to older people at Age Concern, Newcastle Upon Tyne. Correspondence welcome:

Living Tao Project,
54 Waterloo Street,
Grainger Town,
Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4DG.
Tel 0191-261-8804.
Email address marknewsbudochilivingtao@yahoo.com

Website www.geocities.com/marknewsbudochi

Peter Good is a one time soldier, Trade Union leader, oil rig worker and author of *Language for those who Have Nothing*. A founder member of two workers' co-operatives run by ex patients he has worked extensively in psychiatry and is a qualified Clinical Mirthologist, currently leading seminars for the South Bradford Chuckle Club. He has crossed the Sahara six times. Peter's offering differs from the others in tone and content, but is just as empirically based. He gives an in depth account of industrial action in a residential setting, a long-stay institution for people with learning disabilities, when he helped to raise care standards while struggling against management, and Trade Union bureaucracy who were as bad as each other. Peter's essay originally appeared in *Anarchist Review*, November 1979. Those familiar with developments in the care of the learning disabled will recognise the practice of trail blazing ideas, before the work of Wolf Wolfenberger and the concept of 'normalisation' became common currency in Britain.

John Evans has been an actor, Community Development worker, and Probation Officer, and social worker. His three short contributions reflect the pain and frustration experienced by the dedicated professional. However, with John, oppressive managers have not always had it their own way. He is now working with Young Offenders.

Doreen Frampton SRN Our end note, *Whistle Blowing in the National Health Service* shows that exposing bad practice and corruption is not merely a trouble making exercise, but a professional responsibility. It is meant as a warning to the dangerously oppressive, as well as an encouragement to radicals of any stripe to seek allies, plan tactics and strategies. Doreen Frampton, SRN is based in the North West.

AN ANARCHIST IN SOCIAL WORK

by
Martin S. Gilbert

This book contends that at times anarchist thought and action has positively informed professional social work. The material is drawn from a wide range of settings. My view of anarchism is that it cannot be the pursuit of a perfect society because that is a contradiction in terms. Society is full of real people with their own imperfections and contradictions. Patronising opponents of this social philosophy label us 'utopians' equating anarchism with the unachievable. If anarchists contribute anything to a better system than we have now, it will be a mix of deists, atheists, left wings, and right wings; reflecting our present dynamic diversity. The main difference will be that anarchism will be a main influence. I see it as a road we travel, not as a final destination.

In *Resurgence* (Nov '02), reviewing one of her father Nicholas' books, Natasha Walters mentioned "true anarchism". While liberals emphasise freedom, and socialists equality, anarchists emphasise that you cannot have one without the other. They are inseparable.

I offer two brief working definitions.

What we stand for (taken from the New York Libertarian League):

"The 'free world' is not free, the 'communist' world was not communist (it was state capitalist). We reject the ideas of both. One is becoming totalitarian, the other was already so.

The state's monopoly of power must be ended. Government, as well as its underlying institutions perpetuates war, oppression, corruption and misery.

We advocate free agreement from the bottom (federalism) instead of coercion from the top (centralism). Regimentation of people can be replaced by regulation of things.

We stand for a society free of authoritarianism, nuclear weapons, militarism, racism, managerialism and sexism. A society based on human needs, not economic exploitation, whether such process derives from 'private' companies or the state.

Freedom without socialism is chaotic, but socialism without freedom is despotic. We stand for non hierarchical, libertarian (free socialist) forms of organisation. They encourage initiative and develop self-confidence to take direct responsibility for what is going on around us. The tools of training, decision making, planning and information gathering are there for us to seize. They need not remain the prerogative of political elites.

While rejecting the romantic arguments of violence, we plan to defend our environment using libertarian forms of organisation (like solidarity).

We demand control of our bodies, homes, education, places of worship and leisure.

We demand control over our lives and minds."

Social work is designed to increase the client's control over specific aspects of their environment. It involves in different ways, at different times, combinations of: 'comforting, reassuring, reflecting, counselling, advising, classifying, organising and directing.' [1] On some occasions, the social worker will place different emphasis on one or more of these elements.

The above definition is meant to suggest that circumstances, as well as individual style will demonstrate how libertarian or authoritarian, a social work task will be done.

Various professions have been affected at some time by social philosophies, and practised in some form as a result of such influences. How can we start to see how anarchist thought and practice have affected social work? Just as the individual is affected by different, often contradictory influences, so a profession or any large group will reflect trends of thought and action.

Social work has been influenced by Judeo-Christian values of caring for the needy. Added to this has been support for the work ethic and the status quo. Contrary to establishment thinking, but by no means as influential has been the idea that conformity to it only serves to perpetuate the conditions which cause social problems. 'the ideas base safeguards the power base' [2] 'Ideas and theories derived from (social work) training provide a basis for ideologies and a means of communicating, often in a take-it-for-granted way with immediate colleagues and interested outsiders, such as doctors,

psychiatrists, Health Visitors" [3] As Cressy Cannon says 'Because social workers are in the front line in the attempt to control the effects of poverty and environmental stress, they are subjected to particularly pernicious ideologies. Only by constant awareness of these will they be able to use their position in the fight for real change. [4]

We should not pretend that social workers are unaffected by the oppressive ideas that surround them. Orthodoxy, therefore, needs to be challenged with fresh thinking. Within radical social work, are those who oppose entrenched authoritarianism in its many forms, seeing it as a major block to clients' progress. They may not call themselves anarchists or be aware that the methods they prefer can be given a political name. The achievements of anarchist thought and action are invariably ignored, plagiarized or co-opted by others to advance their egos or careers. An example of this is how the battered womens' refuge movement developed.

Erin Pizzy set up the first refuge in Chiswick, West London, with much help from, Jim Huggon and some of his anarchist friends. He used to speak in Hyde Park and organised the speakers forum. Previously, it had been widely accepted that physical abuse in domestic confines could be ignored. As social workers tried to get funding for refuges elsewhere, we were told by councillors that 'there are no battered women in this town'. Although the movement spread, Jim and his friends never had their contribution acknowledged. This is offered as an example of how the real contributors, and anarchists in particular, get excluded from any such due credit.

Anarchist fundamentalists will claim that we sold out to agents of social control. Such critique speaks of the authoritarian left, who, misinterpreting Marx, claim that oppression prepares the ground for revolution, and that social palliatives can only delay that event. We deny that anarchists are in any such contradictory position. This is because we have been able to balance the short term struggle for clients' survival with the long-term aim of major change. In doing so we have attempted to raise the expectations of clients beyond their immediate problems, and the expectations of colleagues beyond work-place disputes. Further, anarchist social workers can claim that the profession was / is a way of earning a living, to pay the mortgage and look after our children - processes with which some people have yet to engage. Far from selling out, some of us will have seen the job as only being acquired on hire purchase, and if the employer missed one payment the whole deal was off! Together with our colleagues, we were not, as portrayed

by the media; naive do-gooders or members of an idealistic out-group. The internal problems that face social workers - or rather the ones that we have continually retreated from - are universal. Among us there is just as much selfishness, hypocrisy and double-dealing as in the wider community.

It can also be argued against us that for years we have been driven into retreat with continual dependence on private agencies giving us short term contracts. We can too easily be blinkered to the possibilities of creative action. Even if we remove some of the oppressive superstructure of the state, society will still produce its casualties who will need our skills. Therefore, while we are aware of how oppressive social work can be, alternative methods of working can be looked for. All sorts of good practice occur without the impetus of socio-political thought. The point is that it is useful to consider where ideas come from and what happens to them empirically. Stanley Cohen refers to the inadequacies of trying to use a Marxist, or any other kind of theoretical blueprint to cope with social problems. Alternatively, he suggests that social workers should defend their clients by acting as lawyer, organiser and information provider, helping 'the fight against the system' which made the problems. [4] In other words, the social worker becomes a resource and the client becomes a potential ally, rather than the passive recipient of good intentions.

These days social work has much emphasis on specialisation in specific areas such as child protection or mental health. Workers of my generation who have generic experience (having to deal with all sorts of problems) are becoming extinct. There can be disadvantages and advantages in both specialist and generic social work to pin point oppressive elements. We need 'oppression detectors' but such skills are missing when authoritarianism is taken for granted or goes unrecognised. One does not need to be an anarchist to recognise authoritarianism, but having such insight is essential. Rather than blame the individual, in the mode of traditional social work, the anarchist critique; with its suspicion of entrenched authority, and hierarchical structures, provides a sociological outlook to consider the causes of presenting problems, and how they might be tackled. Anti Oppressive Practice (AOP) arose from the ideas of Anti-Discriminatory Practice. Being aware of discriminatory practice, and attempting to change students' behaviour, for years, has been an important concept in the training of teachers, nurses and social workers. [5] In its literature, you very seldom see reference to authoritarianism, or anarchists. These 'A' words are generally avoided, which is another example of how our ideas and actions

have been ignored or copied without due credit. AOP has no anarchist label although it was welcomed by anarchist social workers and their less radical colleagues. What gives it an anarchist tint is that it suggests how authoritarianism is a root cause of oppression.

Around 1992 the Home Office tried to lean on The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to reduce the potentially political impact of AOP teaching on professional courses. This major trend in social work training might well have been called Anti-Authoritarian Practice. Neil Thompson's *Anti Discriminatory Practice* writes of the need to move 'from an individual conception of disability to a social one'. [7] He suggests how combating ageism, sexism, and disableism; means moving away from individual ideas of peoples' situations to social ones. In turn, this entails recognising political, economic and cultural bases of discrimination. This formulation some writers would call radical or even socialist. Thompson mentions how anti-discriminatory practice is related to anti-oppressive practice. If awareness of these relevant 'isms' receives so much attention in the training of social workers, and others in the caring professions, why is authoritarianism ignored? A possible answer is that social workers, in the main are very good at paying lip-service to a range of values, but confronting authoritarianism is beyond our grasp. It is as if we can only see clients as objects for manipulation rather than sharers of our solidarity. Cynically, the implications of AOP have been widely attacked as being 'politically correct' which gives a cue to snappy one liners that can hide a mass of spiteful reaction. But to extend our definition: AOP challenges attitudes, values, and behaviour or helps access of equal opportunities. Thompson also shows the link between power and oppression, with analysis that most anarchists would accept; and mentions the powers that social workers have:

- Knowledge and expertise
- Access to resources
- statutory powers
- influence over individual agencies and so on [8]

All indicating how abuse of power happens all too easily when the practitioner identifies more with management than with the client.

Regarding 'multiple oppressions', Thompson says we need to look at 'an overall edifice of power and dominance rather than separate or discrete

entities. [9] Various contributors to the literature on radical social work also recommend a wider perspective. Others would readily agree to the existence of multiple oppressions.

Yet it is hard to find them taking their thoughts a step further into reality, to look at authoritarianism as a main mechanism of oppression or anarchist thinking as a method for practice. One of the few examples I have seen is a few paragraphs on a web site: 'What is needed (today) is a shift in values, away from the more authoritarian, controlling social work ... towards (one) that is truly liberating and empowering.' [10] Another writer, Myra Garret observed: 'We have to be able to question arbitrary, ascribed authority wherever met, and to be questioned in turn when we slip in the cultural traps ourselves. Egolessness is inadequate and awkward as a description of the concept I'm after ... an attempt to express the conviction that ideas and principles can be espoused ... without promoting the ego of the espouser.' ... being guided by principles that have to do with collective power (not) individual power ... (lacking) personal ambition and being suspicious of those who only pay lip service to such ideas. [11] Her idea of 'egolessness' comes close to my idea of 'power-shedding' (developed further below), referring to the ways in which social workers need to transcend the power difference between them and their clients. She asks if there 'is a proper theory to build this egoless, network building social work practice?' Saying that she is influenced by Marx, Garret remarks that it is a class theory, the struggle between the haves and the have nots, but one that is rooted in 'egolessness, network building social work (contributing) to an accumulation of experience, consciousness raising, confidence building; necessary as a base for collective power. Political ideas like these are usually subsumed under the theory of popular power and are often associated with anarchism.' Although not wishing to use the anarchist label, she adds, 'anarchist consciousness is essential for socialism'. [12]. Supporting these ideas in his section of this book, Mark A Newns tells of "levelling the official distance" between himself and clients.

Stress on the importance of other anarchist principles is shown where 'some aspects of the feminist movement ... developed the type of solidarity that produced rape crisis groups. While not being seen as revolutionary by the authoritarian left, they reached 'towards democratic non-hierarchical forms of organisation' [13] 'Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is identifying ... it is a radical posture.' [14] But such examples directly acknowledging anarchist thought are rare, perhaps writers on radical social work fail to see the authoritarian wood for the AOP trees. I offer one more, which not only shows anarchist influences, but comes close to describing the value-base which influenced the organising of networks and groups described below.

Roy Bailey and Mike Brake observe that 'Radical social work needs to develop an organisational context, (providing space) to collectivise practice as far as possible ... (so) that we suggest that the libertarian socialist tradition may have much to offer for a basic democratic structure.' This 'space' also needs room to work with individuals...' [15] In their second book on radical social work, Roy is described as an anarchist. Such references to libertarian socialism are also rare. Although some writers show Marxist influences, most do not hint at anarchist ones. This is not to say that they are absent, rather that they are expressed in tactful language. Also, it is difficult to unravel and identify specific political influences in any profession. Social work shows how ideas of Christian socialism are mixed with liberal thinking, conflicting with Puritanism. Flexibility requires that social workers know which theoretical tools are appropriate in different situations. Contemporary expediency, all too often confines us to subtle modes of authoritarian oppression. This collection of essays only points to some main features of describing the influence of anarchists and anarchism.

Distinguishing anarchist social workers from their radical colleagues would not necessarily be seen in the ways that they operate together. We would be bouncing ideas off each other, and watching each others' backs. Whatever combination of ideas provides our motivations, creative thinking is more likely to be found in those who are not influenced by political blue-prints, or managerial thinking. Such qualification does not make people anarchists; it only places them close to us.

Another aspect of such proximity is seen in the quizzical way anarchists relate to authority and management in particular. You do not have to be an anarchist to have a bullshit detector, even if such devices may be more likely

found among us than other radicals. Social work has been obsessed by managerial fads: team working, Total Quality Management, Care Management (or social work by numbers as the cynics have called it) Best Value (which is about departments competing with each other); and 'empowerment' to name a few, have all delivered the packaging without the contents. Perhaps the 'best' one was 'Partnership', the buzz-word of the 1989 Children Act, which became the catchall for selling local services to the private sector. And of course 'care in the community' now meaning open access to cardboard city. Yesterday's wall plaque from the latest management training course is tomorrow's bin filler. Meanwhile, social work in any form is becoming extinct. But trends come and go so that the time may return when radical ideas will again be welcomed. Anarchists will be needed in that resurgence. At such a time, the value of Bailey and Brakes suggestion mentioned above might be used: while whole groups need to be catered for, the needs of individuals should not be neglected. [16 *ibid*]

Below is outlined the progress of some networks and groups I helped to develop, using some of the above mentioned libertarian ideas. I attempt to show that while significant goals were achieved in the groups, the needs of individuals received attention at the same time. If that seems like a teaching role, then mentioning that dual task serves to show a strong link between the two professions.

Indicated below are a number of basic skills used in group development. By no means are they the sole property of social workers or those who are motivated by particular values. I tried to use them as far as possible. Such skills are useable in various situations where a group needs to be formed with those who find it hard to communicate, and may have little in common with each other apart from the shared problems of isolation, poverty, recurrent illness and marginalisation (if I can use a current buzz word) [17] Also mentioned below are some problems my colleagues and I faced which are common to group development.

Potential attendees being reluctant to engage with you is one such difficulty to expect. The personality needs to be asserted, whether it shows quiet persuasion or something more forceful, to elicit a return of your interest. The idea is that you do not give up efforts to make contact too early, abandoning people to their problems and isolation. A hint of salesmanship is suggested here claiming that a major part of that skill is knowledge of one's

own goods. In other words, knowing what one is doing, and the expected outcomes.

As the group develops the organiser will at times need to be a bit more assertive than at others, but it is done with a light touch, so that the group is not dependent on your authority. In the late 1980s in the Birmingham area the term 'assertive outreach' came to the attention of my colleagues, as we realised that we had long been practising that technique.

It is helpful for the potential organiser of a group to think of either being a 'chair' or facilitator. Facilitating a meeting rather than chairing can be hard for the people who lack the self-confidence for the former method. It means encouraging people to talk and helping the less vocal to feel that they are as much a part of what is happening in the meeting as anyone else. Also, it suggests that you can make things happen as a result of your facilitation. Chairing can be more authoritarian, it is a way of steering a meeting through its business. Possibly, the best chairs are those who can comfortably slip out of the directive role to facilitate the meeting. This is an example of what I have referred to above as 'power-shedding' and enlarges Myra Garret's idea about ego-lessness. Unconfident of themselves, their material or their audience a chair will control a meeting by dominating with personality and other techniques. Business of the meeting will get done. But there is the danger that people at such meetings will remain dependent on the chair's authority, rather than inspired by their own initiative.

A major aim in social groups is that users will actively participate, using their own initiative, rather than remaining dependent on its organiser. A step in that direction is letting clients see your respect for them by:

- Not talking in ways that point to the power difference between you.
- Not dressing so well or eccentrically that a power difference is suggested,
- Letting their decisions take precedence over yours, even when an element of risk is involved (explained further below)
- Getting them to develop their own agenda, rather than getting them to respond to yours.

In sum, Power-shedding goes together with showing respect for clients. It is involved in transcending the power relationship that exists between

organiser and client. Instead of acting as an agent of social control, you are bringing people to be where you are.

Another technique of power-shedding is to suggest if not actually show our vulnerability. A mate of mine in the Probation Service supported this idea by losing his pen, slipping down in his chair, or dropping piles of files, in front of clients. The opposite of this thinking was seen in a team manager, who recommended that as far as possible, his social workers should always sit at a higher level than clients, and never sit on the floor with them. By suggesting our vulnerability, I do not suggest that social workers or group organisers should become a 'wailing wall' - a recipient of endless emotional outpourings. Self-control is like concentration, and self-awareness: social skills which groups can help recover or improve for their members.

A further aspect of power shedding shows another brief example of social work's similarity to teaching: anything positive that the group or its constituent members do is to their credit, not to the credit of the organiser. At one time success in group work - getting clients to attain pre-planned goals, was a stepping stone to promotion in Social Services. I measured success in the way our results improved peoples' lives, reduced the rate of hospital admissions, and attracted resources for our work. With some groups, whether they are for action in a community or social work objectives, it can be important to raise their profile, drawing attention to its functions.

Specific people in the community, or potential professional allies (health workers, psychiatric nurses, doctors etc) should be kept informed of the group's aims, composition and agendas. They should have an active interest in networks and groups of service users because they are so vital as rehabilitative stepping stones to recovery. The professional networking involved in this task can add far more to career building than advancing a group's aims. But before you get to that stage, primary tasks need consideration.

Overcoming blockages to interaction is possibly the hardest task. It goes together with the questions of what stops people coming to a group or interacting in its borders. Easily, one can be unconsciously oppressive in tackling this problem. An aim, rather than a continually achieved goal, is to help people feel a part of what is going on. Often, recovering mental patients are socially isolated so that their self-confidence is badly eroded.

We see much of the same thing in those who have 'normal' mental health. Overcoming peoples' inhibitions is first achieved by them having confidence in you as an individual, not as a result of the task that sends you to their door. Such confidence is elicited by the way you present yourself, not because Dr X wants Mrs. Y to attend your group, or the trees in the park are under threat.

I used clients' relationships with me to form groups and networks. Pairs and trios of them were introduced to each other to encourage relationships. I would stress that 'it's only for one hour a week' (I'm not trying to take over your life) It's about negotiation, initiative and circumstances guiding your script.

Isolated people can often have a lessened sense of self-awareness, as can authoritarian bullies, or those who are too unsure of themselves. Also, the way in which a social worker is seen as an authority figure can be a major bar to interaction in the group, and overcoming peoples' inhibitions. Even when expressing the best of intentions, the groups' organiser must remember that we are dealing with people who are conditioned to respond to authority in such ways that only cripple initiative, and spontaneity. Be aware of your perceived authority, even if it is only an image that others have of you. The way in which we perceive each other, is the first clue as to how, or if a relationship will be formed. Difficulty in making personal relationships is not a problem confined to those with mental health problems.

For many marginalised people integration in the wider community is something they will never achieve. They may have behavioural / learning / mental health disabilities. However welcoming the atmosphere we try to create, they will see it as quite intimidating. This is especially so when you have spent too long at home, or just spend the day wandering around at your own, aimless pace; many places are just too stimulating or frightening. It is as if the fears of your first day at school never go away. Just as people can become institutionalised in hospital, slaves to unchanging routine, so they can become institutionalised at home, confined by self-inflicted behaviour. Many types of situations that they can enter are controlled hierarchically, reinforcing a self-concept of failure / inadequacy, leading to decreased self-confidence. A vicious circle ensues.

Making Relationships: Stepping Stones to New Roles

Over-medicating clients in the community, as a substitute for professional, or social contact, and the relationships that can ensue; is a common practice.

I have met people who were afraid to have their medication reduced! Due to these difficulties, the group organiser, needs to ask not only how to maintain attendance, but how to increase the participation of its members, so that a vicious circle can be reversed. Hopefully, self-confidence will begin to emerge as the individual begins to creep out of the institutional shell. A partial answer is that we need to do two tasks simultaneously: the needs of the individual member must be considered as the group develops. An example of that dual task is seen in the early stages of a group, or in early stages of introducing a new member to an existing one, when a decoy is used to make a relationship with a potential client.

Duck hunters use plastic ducks, decoys, to lure their prey; the idea is applicable to group work. One method I used to attract people to our group was to tell them that by doing so they would be able to help others. Pushing the anarchist concept of mutual aid was not the point, rather it let my decoys see themselves as givers of help rather than its recipients. It also alerted them to the fact that some attendees, more vulnerable than others, would need the group's services for longer than those on a faster recovery track. I would take the decoy round to meet the potential attendee, and as far as possible, let the decoy do the inviting. This technique was extended when people wanted to go to places of mutual interest.

Verbal skills are not always essential in using decoys. I once took a client round to meet someone with similar symptoms. Verbal exchange between them was very limited, but with the handy man's eye, my decoy noticed several small jobs that needed attention. Within days these two had made a useful relationship. Our fishing groups developed partly out of using decoys, but what I have written here is anathema to many social workers, because it could be said to break confidentiality, and therefore is a major block to the type of service development mentioned below.

Confidentiality is an important principle, but the bureaucratically minded can use it as a way of blocking imaginative ideas. In using that first step of taking responsibility, the decoy begins a process that can turn him / her into a valued volunteer, a client then becomes a colleague. Using decoys is another way of allowing people to see themselves in roles other than that of service user, dependent on others for an identity. An extreme but vivid example of that idea is seen in 'One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest', when the anti-hero, McMurphy, takes a group of psychiatric patients fishing, 'borrowing' a fast motor boat for the purpose. As one of his charges panics

in his attempt to land a big one, McMurphy yells at the patient to exercise self-control: 'You're not a loony any more - you're a fisherman.'!

While confidentiality is a major principle of social work, such guidelines can become prison bars for the unimaginative. The idea that clients should be together in each others' homes would go against the ways in which confidentiality is over used in practice. But in the hundreds of useful individual contacts that people made with each other, alluded to below, only two bad incidents occurred as a result of clients knowing where each other lived.

Unnecessary worries about insurance can also prove to be as big an impediment as concerns about confidentiality to the development of the work described here. Our society follows America in too many aspects. Trends suggest that we are becoming equally litigious. I was once asked by a social worker how much insurance our fishing groups carried. She was surprised to learn that we only had car drivers' insurance.

To diverge, I want to say a word about the beneficial aspects of fishing. Chatting together without strain can be very difficult for the client group described in this essay; but it is a recoverable social skill. Creating a good atmosphere in a room can be hard as people go through the processes of getting to know each other. But put them by a canal bank, with minimal equipment and you are likely to halve the time in which such progress can be made. It may be because shy people do not have to have eye contact, and other forms of interaction imposed on them, but can relate to others in the group at their own pace. Our fishing group was a broad mix of ages, abilities, and diagnostic classifications. While some people came to it by being new referrals, others were attendees of previous groups we had run. Such threads of continuity are more than chance. They arise when planning is an ongoing task, using client's ideas to create activity. I could be criticised for pursuing a personal interest, but during the scores of fishing trips which I helped to arrange and transport, I never once picked up a rod.

To summarise: much of the task in organising groups and networks with recovering mental health patients involves making relationships with people who can be having profound difficulty in achieving such a task. Once some kind of relationship can be made between the organiser and the client, there is the potential for the client to use that skill (which may have been lost for a long time), to make relationships with others. The organiser's skill and

sensitivity will guide that progress, to the benefit of the individual as the group develops and its members get to know each other. Hopefully, such relationships will be based on:

- Respect for individual differences
- Shared concerns for clearly stated problems
- Awareness of behaviour and its effects on others

Avoiding Static Thinking

Static thinking is often shown by authoritarians, who hide their lack of imagination, and other skills under a cloak of dynamic action. Ironically, they are often the people selected to arrange reorganisations and restructurings, which are only window dressings for oppressive change. It is also observable that quite often social workers who survive on the job, but are unable to make relationships with people, get into managerial posts, in spite of being 'client shy'.

It may only be possible for a few people to respond to what you are offering at one time, even if a wide range of activity is available. Nevertheless, you have to look for opportunities to link individuals, through mutual interests or compatible personalities, from one small group to another one. In this way pairs and trios of clients, with widely differing ability levels, can follow broadly mutual interests, linked in a network. Clients can then choose how and when they will mix with others, rather than have people determine this for them.

An implication of the above set of ideas about the social worker's / organiser's recommended method of developing relationships is that such work is kept under review. It is oppressive and authoritarian to take relationships for granted, viewing such relationships only in the terms in which they were first conceived. Such static approaches are well documented in Peter Good's contribution to these records, offering detailed illustration of institutional thinking and practice. All kinds of groups can experience a lack of energy caused by staleness not just those concerned with mental health clients. Methods of keeping relationships under review can vary depending on available resources. An efficient group will record its decisions in minute form, but not write a word about the relationships within its frame: Its members may hate each other intensely! It is also worth recording the ways in which relationships between people change over time. This invites criticism that any recording of a group will reflect the

subjectivity of the recorder. Alternatively, we can argue that social workers are in the business of behavioural change, whether such changes result in conformity to the state; or having the self-confidence to discuss or refuse psychiatric treatment. Consequently, such recording needs to be substantiated with case histories, mentioning significant changes in attendee's behaviour; suggesting how the group / network has improved their lives. Recording in some form makes accountability possible, and should make us welcome outside, objective, qualified scrutiny. Your supervisor / scrutiniser may not be able to come to your group's meetings, but at least they could give you feed back from your notes.

In order to test the relationships in a group we need to ask such questions as:

- Is it something that the individual attendee values, or do they see it as an imposition?
- If positive things are happening in the group, how is this seen in terms of clients' behaviour?
- Are you remembering that even if you see your work within the group as fairly libertarian and positive, they might be seeing you as an authoritarian bully?
- How can the organiser recognise the cues which indicate how the group or its constituent parts are viewing him / her?

And use these as stepping stones for our clients, taking them away from isolation.

A result of this kind of work (as I shall attempt to show below), is that people are not merely fitted into patterns of controlling social expectations, rather, an aim is to help them to be more comfortable with themselves, and therefore more self-confident at interacting in the community. This will show itself in mundane activities such as using public transport, going shopping, visiting the library; all taken for granted by those with 'normal' mental health, but distant goals for many people recovering from mental illness. A vicious circle then traps them into boredom, reactive depression, decreased functioning and recurrent admissions. But looking at the task more hopefully, as your networks / groups expand how do you avoid trapping people in static situations? A partial answer is that as far as possible, activities should occur out in the community, rather than inside a purpose designed centre. An organising base is needed, but beware of the Millennium Dome syndrome, where a container was built with insufficient

thought as to what it should contain. A range of different activities is needed for small groups, so that it is easier to introduce newcomers, and try out new ideas.

In sum, our clients need the type of group or networks that will enable them to take steps towards becoming more involved in what is going on around them. They do not need anything that will leave them in the kind of social vacuum that underlines their existence at the end of their time in the group. But these are skills to attain as we learn the job.

Similar to the development of self-awareness, professional identity grows in disjointed, incremental ways. Pride in the job and the way you practice your newly acquired skills are part of that process. Sometimes quite unwittingly, you do the wrong thing, while at others you do something right; equally unaware of your interventions implications, just following gut instinct, linked to your ideas of self-worth and freedom. I diverge a little here to offer an example of this, in the following anecdote. It shows how spurious authority can be challenged in unexpected ways.

Getting Started

My first job in Social Services was as a temporary welfare assistant, in 1972, for the London Borough of Enfield. We were in the catchment area of Friern Barnet mental hospital, which was also known as 'Colney Hatch'. Starting to learn some ropes, I accompanied Anne Marie, a social worker to Dr X's ward round. To describe my observations I must refer the reader to the film, *DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE* where the despotic Consultant, full of mighty bluster, strides along, obediently followed by his sheep like staff. Dr X was such a figure, and oppressive abuser of authority.

During my career I saw power come down from Consultants, and be taken up by other, related professionals at a lower level. Various factors contributed to this slow but highly significant development, as did the professional climate preceding the Mental Health Act 1983. Slow release 'depot' injections greatly increased the options for people to be treated in the community, rather than in hospital. The introduction of Community Psychiatric Nurses, in the mid 1970s, to give those injections, and form professional relationships with clients in their homes; contributed to the discussion about 'care in the community'. Doctors generally, were getting considerably more public scrutiny than in the past, so that they had to listen to lay people. Psychiatric opinion was no longer holy writ. The formation of

MIND, the mental health charity, combined with civil liberties campaigning, also gave encouragement to psychiatrists to shed some of their power. It is no coincidence that the late Tony Smythe, who contributed so much to anarchist causes, was a General Secretary of The National Council of Civil Liberties (forerunner of LIBERTY) and then National Secretary of MIND.

The impetus towards a multi-disciplinary approach was related to that shift, as was the trend for consultants to listen more effectively to patients, and their loved ones. I believe this power shift was also helped by the satisfactory results that were obtained.

This book is being written at a time when there is a most serious threat to the civil liberties of detained (or 'sectioned') mental health clients. For a long time, Tory and New Labour governments have wanted the powers of social workers to be considerably reduced in such situations. A number of very dramatic cases in which mentally ill people became murderers, led the tabloid press to distort the facts, representing anyone who suffers from schizophrenia as a potential murderer. The fact that there are far more murderers among so called 'sane people' was ignored, as was the lack of resources in psychiatric services, a point mentioned in Public Inquiries that reported on those tragedies - Inquiries that were produced at a cost of £1 Million a time (some irony there!) It is common in organizations, not just in social services, for resources development to be delayed due to emergencies. Yet it is equally common for 'emergencies' to be caused by a lack of resources. Also, there was / is the opinion, supported by MIND, that the high suicide rate among the long term mentally ill, would increase as more sufferers were driven to despair by enforced treatment. Research might show that such death rates were lower with more liberal practices. The media could be expected to show little attention to such findings. It is much to the credit of Psychiatric Nurses that they have delayed this legislation by refusing to substitute for Social Workers in doing Consultants bidding. But to return to Dr X's ward round at 'Colney Hatch' in 1972.

When we got to the great man's office, Anne-Marie, the social worker accompanying me, said that I should put on a white coat, pointing to a clean pile of them. More out of absent mindedness rather than anything else, I failed to do so. Later, Joan, our boss, called me into her office. She had beautifully cut tweed suits and a good bullshit detector. It seemed my not wearing a white coat had caused a stir. One of Dr X's minions had got on to Joan about it, but had been quickly dismissed. Far from reprimanding me,

she suggested that my action had been welcome. The point being that although this was only one incident, it chimed with all the others that were also challenging authoritarian practice at that time.

My ideas were slow to develop and be put to use, but I was lucky to be with the right colleagues at the right time. In 1971, as an overseas student on a first degree course in San Francisco, I much enjoyed a course on social group work. A wide range of different types of groups had given me experience of how they form and develop. Since that time the literature on that subject, as on every other field, has grown enormously; but there has been no change in the types of groups with which I worked with most comfortably. In that decade I worked with various sorts of youth groups.

A main model social workers admired at the time was that of the 'Outward Bound School' where the main emphasis was on character building through healthy outdoor activity. It was supposed to make young offenders see the error of their ways. Explanations as to how that was to be achieved were very thin, but plausible to those hung up on Victorian Values. But hindsight gives us a critical eye. Some radical social workers could not see how running up the side of a mountain could help a lad with serious emotional problems, who needed people with listening skills.

In 1983, I helped with a group comprising 16 - 17 year olds, who had much 'form'. We spent most of the time sat around smoking, drinking tea, and talking (including our weekend away in North Wales!) Statistics showed that they kept out of trouble for an impressive length of time. But this method of working, (we referred to it as Intermediate Treatment) became unfashionable; and other trends in Juvenile Justice took over.

'Warming Up'

In 1989, working in a North Western Local Authority, on being given permission by a highly imaginative, non-oppressive manager, to run an all male group for mental health clients; the last thing in my mind was to make political points. Field workers and clients alike had much respect for our manager. If you had a good idea, he would give every encouragement for its fruition. When he was away, team members used to check his desk so that we could prioritize incoming work. His successor as our manager used to keep his door locked. My time budget was limited to about three hours a week initially, extending as other groups developed out of the first one. Sometimes I worked alone, sometimes with a colleague. Our small team of

mental health social workers' daily business had to be pursued irrespective of long term plans: admissions to, and discharges from psychiatric wards, and support work for clients' and their loved ones. Usually I found libertarian, anti-authoritarian power-shedding, mutual aid methods of working, were more effective than others in the three years that I contributed to service development.

Also in 1989, I met 'R', a special needs lecturer at the local Community College. She was not an anarchist, only one who was sympathetic to my methods. The work reported on below developed out of our own initiative. Only minimal resources were available. Our first mental health day care unit did not open until a few years after these events began. As elsewhere, cross-disciplinary work was encouraged. Co-working, to develop group work between such colleagues was a new departure in our area. Our planning, like the acquisition of skills to deliver it, was incremental. We wanted to see if clients could be encouraged to use the college or basic facilities in the community. R's section had a substantial number of students with learning disabilities. Where possible they were helped to enter the mainstream of college life. Systems at the Community College were imaginative and flexible. Programmes could be designed to meet individual needs irrespective of handicap. Consequently, teaching staff had more chance of focusing on student's abilities.

In spite of this user-friendly atmosphere, social workers were telling R. about highly problematic cases. Some people seldom left their homes because they had forgotten how, or had never been able to function outside of its environs (institutionalised at home.) They were the 'square pegs' of the areas case load, the clients who had been passed-by due to lack of resources. They were a mixture of people with learning disabilities, 'maladjusted' and recovering mental patients who had problems with their thinking, feeling, behaviour, and poor self-image. Their shared and individual problems had been made worse by institutionalization at home. In some cases, severe neglect had been the main cause for exclusion from the community.

R. wanted to help. Perhaps the out-reach work from the college could assist? How could bridges be made between that very mixed client group of 'square pegs' and those recovering mental patients who were equally in need of stimulation. In this two year period, three separate, and at times interrelated groups were formed; one of 'mixed' classification, as described above, one for the more able recovering mental patients (both of these of male

composition) and one for women. A wide mix of ages occurred in all three groups which over-lapped in their lifespans.

Changes in the local home care service contributed to the results mentioned below. Imaginative input led to home carers' ideas being widely used. They made suggestions about which potential attendees should meet in twos and threes for brief periods of activity. Some members of this 'mixed' group needed home carer escorts (minus their identifiable overalls) to get to venues. These were usually the common rooms of sheltered housing schemes or an appropriate pub. In order to ease inhibition and build self-confidence some participants were introduced to each other in their own homes. Home carers assisting this 'mixed' group provided minimal supervision of activity. Also, they observed interaction, reporting this at planning meetings.

The objective was never simply to get bottoms on seats at the college. These groups followed a wide range of Day-Centre type activities out in the community or in each others' homes: football, walks, evenings out, table games, craft work, welfare rights sessions, discussions, quizzes, and fishing trips.

This technique provided what can be called 'warm up work': preparing individuals to be part of a group [19]. It was needed, in particular, to assess participants who were more in need of individual attention. There could be no failures. Home carers helped the warm up work by having contact with me and R. Consequently, meeting the need of individuals could be planned without losing sight of long term collective aims, such as extending the fishing group from four to twelve members.

Occasionally R. would also take part in activities, easing the first day at college for those who chose that option. Again, the decoy technique was successfully used, but having mates to go along with was also helpful in overcoming fears. One example was 'Dick' who has learning difficulties and was a very 'square peg'. He seemed to have panic attacks during his first observational visits. He gradually became a respected, if highly extrovert member of a cookery class. Carefully fostered mutual aid between established special needs students, helped 'Dick' and others to overcome

their initial inhibitions, so the final part of their warm up work was done on campus.

Initially, home care staff found it frustrating that the mixed group temporarily disbanded after six months, its more able clients having started sessions at the college. It seemed that the less able had been left behind. However, two years later some of those people finally joined their mates from the mixed group at college.

Although small scale these ventures were not just a departure from the former home help service. The home carers mentioned here saw that they had contributed to a thread of continuity. Successful groups can occur, in an organisational vacuum with no continuity of action when such projects have ended. The mixed group and its developments indicate how home carers, in long term cases, can advise, befriend and assist. The grasp of this combined function is not often credited to such lowly people in the social services hierarchy.

Community Psychiatric Nurses were kept informed of developments and invited to come when their patients were in any of the groups. Usually, their work loads prevented such visits. This did not prevent psychiatrists from making demands on the groups to achieve long term therapeutic goals. Useful links were made between Community Psychiatric Nurses and Home Carers who were increasing their knowledge about mental illness and problematic behaviour.

In February 1990 when the 'mixed group' was under way, the second all male group was formed. Attenders were invited who lived near its base, a sparsely furnished community centre. It's weekly sessions were helped by another social worker, W. and a Senior Lecturer in Special Needs at the college, T. He had much experience of assisting on a sessional basis at the day centre of a psychiatric hospital. Less inhibited and more motivated than the mixed group, they did not need the 'warm up' work mentioned above. Five out of twelve by coincidence had met other members of this group on psychiatric wards. Outreach work from the college included regular visits from its staff. They helped clients think beyond the confines of their homes, encouraging mutual aid within this eight month long running group. Some of its members maintained contact with each other long after the groups' closure. In good weather, both groups were brought together in a conservation task on a piece of industrial waste land. The Groundwork Trust provided us with ideas and contacts to make this a successful outing.

Planting hedges and laying pathways gave further opportunity for some to find new roles other than client. One member of this group went on to do voluntary work at the college. He also became one of the main volunteers for the fishing groups.

In October 1990, the womens' group was formed. It was aimed, as were other groups mentioned here at the long term unemployed, often with additional problems, e.g. learning difficulties, poverty or recovery from mental illness. Initially based at the college, it moved off campus after a few months of weekly meetings. Its warm up work was mainly done by R. who led this group. Referring social workers were expected to aid in that task. A., a female social worker, also gave R. some help. I acted as resource but did not attend meetings.

This group dealt with a wide range of issues. Various educational and social group work methods were used. Some of its sessions were 'closed' (no new members or visitors were permitted), helping to create an emotionally warm atmosphere where deep confidences would be shared. It improved its members' ability to share support with others present and talk openly about their lives.

As with other groups mentioned here, door to door transport was needed for some women.

The attendance rate was encouraging as was the number who went on to take courses at the college. Ten women from all over the borough were successfully introduced to this group in a seven month period. Two of them obtained paid employment. This group's goals were planned by seeing the achievements of the other two above mentioned groups: accessing the community and confidence building. Improving communication and other social skills, personal awareness of needs (not having them defined for you). Physical and mental well being were also benefits that clients derived from the womens' group. also, it encouraged members to further training or other meaningful occupations.

A wide range of educational backgrounds and needs were apparent in this group. They accepted and helped a young woman who lived on her own with learning difficulties. She was known as a kicker of policemen and breaker of windows. In the womens' group she responded very well. Again, pressure to enrol at the college was absent. However, the changes that took

place in all the people mentioned above (including R. and myself) made platforms of experience which could be used to good effect. It contributed to the formation of ideas and contacts that led to our establishing the drop-in centre in June 1992. This was preceded by two outreach workers whom I helped to train. Our team manager was concerned that I would feel hurt about other people taking over what I had organised. He need not have worried, my ego was not so big, and I felt very reassured at the way my work had contributed to attracting such resources.

Anarchist Social Work?

The above record of social work in a North West Authority suggests the type of radical practice that anarchists would support. Not only was it client centred, but where possible client controlled, attempting to transcend the power base between professional and service user. Attention was paid to details like putting changed self-concepts to use as soon as possible. Social work of this type should be easily accessible, flexible and unencumbered by managerial superstructures. It should be directly accountable to clients, like a good community resource, rather than to 'elected members' and their toadies.

Such elements are what might be defined as 'anarchist social work', but they are not exclusive to that idea. Like an anarchist society, such social work has no blue print. Its strength comes from spontaneity, when conscious strategies and tactics are used. The practitioner / skill holder provides a framework of basic organisation, and the client, on their own supplies newly acquired energy. I illustrate these ideas with the following account.

While on my professional training course, late one night, my landlady asked a favour. She was friendly with a young woman, 'J', who worked at the corner shop. Due to their problems, I was asked, at a moment's notice; to speak with J. and her boyfriend. My landlady knew little of my background, other than that I was a student social worker, but had evidently found this 'referral' to be appropriate. It was very inconvenient for me, but I felt curious and slightly flattered. She withdrew, to leave me to speak alone with the young couple.

They had been going 'steady' for years and wanted to live together. J's mother seemed to be very possessive, did not approve of any man associating with her daughter, and was using emotional blackmail to keep the status quo. Also, they needed information: J was 18, what was the legal

position about her leaving mum and going to live where she chose? Reassurance and information were easily given and accepted.

My point is that their attitude towards me, as a social worker, suggested that I was an available; accessible resource, to which they had a rightful claim. Probably, they would have had similar expectations, had I been a plumber or electrician, who could meet their needs.

End Note

It is too easy in these repressive times to claim that resistance is futile. Instead, we can look for allies to help implement strategies and tactics. Our resistance to authoritarianism is a professional responsibility, but not one found in any job description. The types of creative social work methods described here are not at present in fashion. But often, events in different ways repeat themselves. Consequently, these ideas will again be of value one day because they are tools for anti-authoritarian social work, irrespective of how despised and feared they may be today by managerial elites. Although suppressed and ignored, there has always been a radical undercurrent in social work. Beneath that undercurrent, so to speak, run threads of anarchist thought and action. These essays have started to draw together some of that material in an attempt to recognise those colleagues and comrades we have respected, and the training needs of those who are yet to enter our profession.

Martin S Gilbert
1st February 2002.

Note: I apologise for omitting from the first edition the works of Colin Ward and David Brandon.

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ANARCHISTS IN SOCIAL WORK

Anarchist Ideas in Action.

by

Mark A. News

There is a strange type of human being, highly motivated to 'help others'. These 'Social Workers' come in different hybrid forms in contemporary society, although there is a view that they are a dying if not extinct species. The span of 'happy helper' runs from the essentially authoritarian personality, to those dreamers and rebels who seek a society based on voluntary free association and mutual aid. They work to eradicate powerlessness with the client. This self-regulating personality seeks power over her / himself and a sharing of resources with the helped. The latter is the Anarchist; the libertarian who works within a hierarchy of command / obedience roles, who is structurally part of the system, and ideologically committed to working against it. Crazy? Lets do a section!

Split Brain Anarchist Roots

Anarchism as a radical political philosophy derives from the Greek word 'Anark-os', "without a ruler". It is a kingdom of many mansions, with specific landmarks in history, when and wherever people have challenged tyranny and exploitation. It is part of the 'antinomian tradition', in that it challenges the fixed moral laws of Church and State, favoring free co-operative association and individuality, from Zeno of Greek antiquity, to the essential teachings of Christ, where mysticism and rebellion combined to create a grass roots demand for social revolution. If the light of God is within all beings, how can any individual or group claim the right of power and privilege over others? This radical perspective gained expression within the Brethren of The Free Spirit, which flourished vigorously in Western Christendom, from the eleventh century onwards. The roots of anarchism cannot be separated from the roots of mysticism, which were facilitated by confrontation with the corruption of the Catholic Church, and yet strove for a "craving for apprehension of and communion with God."

Just as mainstream consciousness and concern with out time is with 'credit rating', and consciousness as an extension of commodification, the Zeitgeist of the Middle Ages was Salvation or Damnation of the individual soul. The Heresy, or Brethren of the Free Spirit, would only acknowledge the truth of

their own experience, not the dictates of the priesthood. Historians always argue about dates, like Social Workers and their 'cases'. The Movement of the Free Spirit is dated firmly within the thirteenth century, and consisted of wandering bands of preachers, prophets, rebels and assorted outlaws, to be found in northern France, Belgium, the Low Countries and parts of Germany. The origins of Christianity and the Bible, speak of all humankind being traced to Adam and Eve, and the Earth as a common treasury given by God to humankind. This logic or truth combined with the simple communism of Christ's teachings to set the stage for the Anarcho-Communism of the Middle Ages. Norman Cohn in *The Pursuit of The Millennium*. "When finally one comes to consider the anarcho-communistic groups which flourished around the close of the Middle Ages, one fact is immediately obvious; it was always in the midst of some great revolt or revolution that a group of this kind emerged into daylight." This is equally the case with John Ball and his followers in the English Peasants Revolt of 1381, the early stages of the Hussite revolution in Bohemia in 1419-1421, and with Thomas Muntzer and his League of the Elect, the Peasants Revolt of 1525, and the radical Anabaptists of the same period.

Luther's stand against the Sale of Indulgences, 'Cash for Salvation', was the sixteenth century catalyst for the radical wing of the Reformation, establishing the power of individual critical autonomy, based on the 'indwelling' light, and social change. From this period, 1517 onwards, grew the English Civil War, and the radical sects and organizations committed to justice and change; i.e. The Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, Shakers; this period of deep social ferment, crystallized around 1649. These ideas and millenarian thinking, that rejected hierarchy and injustice, were informed by the increasing secularisation of science, and the eighteenth century Enlightenment, that gave autonomy to reason and quantification. The French Revolution of 1789 overturned the ancient tradition of Royalty as a living God, of power and privilege. This provided the historical catalyst for the communitarian / educational writings of the art and prophetic psychology and revolutionary ideas of Blake, and the seminal anarchists of the nineteenth century; Proudhon, Bakunin, Malatesta, and Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, which was written in response to Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1856). Kropotkin showed the scientific and structural possibilities of anarchism working through confederation, and co-operative mutual aid, as a practical necessity for survival. Kropotkin showed that sociability was a key to human survival, and that the State is essentially a parasite that feeds off division, class, capital and conflict.

The influence of Marx's historical materialism arose from his philosophical orientation as a young Hegelian, and studies of nineteenth century industrial conditions, that determined the shape of anarchism within the period. Marx was determined to be seen as an inventor of 'scientific socialism', within the 'scientism' of the period. His compulsion to produce a dogmatic authoritarian formula for revolutionary change, alienated his ideas from anarchist thought and action, that placed a premium on creative thought, spontaneity and the self-determination of the working class. Marx and Bakunin the anarcho-communist were sparring partners during the early Working Men's Internationals. The common belief system or secular 'religion' was a belief in the historical inevitability of socialism, the working class and its historic role.

Anarchists were, and still are, stuck on bits of Marxism, even though now the IT Revolution presents a sea change in working conditions, and a commodified consciousness that has internalised and standardised capitalist psychology as a devotional object. People will not reject the gods that fund their very survival. Anarchists are generally agreed that direct action at the source of power is the best way of dealing with it, and that direct democratic decision making works. The right wing is represented by Max Stirner, of *The Ego And His Own*, and extreme individualism that says "what serves me is fine, what does not is unimportant."

Marx was influenced by three major sources; German philosophy, English economics and French politics. The Marxist / Leninist belief in the State as the vehicle to eliminate class antagonism, and through a Vanguard Party, Democratic Centralism, and Dictatorship of the Proletariat achieve through transitional periods, a classless society, derived from Rousseau's 'Social Contract', and in turn from Plato's 'Republic'. The general will of the people was abstracted from direct democracy and entrusted to hierarchy, and created the living lie that freedom can be achieved through dictatorship. Anarchism, as such has always been more of a moral philosophy than a political one, and has always been the enemy of authoritarian belief systems, and specifically its location in the arbitrary power of the nation State, and the social pathology of capitalism. Its appeal has always been to moral consciousness within the individual and its relationship to political power. Today its dogma is disconnected from current commodified consciousness, but it has traditionally worked as a network of tributaries that flow within areas of society, ranging from educational, community, group and social

work, the arts, science and literary work. The concern for group solidarity, individual freedom and unflinching confrontation with agencies of coercion, has taken the ideology into a space of action within the realities around which the average person has to organize their lives. The strength and the vital obsession is that freedom is about moral responsibility, creative play, and the transformation of arbitrary power, into mutual aid and solidarity. There is a worrying lack of imaginative audacity in subverting power amongst contemporary anarchists, and a tendency to revert to dogmatic prescriptions, and violent confrontation. I think there is a danger of the 'movement' becoming commodified as an icon of political possession, rather than a dynamic catalyst for change and education. I believe that this process is the current fate of all sectors of society, which includes social work, now defined by managers, as centralised control and 'Best Value', 'Time and motion in Cyberspace' Treadmill. Welcome aboard! Grab a piece of the Pie! Don't Rock the Boat! Keep Your Nose Clean, and your retirement pay, and Improvement Ratings are guaranteed! I mean what did you come into this scam for? To help people? You must be a stand up comedian looking for a gig! - What are your roots anyway?

Social Work Roots

Social work is rooted in the mutual aid principle, but its institutionalisation within European society, spins off from feudalism, and the 'Christian' obligation of the rich to help the poor. *The 1601 Poor Law Act* made the provision of charity an obligation. The word comes from the Latin, *caritas*, meaning 'to care'. This was in part due to the all pervasive influence of Christianity and the status of begging during the Middle Ages. The Beghaards who were part of the *Heresy of Free Spirit* movement, roamed Europe during the late thirteenth century crying "Bread for God's Sake!"

Their profession was poverty, lay mendicant friars and vagabond monks; they practised asceticism and voluntary poverty, and were close to the teachings of Christ. "Blessed are the poor." As Christianity became increasingly the apologist for power and the imperial State, its connection with the poor, outcasts etc, became disconnected.

Rural poverty increasingly gave rise to urban poverty as nineteenth century industrial capitalism, coupled with urbanisation created the exclusive nuclear family, and the population movement from the country, to the creation of industrial towns. *The 1834 Poor Law Reform Act* created "Two Nations", those with sufficient income and those without, who went to

prison, or the Work House or Debtor's Prison.' The institutionalised form today is 'The Dole' populated by the 'Underclass'. The Poor Law was inhuman, families were separated and degraded for the crime of having little or no money. This era inception, what Erich Fromm has described as "The Secret Industrial Religion" To Have or to Be.

The mainstream source of worship, was only superficially Christian, its essential frame of orientation, and devotion, was the mechanism of life, the subjugation of labour, and the deification of money. This 'Trinity' of Money, Machines and Quantification, has today simply been updated by cyberspace. Its brutalisation of the human psyche is just completely acceptable, because the technology is so glossy and 'cool'. It presents as a cosmetic, rather than a control mechanism and an object of idolatrous worship. This was rooted in Benthamite 'Utilitarianism' or the doctrine "that the measure of morality is the greatest happiness of the greatest number". "Happiness" being 'quantifiable' and serving money and the market of British economic philosophy, if not you 'Went to the Wall'. Thatcherism was essentially a resurrection of this social predation. It was estimated by Robert Owen the 'Father of British Socialism' in one of his innumerable philanthropic reports to Parliament, that Afro-American slaves in the American deep south, enjoyed better working conditions than industrial workers in the nineteenth century factories of Lancashire. From the sewers of poverty to the liberal consciences of the rich and middle classes, came philanthropy, the reduction of working hours, and the systematic organisation of welfare provision, notably the *Charity Organisation Society*, 1890s Octavia Hill, and hand outs to the 'deserving poor' to be distinguished from the 'feckless, 'Workshy', and 'ne'er do wells'. Stemming from these 'good people' came *The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children*, established in Liverpool, Fabian Socialism, and the Webbs. Shaw, and the establishment of the London School of Economics. Political science was born, managed by a new style of middle class bureaucratic socialist, who were very caring, and genuinely believed that they, and they alone were born to govern.

The roots and branches of CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) are a classical example of this style of 'progressive management'. The class based charity game became dressed up by 'social science', and the development of 'casework'; a distillate of psychoanalysis, a cocktail of therapies, elements of sociology, bits of Christian care, and bureaucracy thrown in for good measure. *The Poor Law* gave way to *Welfare Boards*, and psychiatric social work was imported from the USA in the 1930s. There were real attempts to

address problems rooted in psychodynamics, but these obscured the cultural class-war dynamics of human inequality that has always been intrinsic to the *Social Worker* and *The Client*.

Sociology and Social Work

The edifice of social work ideology reflects the state of contemporary socio-economic forces. When the economy is 'delivering' on some equitable basis, the writer found that client categories tended more to a class mix with emphasis on social / psychological puzzles. This was particularly so in the USA. When capitalism was delivering to the rich and middle classes, with growing levels of wider poverty, client need was rooted in economic factors. Social workers are like grains of sand blown across a socio-economic chessboard. Social workers get paid, have headed note paper and credit ratings, and are invested with statutory power by The State. Clients are the victims. Anarchists in social work feel an urgency to deliver practical help within the social struggle for survival. The focus for this writer had to be time and again how can I be a catalyst for self-help, to extend the dignity and self-determination of 'these people', and politicise, de-mystify and use my authority as a tool for this?

Strawberry Fields Forever

Historians generally agree that social work as such was born in Liverpool in the late nineteenth century. The protection of children demanded it. When I joined Liverpool Social Services in 1978 / 1981 I realised that social workers had considerable power to release money to clients who had little. The managerial / accountancy High Priesthood hadn't taken over then, the job was still 'client centred' or a 'personal social creative service'. The energy of the 60s and 70s resources of Seeborn was still having reverberations, although it was to be swiftly eclipsed that year, with Thatcher's devastating cuts to all Social Services.

I was working from 'District E', known as Toxteth, the south End, or "where they play tig with hatchets". Strangely and pleasingly I found that I was generally known to my clients as "Mark, our friend in the system." I think that for essentially powerless working class communities, to have a genuine helping resource, within an official agency, meant a great deal. I instinctively levelled official distance between myself and clients. I never asked to be called by my first name, it just happened naturally.

I have noticed how so often officialdom takes over vanguard ideas as a front, and reduces them to a shell. Although the informal approach, sharing of common problems, children, relationships, was something that the libertarian left in Liverpool were pioneering. It was away from 'welfare to humanfare' when it came down to it, we were all in the same boat. There was a strong SWP (Socialist Workers' Party) presence in Liverpool, but they saw change happening within authoritarian structures, although they politicised strongly. The difference was that anarchist involvement tended to take change through to the Nth degree: "pushing the envelope"; it can mean having a low survival factor, and recognising that you don't have a "career" but a series of engagements or 'skirmishes'. Often for the working class, it meant children being taken into care, and Granny into the funny farm. Without this stance it meant collusion with the power structures of Housing, Social Security, utilities and The Police. In so many cases social workers were simply functionaries who rubber stamped and colluded with the expectations of other officials in Liverpool. We were known as 'the busies'.

This involvement all occurred during The Social Work Strike 1978. (It occurred two weeks after I joined the Department) Many of the middle class Marxists were politicised by the people themselves. To see these well heeled people shivering on the picket line was a sight for sore eyes. Many were going through terrible angst, dealing with their guilt, and occupational double bind. Many of the clients supported the strike, because they saw the issues in practical working class survival terms. 'If it had not been for my social worker...' The middle class always seem to intellectualise, and the working class act with what is. Much of the change and creative atmosphere was possible because it was Liverpool. Question: "Why are Liverpoolians so funny?" Answer: "You fuckin' have to be to live 'ere, mate!" You have to adjust to the folk way of doing things, 'we' were intruders on their turf. Bureaucratic innovation frequently has to be recycled in the obvious and simple to rejuvenate its sterility. I was frequently asked 'What did you do to so and so?'... 'It's a miracle, they have completely changed for the better.' I replied 'It's complex and intricate; I treated them as a fellow human being.'

In Liverpool I think that social workers were an extension of the priesthood, and we know the control invested in that little lot. The politicised social workers saw their role in ideological terms, problems were rooted in economic, social and political powerlessness; these in turn were individualised by the statutory services, that structurally are a part of state / class capitalist divide and rule. This double bind of being part of the

solution and part of the problem is fundamental to the job description. Its ideological justification rests in it addressing practical / survival needs, 'The reality situation', like the police or teachers and this requires some degree of collusion in the system that generates the problems that social work has to address.

Anarchists and Emotional Disturbance

What is the nature of this curious psychology that lends itself to this style of personal torment? Anarchists have been likened to psychopaths, possibly because of an intensity of conviction. There were deranged souls and nihilists in the 1880s and 1890s, who believed in 'Propaganda of The Deed' by the bomb, bullet and dagger, and engaged in the assassination of heads of state etc. The publicity image from this era has never gone from the 'black cloak' image and completely distorts the truth of the doctrine. The psychopath tends to have little or no conscience and is emotionally cold. The anarchist tends to have her / his conscience on over-drive, and is strongly emotional / passionate; the historian's 'Romantic Rebel'. They express a strong militancy of compassion and sense of social justice, and identify strongly with the oppressed, or 'wretched of the earth'. Anarchists have an unflinching rejection of arbitrary authority, coercion and political tyranny, and a highly developed sense of political intelligence, when giving analysis of the operation, location and distribution of power within society. They tend to be the natural enemies of centralised, hierarchical power, favoring political decentralisation, direct action etc. They tend to be conscious of the fact that within political organisation is the State in embryo, and that organisation must reflect its ideology. It is a living process, or sentence, not a Party Card. The structures of political power, coercion, law, military, media, money, propaganda maintain power and privilege. State Class and Capital are indivisible. Anarchists are the natural enemy of dominance behaviour and psychology. The machine of conquest manifests in IT, technology, in the Work House, The Factory, The Military Barracks, The Bureaucracy, the enslavement of The Military Killing Machine, the machine of Plato's Republic, the first prototype of the modern state, where the cardinal rule was that people must be incapable of thinking for themselves.

Against this anarchists have posited an organic alive model of decentralised non-hierarchical organisation. The machine of globalised cyberspace simulating social space, and mimicking human creativity and intelligence, is another story, and one with quite sinister implications.

Anarchists have traditionally shared a highly developed sense of imaginative audacity when resisting their political enemies, a powerful sense of history and a vision of the future. The anarchist political animal has vast reserves of personal courage, and a tendency to be at the cutting edge of social / political change. Most anarchists have tended to reject the psychopathic personality and violence as ideology, viewing it as a key feature of authoritarianism, manifested in its most sophisticated form by the corporate State. Desperate men, and lunatics did kill in the name of freedom, but for most anarchists propaganda of the deed has meant a political commitment as life style. It had a massive influence on the creation of the 60s 'counter culture', where beliefs and ideals were lived, without evangelising. "Most worthwhile ideals, ideas and values can only survive if they are embodied within peoples' lives, that are a living message." (Erich Fromm *To Have or To Be*)

At heart in anarchist psychology is a deep love and respect for life, and fascination and enjoyment of the human condition. There is a spiritual tradition within anarchism going back and beyond to its medieval roots. The eighteenth century Enlightenment gave autonomy to reason, and the nineteenth century secularisation of all belief excluded spiritual / mystical experience from what was considered to be 'rational' and 'scientific' source. A telescope will help you study and enjoy the stars, but to believe that the telescope is the stars is great folly. This is an area that will have to be re-examined and integrated within anarchist politics, because lack of spiritual juice is drying the movement up, and in fact is turning the planet into a desert. Anarchist detestation of cruelty which hides behind so much of human dominance behaviour was a main drive behind the Animal Liberation Movement of the 1980s and 1990s, although sometimes it feels as if humans no longer belong in the equation. All movements tend to become totally obsessed with partial truths. How can animals be liberated if humankind is still in chains? A love of the hedonistic and sensual has been a feature of Romantic / Rebel Individualism, which includes anarchism, although this was tempered by Catholic Puritan influences of the Spanish anarchist movement, strong Quaker Baptist and Tolstoyan influences bearing 'witness to power'.

Anarchism, The Twentieth Century, and Now...

Anarchism as a political force to be reckoned with, probably had its hey day in the first quarter of the twentieth century around Syndicalism, Workers' Control, in France, CNT Spain, Italy and had a major spokesperson in Malatesta, who focussed on the industrial expression of anarchism, and this had branches in the IWW in the USA, Canada and Australia. Bakunin denounced the 'historic role of the state' as 'the pillars of capitalism'. Anarchists still cling to the central Marxist belief in 'the historic role of the working class' 'historical materialism' when capitalism has become part of a commodified devotional object or system of sign-objects, that circulates as meaning constantly throughout consciousness; transmitted by incessant reinforcement of technoculture.

A great deal of work overhauling and updating elements of redundant ideology must be undertaken if anarchism is to have any relevance within contemporary society. Culture, consciousness and commodity have become fused as one central dynamic in peoples' lives. Much of Marxist 'radical' theory is constantly recycled as museums of past dogmatic experience, the truth is in the 'known' not relevance for now. A 'Memory' has been enshrined as truth, and as a secular religion only requires faith from the flock, and the 'chosen ones' wait for the millennium. There has never been one class that is revolutionary. Revolutionary situations happen amongst alliances of all classes as history shows time and again. The reference group for working class people has always been the middle class, in terms of upward social mobility, improved living conditions, better life chances for their children and so on... Secular myths die hard, because they obviate the need for overhaul and bloody hard creative work. The anarchist belief in direct action, addressing and confronting the source of power, is clearly manifested in those anarchists who are outsiders, by working on the 'inside', and who are attracted to action within formal institutions like 'Social Services'. The spirit of freedom and that of bureaucracy are like oil and water, or are we talking sado-masochism here?

Meanwhile back at The Case Conference.....

So what would a 'freedom fighter' or an anarchist in his or her right mind be doing in a Social Service Department? It gave the writer an opportunity to empower the oppressed, through politicisation and mobilisation of resources; i.e. money. I helped to release a lot of money into the pockets of those who had none, and it gave me the opportunity to critique and change some of the absurdities of bureaucracy and authoritarian structural

organisation. It seemed more real for me not to hand out vague ideological leaflets concerning the oppressed, but engage directly and practically with the situation. It gave fulfillment of my need to protect, politicise and care for the more vulnerable elements in society, and get paid for it. The situation gave me the opportunity to politicise amongst social workers who were of a middle class liberal / conservative orientation. I was aware of being an 'anarchist in social worker clothing', and Liverpool Social Services Staffing Section remarked "he was the only anarchist Liverpool ever employed." (And the fuckin' last!) I didn't go around with it tattooed on my Neanderthal forehead, it is a mode of consciousness, rather than a specific political ideology, inevitably it shows, and doesn't make for a long-term, cosy career structure. It could be said that the anarchist orientation *is* the career structure. It is rather like you are with a large group of people waiting for a vast firework display to start and you are sitting there, wondering when it is going to happen, and you look around and realise everyone is looking at you; you have to light the blue touch paper.

I became increasingly aware that one way or the other I occupied this political category. Many of the social workers were fascinated and horrified at what they had discovered because they shared much of the libertarian perspective, as any liberal would, but only a maniac would attempt to live it. It would be more true to say that it lives you. It has been said that liberals are 'shame faced conservatives', there is a great deal of truth in this ethical / political observation. You don't plan to become a revolutionary, you *are* one. It is not a revolution in terms of displacing power structures with a new set of murderous bureaucrats but entering into a relationship with life itself, where there is an on-going discourse and action within the fields of freedom and power. It is something to be lived, not to be killed, converted, captured or controlled. I experienced it as overthrowing a psychic condition, and being vulnerable to negative sanctions within a bureaucracy, and to an extent by definition not being able to cover 'your arse'. The vulnerability and exposure is part of the strength of the perspective. Much of my work involved giving Social Enquiry Reports to the Juvenile and Crown courts to help young 'offenders' find an alternative to incarceration. There were real risks involved, but I helped establish a record in keeping youngsters out of confinement. The risk taking could take serious turns for the worst. There were serious and comic episodes. One youngster after being sentenced to Youth Custody, when asked if he had anything to say raised his head to the heavens, and said "Fuckin' beam me up, Scottie." The court for a few moments exploded with laughter, order was soon restored.

Tony A. found creative alternatives to Youth Custody. He teamed up with his mate, and played the latest 'dare game' in the Dingle. This consisted of running into a house with an open door, stealing as much as possible, and running out as fast as possible. They entered one house and encountered a ninety year old woman who collapsed in shock and proceeded to have a heart attack. They made her a cup of tea, apologised, and she survived. When I interviewed Tony he was as white as a sheet and very scared. It transpired that the little old lady was the mother of the 'McMurphy sons', a major crime family that held down most of Liverpool. They had already threatened Tony and his mate with having their houses burned down, with their families inside, the normal method of execution, was to simply run down the accused with a car.

I think they learned something about the nature of fear. I had to get him and his mate rehoused in a secret location in Liverpool.

The roots of my own politicisation which led to my sentence in Social Services and 'short fall in the on-going psychoses' (don't they love their jargon?) covered work in the first wave of the anti-nuclear war movement, CND and specifically the Committee of 100, finally as full time organiser, and later work on skid row with the Simon Community, Community Adventure Playground work and self-employment as martial holistic health arts instructor in this country and the USA. One of America's great strengths is that creative opportunities do happen, the availability of money, tends to lubricate potential and make it actual and through introductions, I was working as a columnist with the *Casper Star Tribune*, a Wyoming daily.

The opinion page editor was Charles Levondosky, a New York radical, who was the Poet Laureate of Wyoming, and who won several Freedom Awards for defending the First Amendment. I was able to write from a radical green perspective, and using first principles of Jeffersonian democracy, was able to get across a range of anarchist ideas, that would have been unacceptable. At the time, late eighties early nineties, to be called a radical in America was to be called a wild-eyed bomb thrower. To return to the main theme. What if anything, did anarchists, or anarchist ideas contribute to a more libertarian and ethically based, 'non-oppressive social work?' I think that the libertarian perspective was a catalyst for enabling the facilitating. The Local Authority (LA) power structure took the edifice of this approach and mimicked it, using it as a cover-up for an increasingly authoritarian / management

accountancy based so-called 'care work'. Without a sense of freedom and value of the person as an end in her / himself, there can be no ethics in social work, and the question surely is, what is social work today, and what is freedom? There will always be some element of the disadvantaged person within society, but is it the business of a profession? Concern should be community responsibility, but we know that the reality is not community, it is commodity and self-hood. Social work functions in the huge chasm that the alienation of a commodity / acquisition, money obsessed culture is crippled by. Co-operative, social action is constantly seduced by the reinforcement of the individual hero-figure consumer. 'John Wayne with credit rating and smoking gun, constant fodder for the beast's unremitting greed.'

As the 'underclass' grows (*Untermensch*, I thought we beat the Nazis?) so the bureaucracy must grow to cope with it. Hierarchy and control are inseparable. The greed fear and selfhood of the individual are reflected in former political atrocities like 'Thatcherism' and the psychosis of 'no such thing as society', when we know that humans are social, cultural beings. Saying 'no such thing as society' is like saying 'no such thing as legs', and we are about as much culturally and socially crippled as that remarkably dangerous statement. Without a sense of 'society' no primary human identification is possible. Thus we have in contemporary life an eerie stage set of designer barbarism, glossy predation and an underlying theme of social menace and apprehension.

Does the anarchist in social work say well yes, brutal systems create a brutal society and people are its victims. They maintain the politicians' psychosis, but I, the freedom fighter will get in there and politicise and justify my middle-class pretensions. During the period of time that I worked in Liverpool, my area manager, Alan James, was a warm hearted Christian liberal intellectual, who gave a great deal of support to me in my work with young offenders. Alan was an expert in Child Care Law, and people like that for me made the job possible. He cared deeply about his clients, and had the political clout to back it up. Rather a warm hearted Christian than a cold hearted anarchist any day! I find that he still stands powerfully out in my mind, because he showed the potential creative, statutory use of power.

The Simon Community

Part of sixties radicalism was getting to the roots of power and confronting it. The tradition of direct action was for a while taken into life-style and modes of work as service. This was exemplified in The Simon Community, that provided shelter and friendship to homeless people and involved taking soup and friendship to Waterloo Station and other sites, on 'soup runs' where people were sleeping rough. Direct action was basic to the helping process. The whole process of that period is almost like trying to remember a forgotten language, not in terms of personal awareness but in terms of group social interaction. It was the antithesis of the Zeitgeist that obtains now. It was a rejection of middle-class materialism, elitist images, and the cosy stereotypes that say if you conform and play the corporate game, the house on the hill is yours, and security opens for ever, because now you're in heaven, but 'first you must learn how to smile as you kill.' Thanks John Lennon!

The Simon Community was named by Anton Wallich-Clifford, after Simon of Cyrene, who helped Christ carry the cross on the road to Calvary. Anton had been in the RAF and sported handle-bar moustaches to prove it. He had been a Senior Probation Officer at Bow Street Magistrates Court for many years, who got tired of having referrals labeled as No Fixed Abode, and realised that what the homeless needed was homes, with a real community spirit. He was a radical Catholic visionary who believed in love in action, through taking direct action against social evils, he was instrumental in creating 'homes' full of warm, informality and acceptance, not 'institutions'. Power in the network of houses, devolved down from the Director down to the Houses of Hospitality, and to House Leaders who were accountable to the whole house for its running. House policy was decided by democratic participation at house meetings, accountability and recall.

The vast majority of House Leaders were women, because their intuitive skills and gender tended to inhibit potential violence and defuse some of the ugliest situations. The structural organisation was financially supported by some grants, and living out of a common purse, £1 a week pocket money, and half an ounce of tobacco and papers if you smoked. Fish, meat, fruit and vegetables were 'conned' from Billingsgate, Covent Garden and Smithfields markets. Donations and cast-off clothing were always plentiful, plus tea, soup and a smile.

Motivation for Voluntary Work

On my first day at Simon I was slammed up against a wall by a 'meths drinker' who shrieked 'Why does an intelligent man like you want to help a fucking cunt like me!' A fair question. He believed in plain speaking. My radical middle-class pretensions were constantly challenged and sometimes it was formidable and dangerous. Shortly after that experience, one of the residents, Geordie, tried to stab the Publicity Officer. They frequently had a problem with communication. I can still remember the flash of steel, and the struggle to thwart a killing and stay calm. Workers were in a strange double bind. When residents attacked you at some level, if you just absorbed it, you got it even more. Then if you challenged or remonstrated with them, then you were told 'You are here to care for us, all you are doing is poncing off the dossier!'

The motivating force for full-time volunteers was service or love. The motivating force for social workers within a statutory context has to be compulsion and official power over the client. You can humanise the role, but it circumscribes everything. It must have a command hierarchy in order to enforce statutory orders within the relationship. Compulsion has to do with money, pensions, headed note paper, hierarchical authority and officialdom. I discovered some years afterwards when I became a professionally qualified social worker. When dealing with life / death situations, it is necessary to be able to enforce a Mental Health or Care Order, but it has very real limitations. I don't think that I ever worked in a setting where the complete needs of the individual were given such a detailed and compassionate focus. The co-operative voluntary principle combined with free food, and refuge for all was like a breath of fresh air, showing on one level anarchist ideas in action. In this genial chaotic madhouse, politics were lived as direct action, complete engagement and acceptance of each person as someone valuable and unique, with only your personality and relationship to guide and protect you.

Relationships ranged from strange renegade vicars, eccentric probation officers, sociology and social work students, Buddhists, Quakers, anarchists, Liberals, Communists, and rebels thrown together in battered buildings, with elastic walls, tea and soup runs. Police cadets were sometimes seconded as part of their training, and the more authoritarian rule-centred ones had a hard time. I remember a veteran dossier called 'Dublin' remarked to one, 'You're not even a fucking pig, you're a Piglett!'

The practical care campaign had a political wing, *The Mission to the Misfit*, which propagated the politics of homelessness to Ministers within government, petitioning for reforms and legislative change. For the first time in my life I had to live and work with 'all faiths and none'. Always the overwhelming reality of human need integrated ideology and dissolved the often petty and dogmatic differences between people from different political and religious backgrounds. Polemic and religious dogma became meaningless when pulling a 'wino' out of a fire, who is burning to death, and is too drunk to care.

Being, Authenticity and Compulsion

After joining the Simon Community in May 1966 and being in a state of induction / environmental shell-shock, I remember talking with a volunteer Nun who had a beatific calm and grace about her, who asked me why I chose to work in such degrading conditions. I replied that the voluntary co-operative principle of work as service released me from the standard corporate, work money ethic. She replied 'I think it's because you want to live more authentically.'

Snap Shot in A Day of a Life Living With Dossers

Anton was affectionately known as 'The Chief Dossier'. This is a mental snapshot of the Simon Community at breakfast, at St Joe's House of Hospitality, Chalk Farm, North London. This makes 'The Adams Family' look pleasantly 'normal'. (Circa 1966)

A long breakfast table with assorted donated furniture accommodated the strangest family on earth. Seated in one chair was 'King David of Soho'. Very tall, with long matted hair and a lantern jaw, he was reverie deep in a strange subterranean world of fantasies, demons, terrors and longings. "It is no joke to eat coke, it is no joke ..." Strange incantations, he muttered to himself "Shut up you mad fucking bastard" yelled Geordie, as he obsessively sharpened his large cooking knife, muttering about the various people he was going to finish off. Nothing like a little stimulation before breakfast. Depending what has been donated or conned, you never knew what to expect. This morning it was porridge.

A huge wobbling Charles camped it up along the breakfast table, with a large tea pot in his hands. "I suppose you want me to be Mum again." He intoned with weary resignation. Ricky a gay heroin addict rushed in ... "Whose been using my fucking spikes and left all these dirty ones." He

screamed. "Have a cup of tea sweetie" soothed Charles. "It is no joke to eat coke..." added King David with conviction. "Morning sinner." A sinister Belfast accent announced the presence of The Mad Monk, who declared he was saying Mass for Lucifer, "But couldn't find him" "Ha ha maybe I'll find him on Hampstead Heath." A bleary eyed Gerry walked in, sat down and in a raucous Glaswegian accent said "What's the Pope's telephone number?" "Go in." camped Charles, "Surprise me..." "Vat 69" roared Gerry, laughing so hard that he nearly spat in his tea.

The array of faces and figures had been etched and fashioned by the razor edge and hammer of human tragedy, hardship, suffering and stupidity, violence and greed beyond the wildest fantasies of the average person. They were aristocrats of the urban sump meeting in mutual histrionic greeting. The greetings in the morning were rarely pleasant, my nerves longed for it to be so, it was like guilt and aggression constantly feeding each other. At one level it was rock bottom, crazy and warm without pretensions. I think that we are all really homeless. It was just hard sometimes to avoid throwing up. The ever present stench of stale urine, unwashed bodies, wall-to-wall failure, and always the simmering keg of potential violence about to explode at any time, but for real, no half measures. Most of these people had been drowning at the bottom of life's whirlpool, and had nothing left to remotely bother about; least of all killing someone, and yet there was always a code.

The Reverend Hugh Mindham walked in, greying, 50s 'ish, grey cardigan, meat hook back and dog collar. Quietly he sat down and said grace. 'You... you... you... fu.. fu.. fu.. fucking per. per... per., pervert!' stammered Kim, a 30'ish Lancashire man with a strange history of mental health problems. He sat down before his tea, with black greased hair, a university scarf around his neck, starring fixedly into space, cursing and stammering epithets at the Rev. Hugh who was quietly trying to read his copy of *The Simon Star*, the community newspaper, before going to run the Simon Community Charity Shop just down the road.

'Mark you fucking come-down-machine.' Yelled Nadia as she entered for breakfast. The obscenity greeting was a ritualised form of affection. 'Don't become a social worker, they are all wankers, become a blues singer, that's what you are.' Nadia is an attractive 19 year old, skin popping heroin, who has wealthy Peruvian parents, who live in Norway, and who have disowned her. 'Mark, did I tell you I am going to have Bob Dylan's baby?' 'He fucked me in New York.'... 'Yeah it's true' ... she drawled rolling Old Holborn, and

sky blue heroin glazed eyes. 'Hadaway and Shite' yelled Geordie, evidently pleased with the sharpness of his blade.

Suddenly the door opened and Anton walked in. A good looking tall man in middle age with raven black hair, hooked nose and RAF handle bar moustaches. He had served in the desert, and legend had it, that he was suffering from a rare terminal blood-wasting disease. He smoked strong tobacco, puffing his pipe, he swept to his place at the head of the table, looking around he beamed indulgently at the strange gathering of motley humanity. 'Morning family' he intoned as if having arrived from a bombing mission. I finished my porridge.

The Simon Community pioneered change in terms of democratizing hierarchy; it put human need before 'official procedures'. The point of need was the point of communication between human equals. There was the imaginative use of professional expertise within informal non-authoritarian settings that drew out the maximum creative resources. Everyone mattered. The Simon Community pioneered on-going experiments in 'environmental living'; direct action became a style of life.

We Have Ways of Making You Kare!

Professional Training 1967 / 1970. There is little doubt that anarchists have always been at the cutting edge of social change, as part of the politics of social revolution. This period was for me the first year of the CQSW, after having spent a year studying 'social science' at Fircroft College, Birmingham. Fircroft was a College for Adult Education, the Brummie equivalent of Ruskin, founded on the industrial philanthropy of Cadbury's, and the need for 'mature' students to get into Higher Education. The time was extraordinary. For the first time full grants were available to working class students. Working class accents ranging from Brummie, Scouse, Cockney and Geordie could be heard arguing the intellectual toss with academics who had spent most of their lives in middle class Ivory Towers, something important was happening, and it attracted the radical and the revolutionary who were going to make their mark, and grab a piece of the action. I studied with mystics, revolutionaries, from Trots to Buddhists. Every shade of Left wing opinion was at Fircroft, and after having completed a year there, I gained a place at the University of East London, Barking, to study for the CQSW, a two year professional social work course. The only students not seconded from a Local Authority on full salary, was a Monk, a Nun, and Me!

Open and creative discussion was inhibited by the fact that if the Local Authority students did not get 'certified' they were out of a job. There was naturally very little, if any, boat rocking. It soon became very apparent that this 'professional course for social workers' had little to do with developing social skills to promote creative change and political awareness. It was about shutting them down. At the time one of the biggest scandals in social work training, highlighted how middle class trainers stuck together like shit to a blanket. The democratic content of the courses has improved, then the militants were targeted, and constant pressure was put on to socialise students into fulfilling an authoritarian role in Local Government. The technique was to reverse Freudian defenses and strip down the students psychologically, induce extreme guilt and malleability. My social work Supervisor was a Ms Anne Fontaine who chain-smoked cigarettes during tutorials, crossed and uncrossed her legs aggressively; looking somewhat like a gin-soaked music hall opera singer, with mascara leaking down her wrinkles, and a smile like a catatonic Cheshire cat... 'Hello Mr. Newns ... how is our anxiety today?' and so it went on. Prior to this, my partner, had been under her tender care, and after a year of it, attempted suicide. It was not a serious bid, two others after her tried and succeeded. Everyone knew that Ms Fontaine was dangerously crazy, but all the tutors and lecturers closed ranks and the students were schtumm. I recall one middle aged working class lady, when having her consciousness invaded by this post menopausal neurotic, demanded to know 'Anne, why are you such a fucking cow?' This reduced her to chain smoking tears, but middle class institutions with professionals locked into their towers of power and privilege are very hard to budge. This is so because your conformity to their psychological madness, or violence ensured that you received their stamp of approval and 'professional status'. It used to be called "paying your dues."

I told my tale of woe to a Jungian left-wing consultant psychiatrist, Dr Jack Waldman, who was a political refugee from South Africa. He was one of my supervisors. I was on a six month placement at Loughton Child Guidance Clinic, as a locum PSW. He said 'They are really putting the pressure on you, Mark.' 'You must keep your 'ead down' because they 'ave a huge rock, and they will crush you with it.' 'Go out and get pissed with good friends', 'Don't do it with middle class social workers though, they are too insecure.' 'Mark, Anne is a dangerously repressed old virgin.' 'What she really wants, is for you to fuck 'er' 'That would be quite a trauma, far worse than this one.' 'She would want to kill you for taking away her power, she is trying to rape

you with her repression.' 'Some of the most damaged people are in positions of social work authority.'

Anyway at a joint field-work supervision at the Clinic, he confronted her and said 'Anne, Mark is an unusually committed social worker, he gets things done, there is movement in his work'. 'Anne get off 'is back.' Anne groveled before him, writhing on the ground having a spontaneous orgasm, clutching at his highly expensive raw silk suit, and drooling on his highly polished brogue shoes. 'Yes Dr Waldman, anything YOU say' ... 'Get up, Anne' he commanded imperiously, 'Your character armor is ruining my shoes and wilting my libido'....

It was a strange time of very intensive political action, which was integrating with radical / revolutionary psychiatry and philosophy. The work of R D Laing, Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich were doing the rounds. The lay psychotherapist at Loughton was Jeffa Kareem who suggested that I gather together the revolutionary students so that they could be more effective. The dialectic for change was going within, a few got involved but most saw social malaise as being located externally within unjust political and economic institutions. I was on guard duty at several squat locations in Ilford with the East London Squatters. It had been set up by Ron Bailey, who I worked with in the Committee of 100. We were installing homeless families into empty houses that were due to be demolished for profit. It was possible to give some support to some families, but this was combined with direct action defending the squats and spreading propaganda about the nature of capital, private property and the Law. Some of the Bailiffs illegally employed by Ilford Council, were National Front [a fascist and racist political party active in the 1970s] members, and used crowbars against squatters. In one incident, a woman who was very pregnant was hit in the stomach and miscarried on the spot, and another squatter had his jaw broken in several places. After that I took up karate training. It was all part of anarchist split-brain functioning for me.

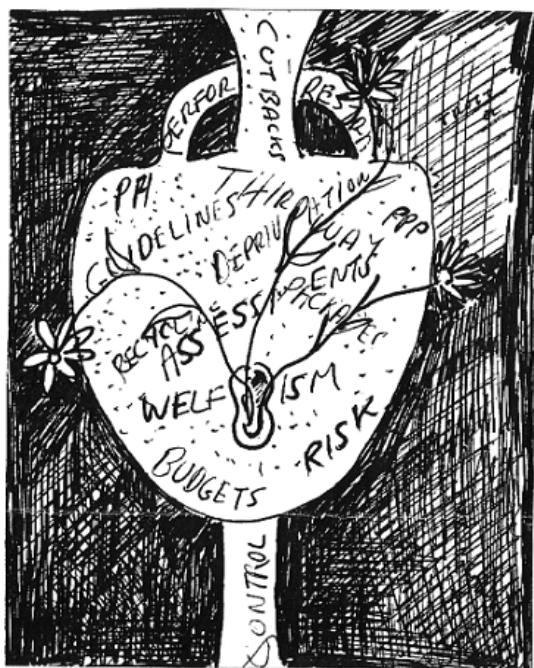
The divided society and divided selves manifested extremely with radical attempts to address the ills. During the day I was on placement at Loughton Child Guidance Clinic, and being given supervision by a crazy supervisor. It was an attempt to put anarchist principles of direct action and social justice into operation combined with social work ethics of care. I was able to politicise amongst the social work students, and frequently I was attacked by militant squatters, who saw their dogma being corrupted, and conservative

social workers, who instinctively felt their power being threatened, which it was.

Ann Fontaine did eventually get off my back, and much to her horror I got social work graduation. She was eventually dismissed for professional incompetence. For me this was a classical lesson in how middle class professionals commit acts of violence through their occupational institutions. Jeffa Kareem and John Offord had to appear on my behalf to give evidence before the National Council for Training in Social Work Tribunal. John was a brilliant 'hippy' lecturer in sociology who gave me tutorials on 'social deviance' over joints and trips to the local. He was asked "If Mark Newns sees fit to attack the whole edifice of professional social work, what right has he got to be in the profession?" For my thesis I had written "Towards an Anti-Social Work Agency" which argued the case for the values of social work care, and was against the values and institutions that generated a need for social workers, and social work. During this time, the late 1960s, focus for radical thought and action was 'Anti-' anti-universities, anti-psychiatry, so why not anti-social work? John Offord's reply to the examiners was brilliant, he said: "What kind of a so-called profession is it that can't take dynamic criticism?"... "Indeed professions have only grown because of relevant analytic criticism and action" ... and so this ludicrous farce continued, anyway I got through, but it was a psychological battle, that in some ways involved several years of political hell. If you go into a bureaucracy that is part of the social control system, and mean business about freedom, you will have a fight on your hands. They were failing me on politics, and used my work, which wasn't possible because it was well up to the mark. I was from a Committee of 100, Simon Community, and Fircroft College background, and my politics were anarchist, not violent or psychopathic, but in rejecting arbitrary authority and the psychopathology of the capitalist state, the velvet glove was taken off the mailed fist.

John Offord had the last word. He shook his waist length hair to one side. Hippies always seemed to be doing that. The hair flick twitch, and said "Fuck them Mark, their norms are worms". That was 1970, the *Stevenage Graveyard With Lights* episode came later. I left under a cloud, it was atomic. The price you pay for confronting institutionalised power that won't move its stagnant arse is that ultimately your days are numbered. For me it was always a tour behind enemy lines, and on entering the jaws of The Leviathan, I was plotting my escape.

At that time there was a trendy radical climate of paying lip-service to 'people power', that masked the dominance of cash, authority and control. Currently the mask has been ripped off and the radical guiding light is cash led authoritarianism; it is synonymous with freedom. So brazen are the managers, that social work is called 'Cash-Led', and 'Best Value', which is another lie; the value it generates is monetarist and statistical and concerns the demands of accountants and centralised authority, the client is not only neglected but actually violated by this system. Market monetarist popularism is the keynote of freedom and altruism itself. If you don't collude with it, you don't work. The client, needs and true ethics are irrelevant. The predator has been liberated and defined as liberal democracy and 'market forces' greed on a corporate global scale, is now globalisation. In 1984 (George Orwell) the totalitarian regime didn't have any problems with freedom, because the concept no longer existed. Predation and greed define the scope of your freedom, and all this new glossy social work is taking place in an infra-structure of feudal systems that have changed little since the Norman Yoke of the eleventh century. What was called working class culture is the essential connection to folk culture, and the human salt of us all. Cyberspace and commodified standardisation of global consciousness is taking care of that; if we let it. We have to understand the nature of a system split by power, privilege and elitist dominance behaviour that social workers and anarchists have attempted to address. The predation of ruling class dominance behaviour is about *The Freedom to Own* masquerading as *The Freedom To Be*. It has been taken out from under its wraps and made into an icon of worship, excellence and liberation. Class analysis alone cannot explain the global identification with and spiritual attachment to the chains of commodification. The source of this slavery is religious. To find our common humanity, hopes, dreams and madness of us all can make for solidarity and integrating the best of class psychology, which ultimately in terms of sanity is the road we are all on. To become complete and whole human beings.



Stevenage New Town - 'The Graveyard With Lights' - 1970

Instead of taking a break in Slough, and having Feng-Shui brain surgery, I plunged into the madness of the time, and after certification, got a job with Herts Social Services as a Detached Youth Worker, with an office in the Family Centre, in the centre of Stevenage. The generic qualification at that time enabled the practitioner to work in all social work related fields, community, youth etc. There were very few people to be seen, let alone families, and the centre was still a graveyard, with more lights. Dating from the 1960s, there was a growing sub-culture of registered heroin addicts, the legitimate pusher was the GP, and the idea was that I would work with these assorted deviants, and after a 'Reconnaissance Phase' would set up a 'Self-Governing Arts Lab' run by the deviants, and drug crazed graveyard with lights, so that their self destructive tendencies could be transmuted by the arts and community services, and I would be awarded an OBE, write a book which would be recommended reading on Youth and Community Work Courses, and retire to Rickmansworth. It looked good in the newspaper write-ups, and my glossy plan of action report, and it was in keeping with the Seeborn Report which led to the introduction of Social Services Departments.

My report identified and exposed a half-arsed youth service provision called Bowes Lyon House (the biggest street corner in England) as a 'Glossy Play Pen'. Very few youths actually used it; it was full of youth workers, and assistant youth workers trying to get up a career structure, looking for youths to befriend. John Offord the sociology hippy lecturer was paid as my personal adviser, and his verdict was that I was in an 'existential double-bind'. The funding for the self-governing Arts Lab went ahead, it was my idea folks! The double-bind was theirs! The Youth Service wanted me out. Heads rolled, they were exposed, essentially because if they had been doing their job, rather than going through the motions, there would have been no need for my appointment. I had the ear of the 'yoof', but was employed by 'the man'. Bowes Lyon House had a lot of expensive equipment, but no basis for self-organisation. The 'cool idea' of the time was that the statutory structure would become increasingly non-involved politically, only provisionally, but it could mean a threat to the career structures. I spent months getting the services together to discuss the idea, they realised that professionally they had to agree it made sense, and it was wanted by the young people, but politically it was a threat, as direct democracy must be to hierarchy. They were there building their empires, and I poor 'Fool', I

realized well, my appointment was in the nature of a good old local authority scapegoat function. I too was supposed to go through the motions. But the idea caught on like wildfire, I had been a catalyst and it spread to the other areas of the 'Dardanelles'.

Anarchist Input

A willingness to risk confrontation with my employers, when it was corrupt, but no more so than any hierarchical structure that was trying to set up a libertarian concept from an authoritarian base. A willingness to use my statutory power, to expand resources to those with little or none, in a situation that always expands and contracts with the socio-economic climate. Major anarchist resources in terms of non-oppressive practice, client participation for real, and political confrontational courage. Sheer bloody mindedness and total lack of identification with the power or career structure. A genuine belief in democratizing and empowering the client in terms of their inclusion. The capacity to know and feel safe with my own power and contempt for their rule book, knowing that so much of it was simply a career structure safe guard. At that time the term participation had come out of the 'counter-culture' but it was unheard of in local authority social work. It was real trail blazing work, and served as a model for the region and the country. I emphasised that direct democracy, people power etc was economic, it released human and economic resources, often trapped in bureaucratic hierarchies. The nature of self-regulation is an organic model that presents its own creative self-justification. It is holistic not dualistic, co-operative and not competitive. I would say it is a 'natural' tribal model for social organization, that is used by such diverse groups as business management, community groups, and the S.A.S. It runs into deep political waters when it does not reflect hierarchical ideology of command / obedience roles, and thus resists control, but we gave them a good run for their purple spinal point book. (This refers to the Local Authority salary scales).

Grey Libido in Grey Suits: West Suffolk Social Services

My first salaried job, after trying to save heroin addicts in Stevenage New Town, was in Bury St Edmunds, West Suffolk. Prior to this I had been involved in the Anarcho / Adventure Playground movement, in London and Liverpool, and had just finished a glorious summer setting one up at Haverhill, West Suffolk, on a London 'Overspill' Estate. I remember being halfway up a fifty foot high structure, trying to prevent a kid from pushing

me off, and all around the creative chaotic hubbub that defined the energy; when out of the turmoil, gingerly approached my prospective senior social worker to be, John Pettet, who peered up, and said 'You having a good time up there?' 'Just thought I'd look in to say hello.' I was due to start work at the head office that following Monday. I felt a whiff of the rule book and compulsion closing in on fresh air, and energy.

I sat in the reception waiting to report for duty, when the Playleader at Haverhill, Bob Hughes, breezed through in jeans, T shirt and red beard. He looked at me with a sardonic grin on his face, and quoted knowingly the latest Bob Dylan song. 'They say the whole world is one big prison yard. Some of us are prisoners, the rest of us are guards.'

Within this statutory stage set, my area manager was one Gordon Hatchette. You couldn't imagine anything less like a grey banana, let alone a hatchet! Gordon was completely grey from skin to suit. Kafka had just invented him. Gordon longed for freedom and loathed the reality; he shed a skin in horror each time it called. During the first day Gordon muttered to me in nasal choked back, lower middle class character armored tones 'I was amazed you got the job, you weren't wearing a tie.' Inevitably within this scenario I met an ally and friend, a Tom Bailey ex Mare Street, Hackney look-alike Kray twin. He had actually gone to school, done boxing with them and grown up along with them in the East End 'quickwits' 'cut and thrust' survival game. He saw more of a future in becoming a working class hero. Tom had trained at Ruskin College Oxford, (I had been to Fircroft, the Brummie equivalent) He was a libertarian Marxist, and combined a very sharp political / intellectual mind, with the toughness and resilience of the East End. He loved to quietly outrage the middle class. When he started work with West Suffolk, the women in administration asked his name, he muttered with a grin 'Big Balls' flashing his teeth with the confidence of a basking shark. He was the only Social Worker I ever knew who made sure he was present when the DS called on his clients to make sure they got a fair deal. On one occasion he couldn't be there, and the officer reduced the woman to tears. He got on the phone to the DS (Social Security), and in a voice replete with cold fury and casework elegance said; 'You fucking animal, you made that woman cry, you give her what she's due, or I'm going to pay you a visit.' He took his chances and it played off for his client. His aggressive no-holds barred confrontation countered the institutionalised violence and arrogance of the system, particularly the 'Welfare' system in rural Suffolk that was still very close to feudalism. Tom had that combination of bitterness, anger and

loathing of the Establishment combined with a compassion and tenderness, that today is very thin in cyberspace. I remember his ruminating once 'In some ways Mark, we git paid a Prince's ransom for doing fuck all.' 'Do you fink that social work provides a career structure for cunts who ain't ruthless enough to make it in commerce?' I think he had a point. Much of that gut reaction of the working class, has been absorbed by commodification and the levelled down equivalence of football, baseball caps, junk food, de-eroticised sex, eroticised violence, and a World Church of Commerce.

Areas of Radical / Anarchist Input

The theme that in those halcyon days of Seeborn's 'pots of plenty' was possible to actualise was people power, the need to democratise, humanise, include and distribute resources for council tenants stranded on the dole. Just outside of Bury St Edmunds was the Great Cornard Estate. It was another take on the 'Graveyard With Lights' theme that induced Londoners to come out to the country! Where there would be jobs, modern housing, fresh air, and Alsatian dogs called 'Jason'. The companies that were to offer the 'jobs' set up in these 'quasi-satellites', worked a tax dodge, where after a few months they would declare themselves bankrupt, clean up and move on. They, that is working class people, were stranded in these plastic cemeteries, in the back of beyond and needed immediate resources. Over a few pints of Abbot Ale, Tom and I had the idea of setting up a Neighbourhood Advisory and Information Service based on the estate. The Social Services would provide the training, and they would take it over and run it as a self-help resource; this was with particular reference to DS rights, claimants, problems, complaints etc. This was innovative and a first, in that Social Services were directly aligned with the claimants, and all resources were focussed on it being their project. We had a feature article in the West Suffolk press, and were commended by the Director of Social Services, a Welsh gnome, called Mr. Jones, who was a Communist, and had been a Miner.

At that time, (1971-1972) the DS operated from an 'A' Code, which gave vast discretionary powers in terms of cash payments to clients, etc. At one stage I worked with a central Government DS Investigator, who turned out to be a 'closet' anarchist, and was an under-cover enemy of the system that venerates money, property power, owning and money before people. In one situation where a woman with four children had been pushed from pillar to post by 'authority', it was possible to actually buy her a house, pulling the

right strings; then human need took precedent, but now? Let them eat cake, sleep rough, and sell *Big Issue*.

Gordon Hatchette knew how I felt about doing Sections - that is removing someone's personal liberty by law. He would wait till I was on duty, and 'save' a child abuse investigation just for me, and 'order' me to remove the child. I was quite prepared to use this authority when no other means was available, but it was so often the case that statutory power was invoked as an exercise in arse covering, because of a lack of imagination or risk-taking.

In one situation Gordon was quite off the wall, in his directive, an older veteran worker showed clearly it would have been madness to remove the child. He then switched to Mental Health, and said that I must commit a harmless village eccentric, who now and then would walk into a local pub, and say, 'You are all under arrest, I'm the Inspector.' Dolly was essentially harmless, one of those country village characters that the community tolerated, who could at worst be deemed a nuisance. Working with Tom we set up a network of community support people, relatives, friends, significant others etc. It was all done in the spirit of preventative mental health work, and it came off. Mr. Jones again commended us. We were requested to have an audience with him, and entering his office it was hard to stop splitting our sides. His head just about peered up from behind this huge executive desk, that combined with his broad Welsh accent. 'Well done lads This is just what West Suffolk needs.' ... 'We'll 'ave to go out for a few jars.' It was also a time when humanistic and scientific influences in social work were big. Goffman's *Asylums* and *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* defined sociology as the academic flavor of the month in the 1960s, and its *Imagination* a-la C. Wright Mills most certainly had an enriching impact on social work. The very 'interactive' science of sociology demanded that social workers understand reality from the perceptions of their clients. This in turn with the influence of existentialism via Laing, Cooper and Bateson evoked notions of existential dilemmas and empathetic communication, which militated against the intrinsic authoritarianism of statutory practice.

Meanwhile back to Gordon and the village eccentric 'Dolly' I was driving through one of the winding Suffolk lanes, when Gordon pulled up like Starsky and Hutch with 'Road Rage' 'Is she in yet?' He demanded. I informed Gordon later at the office that she was being supported in the community, and we had been commended for our efforts by the Director. Gordon paled, choked back his vomit, and mumbled 'Good Show' staggering

to the Gents to empower himself, he left behind his copy of 'Sado-Masochistic High Jinks in Torbay'. "Go on Gordon." Laughed Tom, "Ave one on me mate." Tom's nickname for Gordon was 'Flac'. The flaccid man of straw. Gordon became obsessional about exercising power over me, and eventually I cornered him in his office, and told him a few subtle home truths, like 'You are a vicious, weak, incompetent liar.' He kept his distance after that. I think there was definitely some masochism there in that little lot.

Throughout this whole period of work, there was a genuine attempt to provide libertarian solutions rather than invoke statutory proceedings, which worked and were economic, but they worked against the authoritarian spirit of Local Authority culture of deference / obedience. When compared to what exists now, it was like an anarchist summer camp at West Suffolk. There is so much twaddle talked about 'cash-led social work' when most of it seems most uneconomic, because the simplicity that comes from a principled direct action social work, throws the hierarchy out of joint. So much of it is a sham to cover the eternal need for centralised control over peoples' lives, whilst they go through the motions of de-centralisation.

What corporate power, and management / cash led systems of organisation are doing is to milk the self-directing co-operative good of Enlightenment ideals, and use it as a fig-leaf to cover the naked centralised cash and control value system, that masquerades as social work. Even then there was a sense of living on borrowed time, because you worked from the heart of moral / emotional intelligence within the client's reality and possibilities for change. Within these structures you can best work to integrate and educate, but the more the libertarian spirit spreads, the more statutory orders are invoked. The inevitable decentralisation of power, would mean that Gordon's world would dissolve into the hollow command structure of personalities constructed out of rules, hanging on to money and status with nothing to go back to. What command power has done, and is furiously doing now is co-opting regional government decentralisation as fast as it can, to ensure that Gordon has the whip hand and his wife's shoes. They know that the direct action, direct democracy trial balloons that floated up in the 60s from the anarchist / libertarian tradition, surfaced because of need; to return to the 'uncarved block' or 'root' as the Taoists would say. The centralised State cannot work; its limitations are defined by its conquest function, so it goes through the motions, and anarchists in social work beaver away like masochistic front line warriors offering freedom on a brief tour behind enemy lines, having no illusions about the political stench, knowing when to

get out and recharge with something completely different. I recommend left handed Egyptian Nose Flutes for a complete break, but you've got to have the weather and the wood! My experience currently within social work, is that, as hitherto defined, it is being killed off, and a glossy cyberspace mask preserved, meanwhile according to the NSPCC between one and three children are killed each week because of inappropriate social work intervention. In one sense you can't get out of what no longer exists; unless you insist on climbing into a cyberspace prison, with a national record of institutionalised violation of social work ethics. I think that managers and accountants should be taken before the European Court, but then that would end up with litigation against the whole State superstructure. In the 60s Frank Zappa wrote 'All your children are poor unfortunate victims of systems beyond their control. A plague upon your ignorance to the great despair of your ugly light.' All your children are poor unfortunate victims of lies you believe. A plague upon your ignorance that keeps the young from the truth that they deserve.' It was written for social work management.

During my trials and triumphs at West Suffolk, in the spirit of generic social work, I moved from the country to take up an Adventure Playleader's job on a playsite just off the Old Kent Road, the notorious North Peckham Estate, SE21 London. Going from rural peaceful Suffolk to this dirty dust hole is typical of the condition we have been describing. A strange juxtaposition of lifestyle, but I wasn't in it for pension rights. The housing estate was low-rise, working class stock built on the cheap, by some whizz-kid architect living in Dulwich. All architects should live in the houses they design for a trial period. There would be an immediate qualitative change in the environmental fabric. There is a pragmatic philosophy that says brutal systems produce a brutalised society, people on the blunt end are its greatest victims.

This is what took me to Peckham, how could I use my concerns, expertise and experience to help and politicise? The area around the North Peckham Estate is now a very dangerous place, known for its drugging and mugging and violent street girl gangs 'New Cross Bitches' etc. I went there in 1973. Twenty eight years on, it is a dangerous slum. Now regression is progression, the real slum has got to be between our ears.

The playground was run down, and consisted of the usual do-it-yourself structures, ropes, nets and a self-created co-operative environment. Ages ranged from three to eighteen years. It was strange moving from statutory

social work with all the structures, and 'Gordons', and then into the most unstructured people work in the world. All you have is your personality, and one rule, play work together, invent, because violence stops play. Children know that instinctively, that there is that fine line between 'play-fighting' and the 'real' thing which is malicious. How many people can play in their corporate jobs? Apparently some 40% of the corporate work force in this country, dread going into work. See them during their lunch breaks in three button suits, outside the office, sucking down the cigarette smoke. Local authorities gradually moved into Adventure Playground work, trying to run a libertarian / anarchist project on authoritarian lines. Their buzz-word during the 60s was 'of course we are investing money in play'. When that was effectively destroyed, during the 1970s it was 'investing money in Positive Discrimination' it then became during the 1980s 'investing money in AIDS', and now it is 'Sustainability'. The vote catching gimmicks are without end.

Today there is hardly an Adventure Playground left standing in the UK. The spontaneity, creativity, and co-operative anarchism fundamental to that movement, that began in Denmark in the 1940s was simply too dangerous. A monetarist, authoritarian class-ridden society had to stop play. It wasn't rain, but reaction.

The work was like a craft wearing hundreds of hats at once. Now like all things concerned with management, a caricature of the real. Money centred madness, disguised as 'normality'. The society has become a pathetic, spineless shrunken culture, its possibilities of interest, imagination, freedom and action are dying, as dialogue within social space is essentially dead. The caricature of communication, which is non-communication, faster than the speed of thought, is cyberspace. I am convinced it has become an end in itself. Freedom is on the sole of your £100 trainers, or possessing as commodity the correct ideological line, witness the state of the 'Left' or the 'anarchist movement'. Conquest is complete, you never have to question or think, just spout the correct line, or buy the latest pair. Radicalism exists in marginalized sub-cultures and ghettos but its mainstream dialogue is the idealisation of commodity in material and metaphysical form. The movement and its ideology is something to be owned, not explored, there is no more adventure of the spirit.

I am on Peckham Adventure Playground, up to my neck in mud and telegraph poles, talking to Annie, an East Ender, she is a brilliant academic

with an honours in sociology from Essex. 'Why Mark do you want to help people?' 'Well, I've got to activate my care, and resistance to the system.' 'Mark, have you ever bothered to ask us if we want your fucking care?!'

That was one of those right from the horses' mouth, that you never forget, if you have any of the animals sense. Class-ridden split-brain values, and twenty eight years on, has Annie become a caricature of her bright brilliantly acerbic self, as she crawls up the ladder of careerism, aping the worst of male phallogocentric corporate manipulation, in the name of female liberation, or 'breaking through the glass ceiling', are her hands cut on the jagged edges of ambition?

Accept and enjoy the rescue work, muses the sage, dance beyond the contradictions, in a split condition of madness. Its all beyond class, you will receive medals, citations and a mention in despatches! It is the eternal paradox of existence, the horrible beauty of it all. The exquisite dance of form, find the centre and don't, like Marx or others think that you can find a prescriptive ideological solution; unity comes from the bridgehead of contradiction and opposition. The synthesis that the dualistic ego cannot make until it understands its own purpose of self-annihilation within the meaning and mystery of human existence. A key problem with the Left? There is no mystery! We work, I believe to integrate the value system of both class sub-cultures, they contain essential split parts of the whole, move with ease between both worlds, but effectively being in neither. Never mind that did you get my National Lottery tickets, I must check my emails, I get 150 a day! The society has become more glossy in terms of its perceived virtual reality affluence. The iconization of commodity has replaced human ethics, in all dimensions of life. WE are collectively voluntary slaves, we enjoy the game of self-betrayal, it is a global game of playing with images or Baudrillard's 'sign-objects'. The new wealth is the acquisition of being poverty stricken in terms of authentic human / social experience. We have created and colluded in a global 'Bar Code Consciousness' with its very own culture of banal excess and constant mutilation of the human spirit.



This Christmas Card was sent to all staff in
Suffolk Social Services and D.S.S. 1972

Children's Community Centre

(1974) This voluntary education experiment came out in the very early 70s wave of the 'Women's Movement'. Located in tatty post counter cultural Dartmouth Park Hill, North London. The aim was to provide a facility in which little boys would be encouraged to play little girl's games, and break down gender stereotyping and sexism. It did not take into account the need for core gender identities to be crystallized, and at worst could have been responsible for socialising damaged personalities. At times of heady revolutionary ferment there tends to be a total obsession with partial truths, the baby is thrown out with the bathwater. It was well meant, but off the wall.

St. William's Community Home School - 'Do The Boys Hall'

This place definitely looked like the Dickens version. Located in East Yorkshire, it was a 'rehabilitation' home for 'bad lads' run by De-La-Salle Monks, many of whom needed long term psychiatric help or therapeutic shooting. I ran a 'Rogerian Based Unit' in which therapeutic activities took place, encouraging the lads to express their authentic selves, whilst they were in the double-bind of having it repressed by some of the 'Brothers' who had been socialised into an extremely authoritarian religious sect, with all the resultant damage. They latched on to the Humanistic Therapy of Carl Rogers, encounter groups, co-counselling, and all the other 'levitating cats', and liberal paraphernalia that came out of the 70s 'Growth Movement'. I became aware that physical, emotional, and possibly sexual abuse was going on but couldn't prove it. I eventually had a confrontation with Brother James, or "Fuckin' bent nose" as he was affectionately known by the lads, over many issues and eventually left. Twenty years later, I read in a major national paper that he has been imprisoned for a long time. He will eventually leave prison, but the boys he violated will most likely remain stuck in theirs'.

Anarchist input? I think that psychologically anarchists tend to attract the venom of authoritarian personalities and confrontational stuff that inevitably flows from the interaction. There is a built in crap detector within the personality, and a tendency to continue 'pushing the envelope' looking for libertarian gains where 'Angels Fear To Tread'. At worst some anarchists latch on to the 'Movement' because they need a 'home' which gives them unlimited license and something to lash out with. This kind needs help,

others are super democrats. I don't buy the individualist anarchist line, it justifies selfhood, and is a running dog of Thatcherism, it lacks compassion and is nihilistic, like Nietzsche which it is a variant of, it is simply scared of love. The super direct democrat is also a paradox; there is a fierce belief in the value and worth of the individual, which is where the liberal strain of the philosophy comes in. Liberal meant liberation originally. The anarchist in me had a nose for corruption at St Williams, and I was prepared to risk the job to do something about it, which I did. People said "What about your career" Funny coming from anarchists, I have always felt that my life is my career, there are just changing movie sets to work on.

There is a spiritual dimension to anarchism that St. Williams threw up. One that has remained covered by the Enlightenment and Marxism, in which there is nothing beyond historical materialism and ego. I became interested in this through martial arts training, and the philosophies that underlie Karate, Zen Buddhism, and Tai Ji Ch'uan, Taoism. I mention this because I think we have become so saturated with scientism, that we have become desensitised to the realities of evil, and being opened up to light and dark forces. For a time at St Williams I actually lived there, I had a room and my partner Brenda stayed over. During the early hours of the morning I noticed as the pre-dawn light sneaked in the window, a strange black form whirling out of the high corner of the room. It emitted sheer evil, and was as weak as limitless negativity. Without thinking, I raised my hands and said 'Get back go' (then ran to the toilet) and it actually gathered itself up and vanished into the corner from whence it came. I have digressed but if you consider that for at least 150 years that 'school' (it had iron manacles built into one section of the wall where boys were tied up and flogged for frowning at the monks behind their backs!) had evoked massive suffering, it has got to generate negative energy at many levels of which we know nothing. We probably know as much about the human mind now, as we did about the stars in the fifteenth century.

We are in the unit having a small group counselling session. I structured these so that the lads could express just what they wanted to say, without harming each other. It was a strange role because I was part Establishment, part Delinquent, and part all-purpose Aunt Sally for the boys and the 'Brothers'. John D and his mate had pulled off a clever scam. They started posing as 'gays' so they could go out shopping for the boys, and strangely enough with that came all sorts of prestige, and the really heavy bastards left them alone. They were fascinated and in awe of them, playing this role they

generated an autonomous power that gave them an exclusion zone, that also brought some colour to the school. I mean two fifteen year olds, in 1975, camping it up! We talked politics, I made no bones about mine, and encouraged them to make their own value judgements about the power structure of the school, and its relationship to the hierarchies of the wider society. "The Brothers fuckin hate you Mark." Said John, "Because you're not scared of them." "Especially that flat-nosed bastard." Brenda was there with me and made a good Geordie working class balance to my middle-class London angst. "The system will never beat us Brenda." "We fuckin know the score." ... and they did. I often wonder how they are doing.

I have written about this in length, because it underscores some of the kamikaze tactics, that anarchists can employ in formal 'welfare' or 'care' structures that are 'bent' to say the least. It is like living on borrowed time, or 'doing a tour behind enemy lines'. I knew that I would never qualify for a pension.

Cambridge: Home in a VW on an Adventure Playground

After leaving 'Do-The-Boys-Hall' I teamed up with Brenda, and inherited two little step daughters, Jessica and Lyn. I got a job as a Playleader on Arbury Estate, North Cambridge, where the tourists and students don't go.

We drove down in my VW caravette. There was no housing available, so we lived in the van on the Playground, until the house came through. It brought you closer together. The Playground was run down and had few children, because a gang of teenagers, the local 'Mafia' had taken it over and the children were scared to come out to play. Some advanced publicity in the local community newsletter had announced our coming, saying that I held a brown belt in Karate - it helped with the 'Mafia'. Their 'leader' looked like a blond version of Sylvester Stallone with a hangover. Anarchist influences in this area of work? Adventure playwork is anarchist work, because it hinges around mutual aid, creative and spontaneous action, the essential taboo is no violence and hierarchy. I think direct and honest confrontation combined with the spirit of the movement, helped, plus expressing that I was obviously concerned to work with them. If you create dragons out of them and engage in a power struggle you lose right down the line. I was the 'new kid on the block' and this was their turf, when they were little they had all played on the site. We had a meeting and I explained that the Playground was for children, I wanted them to help me set it up for them, if not they had to

leave, and I would ensure they did. I was firm and polite and it worked, they helped. The curious thing is that the place had not functioned for months, and had that strange dead atmosphere, that enters when the energy of children departs. The politics revolved around the fact that the parents were scared of the teenage Mafia. There was a huge parent Richard Blows, who said "Our parental rights have been taken away from us, Mark." "If we touch them we are in court." I explained that it was the spirit of approach that mattered, not violent confrontation. Institutionalisation of initiative was underway then. I had back up but had not raised a finger to any of them. I conveyed that I cared about them, and would provide a structure and boundaries. I was prepared to risk doing that. Sincere direct communication works. The truth was that the parents did not care, they couldn't be bothered. It was that generation of mid 1970s parenting that believed it cool to let children do what they 'liked'.

At the time another area of observation during 1976, was that the socialisation age for consumer expectation was getting lower, all the time. Children were also finding it harder to play, to engage in spontaneous creative activity outside of the consumer adult expectation. Play is an exercise in imagination, essential for child personality development. Some of the current violent zombie consumer consciousness can be explained, today it is the norm. The creative, spontaneous and the living is being marginalised by the psychic invasion of globalised electronic images, social communication is vanishing into cyberspace, the essence of commodification, and it possibly betokens an 'emotional holocaust' for the young.

I remember talking with Sylvester. He towered over me, but as is often the case was a 'Gentle Giant'. We do appreciate what you are trying to do, Mark, by stopping us' He said hesitatingly in his Cambridge drawl ... 'But we've never had it before from our parents.' So often their parents were busy being 'Swingers' with Kiki Dee and Elton John singing 'Stop Breaking My Heart', reading *Forum*, wearing flairs, and fingering Rubik Cubes.

I romantically thought that local voluntary management would be the soul of the 'people', more co-operative and free than LAs. I soon found out that the human ego, and power, plus the hierarchical model, are everywhere. Their reference group was the Local Authorities and good old middle class values. The Arbury Adventure Playground had received grants from the Cambridge Local Authority to install electricity, so that the large Playhut could have

light, heat, cooking facilities, rare luxuries and the like. They steadfastly refused to spend the money because they wanted the electrics to be given as a donation. They were told by Cambridge that if they didn't spend the money they would lose it. Meanwhile we were running the playground in the winter months without heat or light etc, using candles and a heater to keep it warm for the kids. The truth was that they didn't care; they saw the playground as their personal possession, not as a community resource for local education and social education. We left over this, and the lights were finally put on. Following the work at Arbury Adventure Playground, we left and took up residence outside of Chorley in Lancashire. Cassandra my daughter was on the way, and I eventually got work as a Local Authority Intermediate Treatment (for young offenders) and generic social worker in Toxteth, Liverpool, and this is where I came in.

Liverpool had a very powerful section of militants, mainly Trots, who were vociferous during the social work strike. Initially it was Liverpool, and the Tower Hamlets, and others followed or went through the motions of supporting it. The Union was NALGO, a rich staff association, and the salary levels were not bad at all. I saw it as a golden opportunity to politicise, and a number of lessons were learned. The strike lasted several months, and certainly the streets of Liverpool were not like running sewers in Calcutta, because its 'soft cops' were off duty. Many social workers refused to support the strike, because they saw their engagement as a vocational one, with nothing to do with politics, although the politics of social work gave them the job!

Politically social work provides a palliative for the Corporate State; a socio-political 'carpet cleaning force' that individualises the political, and maintains the alienated powerless structures of the community. Socially it had a humanising and politicising effect if the worker was prepared to be a catalyst for change, in terms of transmitting libertarian ideas and values. Many of the working class militants in leftist groups like 'Big Flame' and others, were aware of the political double-bind in social work, and I remember being taunted by Joe. He would say 'Here he comes, the evil bastard, how many kids and old people have you banged up today, Mark?' This kind of banter would go on, and was known as 'pulling your pisser, in order to test the waters' when I think back, it was funny and therapeutic. What alarms me now is that social work culture is so bureaucratised, and self-conscious, it is devoid of the very humour that enables the worker to survive the job. I linger with Liverpool, because all those years ago, I was

aware that an era with some strands of gold, with the possibilities of freedom, was coming to a close.

Social Work Related Holistic Health Teaching

Following the 'leaving of Liverpool', I became a self-employed holistic health teacher, offering oriental exercise, centred on Tai Ji Ch'uan, moving meditation, Tao Yin, dynamic warm-ups, and Chi Kung, respiratory therapy. I called my system Budo-Chi, or 'Warrior's Path of Energy'. It derives from Wu Te, or martial virtue, the healing and strengthening tradition at the heart of the martial art spirit.



Tai Ji Class, Newcastle University (1981-2002)

The work was based at Newcastle University, and received a very enthusiastic response. For the following eight years I worked in student, clinical and public settings. I had studied Kyokushinkai karate up to shodan black belt, and then took up an interest in the Taoist internal healing arts in 1976. The 'internal' systems refer to an emphasis on consciousness, breathing, flexibility, sensitivity and relaxation. Major internal organs are strengthened and energised, the whole system cleansed with oxygenated blood, and Tai Ji Ch'uan as a Chinese system of body movement is a major corner stone of the 'internal tradition'. The 'Bruce Lee' wave of the early 70s

had all but destroyed the spiritual basis of the arts, favouring macho-mayhem and profitability, violence and sensation. In the early 80s, I began a series of workshops and training sessions around the Festival / New Age circuit, at the Glastonbury Festival and Green Gatherings, Green Deserts in West Suffolk, Blue, Green and Silver Moon Festivals in Cumbria, and the Elephant Fair in Cornwall, etc. A young punk came up to me after one work out 'You cured my fucking asthma.' I didn't, having just been a catalyst for his energy. He had learned to consciously breathe. Breath is the basis of all life, and as such its correct conscious use has vast healing potential. I then realised that what I was teaching was a blending of the committed urgent energy of Japanese Budo, the path of the warrior, and the Chinese Chi, or life force, hence Budo-Chi. My hope was that it would serve to counter the commercialization and psychopathy of the martial arts 'licence to print money' industry, by offering an alternative that focussed on the co-operative and healing dynamics.

I set up workshops and classes in Newcastle, and eventually had twelve classes a week running. It was a first for the North East. Areas included work on issues and problems ranging from physical handicap, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse unit, Age Concern, work with the elderly and arthritic conditions, and work with young offenders - Barnados, Coping With Cancer. The work took me all over the North East, and other parts of the country. There were TV appearances, *Look North*, publicity and feature articles in the regional press. I worked with a world famous North East strong man called Mel Robson, who came to fame by blowing up meteorological air balloons and bursting milk bottles with the power of his lungs. Mel was eight times in the Guinness Book of Records, breaking his own records, and his capacity to resist being strangled by two strong men, standing either side of him, pulling thick ropes around his neck! He introduced Nautilus training methods into Newcastle, and had a powerful taste for wine women and song, which contributed to prostrate cancer that spread to the lymphatic glands. When he contacted me, his cancer which had been given a profile in *The Lancet*, had become terminal and he had around six months left to live. We trained on a one to one basis, and Mel decided that he would like to teach and pass it on. I did not think he had done sufficient basic training to do this, but it was the main project in his life that was keeping him alive, so he went ahead. I went to America in 1988, and stayed with my sister in Poquason, Virginia, and Mel opened his Budo-Chi Studio, in Gallowgate, Newcastle. He lived for a further three years.





Tai Ji Class, 'Age Concern',
Newcastle upon Tyne (1987-2004)

After luxuriating in Sun Tea, Jack Daniels, and the laid back drawl of Virginia, I made my way to Riverton, Wyoming, via where I stayed for a while with my nephew Gene and his wife Laura. Laura had been running a New Age shop called 'Mindlight' in Virginia. When I met her, I disliked and mistrusted her instantly. It turned out that she was a 'channel;' for a 'Higher Being' called 'John' who had been through many previous lives and now was living as a spiritual being and guide to humans. At this time in America, every other person was 'Channelling' including the cat. It was a retake of the 'still small voice' and mediumship, receiving practical and spiritual messages, from 'higher beings'. The danger with metaphysical knowledge is that being without empirical evidence, 'anything' can go, and in come the charlatans and super-spooks. I found that I was in an un-masking operation, because it became clear that Laura was working a power game, with a lot of gullible people, and after the inevitable confrontation, I found myself outside the relationship, and with Nancy, a Yoga teacher and fine lady I met at a Bud-Chi class. We wanted to be together, which required marriage, and a Green Card.

The details of this extraordinary caper could form at least a chapter on their own, so I will move on to the anarchist social worker at large in Wyoming. I began locally based classes at the Casper Recreation Centre, and at local venues. Casper was 100 miles north of Riverton, but I got used to the drive and vast distances of seemingly endless sagebrush, prairies, mountains and white tailed deer. I had a feature article in the local Riverton Ranger; Laura worked as a journalist for the paper. I was contacted by Bruce Kein, the Director of Allied Therapies at Pine Ridge Hospital for Human Development, based at Lander. The hospital had an adolescent and adult unit, and I was offered work as a Recreational Therapist, offering Taoist, holistic health arts, and one to one group counselling sessions. The adolescents were receiving help for behaviour problems, anger management, and the adults mainly chemical dependency, cocaine, crack, alcohol, mental health issues, Bulimia, Anorexia. There was a great deal of freedom in this sessional work. It also involved Mountain Therapy, which meant going up into the Shoshone National Park, over 5,000 feet above sea level, and there amongst Alpine meadowland, wild flowers, pristine beauty and air like wine. Therapists and young American deviants showed each other how they could get back on the straight and narrow. It was the only setting I have worked in, where you actually felt healing taking place, and staff occasionally spoke openly about their own difficulties, not to dump their own responsibilities, but to lessen distance between helpers and helped. When all is said and done, all healing is constantly interactive; the whole show is one big diamond. Mountain therapy was fun and it worked, with an occasional Moose looking in out of curiosity, rattle snakes abounded, and no Grizzlies showed, although they were out there.

I also taught at the Wind River Reservation at Fort Washakie. There were two main nations, the Arapahoe and Shoshone. The tribes were long standing enemies, because the Shoshone had scouted for the American Army in the 1860s, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, always with ethnocide on their minds, had deliberately relocated the two tribes alongside each other, possibly with the hope that they might exterminate each other. Native American parents were very concerned about their children getting tangled up in drugs and alcohol, because of a high degree of boredom and alienation on the Reservation. It was a sad lonely place, with all the natives walking

around like ghosts, amongst rusting cars, makeshift homes with Old Glory fluttering in the wind.



Arapahoe Pow Wow, Fort Washakie, Wyoming, USA

A group of parents explained that they wanted their children to learn Karate as a discipline. Their children were mainly Arapahoe, between twelve and sixteen years of age. The sessions were good, they had a powerful spirit, but would often show up for a class half an hour late. One time they explained that it was a fine evening, a rainbow was happening, and the fish were jumping in the hole, so they stayed and watched them. Their whole concept of time wasn't based around commerce. 'Time is Money'. which is the WASP perception of time, and life itself. They see it not as a device to measure changes in the environment, but as experience itself. They would often ask if we had a 'real Queen' and 'did she sit on her throne all the time?' The sad thing was that as the children 'matured' into adolescence, you could sense their spirit being repressed as the reality of their life dawned upon them. They had neither a full American inheritance, White America had tried to commit ethnocide on them; nor were they fully connected to their traditional identity. They occupied a cultural 'No-Man's-Land' and of course

alcohol was a serious problem, because there were no immediate or obvious alternatives. The recovery of their tribal identity is the key, which has been found and is turning in locks, and opening doors everywhere.

I met a Pat Brown Wolf who was part Scots and part Araphoe. Pat travelled across the United States, helping the various nations find their identities, through a revival of the Sweat Lodges, Pow Wows, story telling, etc. Another line of work I had was holistic health work at Wyoming Honour (Prison) Farm. It was an open prison based around a fully functional farm that the prisoners operated. The mainstream offences were homicide, multiple rape, drugs etc. Gary Starbuck who helped run the place, did not give me any background information about the in-mates as such. What we shared was a belief that in order for people to behave responsibly they need the facilities to exercise it, and all people are capable of learning some degree of self-regulation in their lives, if they can strengthen self-belief, through a focus of authentic interest and personal fulfillment. I ran Budo-Chi sessions there twice a week, the men initially were invited to attend, with a proviso that they would earn more credits for their release if they did. I wasn't too happy about this, but it was a nick after all. During a training session, one guy who was particularly charming and helpful, turned out to be a multiple killer, who had taken an overdose of 'Angel Dust', elephant tranquilizer. He went berserk, and became convinced that his wife and children were devils. He shot her, and three of his children, and didn't murder the rest of the family, because he ran out of shells, and eventually turned himself in.

During this time, 1988 / 1989, there was an economic reality that the days of the permanent job were over. I, like many others, were 'winging it', that is finding paid work where we could. One very demanding and bureaucratic job I had for a while, was as Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor. This helping agency was formed after WW1, when troops came back badly injured, or as vegetables. The counselling role was to help Americans mainly from a low income background find a place in the workforce by proving that they have a disability. They could be psychiatric, medical, educational, and I was given a pretty large budget to fund the appropriate help. In one case this meant getting a rancher cataract surgery. Most of Wyoming was about 5,000 feet above sea level, the sunshine was very intense, it was the only place I lived where sunglasses were a necessity for health. There is a level where much of the American education system tends to be a sham of images. One High School graduate I worked with came to

the office for help, because he was unable to read the Editorial of a newspaper. He was effectively illiterate. He had graduated from High School, because he was a brilliant sports and business management student, and the authorities had turned a blind eye to his illiteracy. This was post-Reaganite worship of sports and business systems, and it had a knock-on effect throughout the whole society. Many of my clients were Vietnam veterans, who lived permanently in a drug and alcohol dazed time warp, circa 1973, when the 'War' wound down, and they came home, and found nobody gave a damn about their patriotic chore. They had gone as heroes to prevent the 'domino effect' of Communism, and came back as 'un-persons'. Another client group were native Americans, who had a great deal in common with Vietnam Veterans. In terms of alienation, a kind of identity damage, there was no cultural or social space where they authentically belonged. They had been disowned, a kind of living death. Which was the worst, the living kind, or the 50,000 servicemen who came back in body bags? Many Americans I met, referred to the Vietnam War as a war of child abuse; many of the service men who enlisted were little more than boys, who lied about their age in order to protect 'freedom and democracy'. They represented a white and red underclass, because they were no longer relevant to the needs of white mainstream middle class America.

My boss in Vocational Rehabilitation was a former marine, who had served in Vietnam, Carl Shappard. He had a twin brother who had been killed in action, and Carl had a deep guilt feeling about the 'Nam' and his brother who hadn't survived. At one level he was a very genuine guy, but conditioned like a robot. During the induction period, I noticed how other counsellors kept looking at me knowingly, saying 'How you getting on with Carl, Mark?' I eventually cornered one of them and asked what was going on? only to be told 'You'll find out.' The HQ for Vocational Rehabilitation was in Cheyenne, but I was working at an outpost office in Riverton. I found out that the job had been vacant for months because no counsellor could work with Carl. 'He's a lovely guy, if you can handle working with a living rule book, he's still in the marines.' The marines were conditioned in basic training to gouge out the eyes of kittens, attack their closest friends and other forms of brutalisation and depravity. They were also trained to draw their lips back over their teeth to display their reptilian nature when speaking. He used to give instructions like a drill sergeant, which I think he had actually been. I eventually told him where to go. I did do some very creative work there in terms of getting money and resources out to poor Americans.

I also worked as a columnist for the Casper Star-Tribune, writing from a green / radical perspective. In one column I wrote about the dangers of nuclear power, and their link with nuclear weapons production. At the time I didn't realize that Wyoming had a vast uranium mining industry, and that the proprietor of the *Riverton Ranger*, a Mr. Robert Peck owned most of the shares. I also didn't realise that the Wyoming uranium miners had not received any warning about the hazards of their industry, and that many of them were ill, and dying, and they were being refused compensation by the Federal Government. I seem to have a nose for trouble shooting that just happens. I had inadvertently taken the lid off a can of cosmic worms, and it was radioactive. After the publication of the column, and another which was published, by Robert and his family, I was contacted by a Uranium Miners Trade Union official, it appeared that my article had helped to de-mystify them. It transpired that the Federal Government had kept them completely in the dark about the lethal toxicity of uranium, radiation etc. If you can imagine that Wyoming is slightly larger than Germany, geographically, with at the time a quarter of a million population. It was in a sense cut off from the mainstream immediacy of the world; the state only got electricity in the 1940s. I became very aware of my politicisation and was told that I had helped to politicise the state, and was invited to a Buffet, and miners' get together where I was treated like royalty.

The Gulf War psychosis started in 1991. Prior to this Uncle Sam had been flexing his military-industrial complex muscles by bombing Panama. Remember it was Noriega, and 'Narco-Terrorists', now the latest demon was of course 'Saddam'. Grade schools all over America had children wearing yellow ribbons, and waving the flag for what amounted to an obscene 'Turkey Shoot'. I wrote extensively against the war, and travelled overland two thousand miles round trip, with the Wyoming Federation for Peace and Justice, to San Francisco, California, to protest the war. It was an exhausting trip but very worthwhile. I remember watching the war's progress with Nancy on a water bed, in an apartment, in a penthouse, that belonged to one of her rich friends in Denver, Colorado. It was NBC TV, there was a roll of drums. 'Day One. The air strikes with Scud missiles were surgical, with collateral damage.' It was a tactical attack, and a lot of innocent people were killed. Some 200,000 Iraqis were murdered, but in Baudrillard's words 'It was a war that never took place'. No one bled or screamed, it was the start of cyberspace reality, the 'media war' that made it acceptable and clean. just as the Pentagon political Newspeak makes atrocity 'squeaky clean' and

acceptable. The newsreaders were like programmed 'cheerleaders', and this experience reinforced in me the belief that there is a deep corruption within America, which is demonic. American radical friends were convinced that America was a utopian experiment that had failed. One guy with a laconic sense of humour said 'Don't worry Mark baby us Americans only feel alive when we're killing people.' Eventually work contracts came to a close and so did my marriage. I decided that it was time to return to moth eaten Britain.

Britain was exactly as I imagined it to be; a post-Thatcherite predatory jungle, socially dangerous and extremely dull. Britain's post-Imperial collapse was finding a pathetic identity in baseball caps and McDonalds replacing autonomy of consciousness. It was effectively culturally colonised by the USA, but without its open directness, as always hamstrung by the oldest class system in the world. 'Necrophilia must be like a Turkish brothel on speed after this little lot.' I mused, contemplating the undead at Heathrow. There was a social deadweight atmosphere of weariness and exhaustion.

I undertook agency work with 'Reliance' working at Tower Hamlets, and Wandsworth Local Authorities. At this agency all social workers were offered immediate 'free' counselling facilities, such was the nature of inner London stress. Crack cocaine, and alcohol abuse were the main drugs of choice favoured by the 'helping profession'. This was 1992, and it became abundantly clear that Britain and England in particular, as a collapsed post-imperial power had also a collapsed social structure. There was a pervasive atmosphere of cynicism and above all, fear. Mugging and apprehension were rampant. The companions of a divided society. Split between the rich in Mercedes-Benz and a culture of begging. Yuppies choking on their own twerpish greed, and long term unemployment and homelessness without hope.

I was employed at Tower Hamlets as a Level Three Child Protection Worker, also carrying a generic caseload. I went for three months, but was asked to stay for six. There was a great deal of duty work. There was a Drop-In Centre for advice etc, and particularly as far as Section Seventeen money was concerned, there was an attempt by clients to turn the place into an extension of the DS. In America and Canada, the Social Services, and DS are largely amalgamated as Departments of Human Resources. The pressure was insane, and in so many ways here was the direct social evidence, of Thatcher's love of Victorian values come home to roost. I encountered real

poverty daily, and the Dickensian twisting of character that goes with it. The victims of predation becoming the new underclass of predators. During the Victorian 1880s and 1890s, inner London was a dangerous 'no-go-area', social crime, mugging and child prostitution was a way of life, and I witnessed all this in post-Thatcher's money / property obsessed 'paradise'. In the early 1980s it was invading civilised social values, now it has become the normative landscape, and the so-called social work profession has no choice but to collude in de-civilization with 'cash-led social work' and the destruction of its own profession. In one sense, Baudrillard, the French post-Structuralist philosopher is right when he writes that we are not surrounded by people any more, but sign objects. Following this, my belief is that we go through the motions of being human. It is a re-cycled script that imitates human behaviour and ideology, but actualizes commodification, a reduction process that converts commercial objects, and human values, into iconized symbols for buying and selling.

Back in reality I was able to complete one piece of creative work, that stays with you proudly for good. I was asked to make a 'Place of Safety' order concerning a fifteen year old who had run away from Mum and was living rough with a delinquent tearaway, known to the police for drug offences, and all manner of nasty convictions. 'K' had been living at the International Youth Hostel at Centre Point, and I eventually managed to interview her. I explained to my supervisor Corby Ward, a former Children's Officer, and salt of the earth, that before initiating statutory orders, I would work on a span of relationships, beginning with 'K' and then Mum, and her boyfriend. This would be in the spirit of the *1989 Children's Act*, in terms of the needs of the child being paramount, and working in partnership with the family as an organic whole. During the interview 'K' complained that she could not do anything right when Mum was around. 'Mum always picks on me.' I found out that Dad had emigrated to Australia, when 'K' was a baby, and it transpired that Mum had been abandoned when little herself. Mum had lots of 'boyfriends' and appeared to be 'on the game'. I interviewed Mum and 'K' together, there was a lot of assumed hostility in the relationship. 'K' was trying to assert her emerging womanhood, but Mum would have none of it, so 'K' was being a 'little woman' in quite dangerous circumstances to put it mildly.

I then interviewed her boyfriend, 'J'. His face was covered in small scratches that looked like they had been self-inflicted. He then told me this tale about 'these geezers that were going to beat up and rape K', and I told them where

to go, and this is what I got...' It seemed obvious that 'J' was portraying himself in the light of 'Hero', and I told him so. I could feel some emotional concern coming because I had a daughter of the same age, and felt protective and primitive towards 'J' who actually lived in a fantasy world. I told him that I felt strongly it was important that at this stage it was best for him to keep some distance from 'K' until things were sorted out with her family. He exploded screaming 'Keep off my fucking case you' He was going to kill me and the rest of Bethnal Green. I told him politely that I didn't care, my concern was for the safety and well being of my client.

The next stage involved a lot of work with Mum getting her to see what she was doing to her daughter, and what her daughter was doing to her. Some fair functional degree of rapport was established all around. I then found a short stay hostel for her in Basildon, Essex, and worked with 'K' on what she wanted from life. She wanted out of the relationship, and I helped her to help him to back off. She was determined 'If he don't, I'll cut 'is cock off.' Communication was strengthened with her and other family members, and to some extent Mum was able to see the way in which her family 'ghosts' were being visited upon 'K'. It turned out that she was quite a 'high flyer' academically, and she expressed a wish to complete her 'A' Levels. I contacted her school, and got her re-admitted. She also expressed a lot of emotional confusion, and anger about her circumstances, feeling used over sex and drugs. I contacted the Family Therapy Department at Maudsley Hospital, and arranged for to have sessions with a female therapist, which reinforced her motivation to get back to school, and a better degree of contact with Mum. I also worked with Mum in getting her Dad's address in Australia, so she could have the option of writing to him, although I don't think she did. What was important was for her to have access to his identity. 'J' backed off after once again threatening to kill half of London, including me, but he was mainly all talk. He was no doubt serious borderline mental health, and I was relieved when he faded out of the picture so quietly.

That was a case with a bit of a fairy tale ending, the sort that helps you to keep going. At lunch time, I would sometimes go down to Victoria Park, to work out in the cleaner air. On the way back, a young man pulled out a dagger, and began screaming 'Have you got an attitude problem?' I stopped and pointed up to the radiantly blue sky, and said 'Isn't it a beautiful day?' He stopped and stared up at the sky, and I moved off fast. Another time I was emerging up the stairs from Bethnal Green tube, and two young black guys said 'Eee looks affluent, let's mug him'. I said 'Would you mind waiting

till my breakfast digests.' they found it funny, and I moved on to work fast. I then went to Wandsworth for a while. It was quite common when working for an Agency, to be used as an all purpose 'dogsbody'. I was 'ordered' to accompany a social worker who was leaving, to remove a baby from its Mother, because the infant was failing to thrive. The woman had two babies removed before, and there was clearly mutual antagonism felt by the two women. This social worker was getting promotion, and I was getting the 'dirty work'. In the work with 'K' and this situation, I questioned the power structure; I did not automatically comply with an authoritarian directive, disguised as a 'professional decision'. I examined the baby and saw no circumstances to warrant, abuse or neglect, and I told them that as a professional social worker, I requested a second opinion from a Paediatrician at St George's Hospital. The social worker was shocked and annoyed that I was exercising this autonomy. The Paediatrician examined the baby and found no cause for concern. His only complaint was the diet the baby had been given by the Local Authority. He requested that the child come off it straight away, and that the Mother be allowed to exercise her intuitive mothering skills. It was in my view a mixture of arse covering, combined with heartless and unprofessional emotional involvement. I found in my experience that some of the upwardly mobile career women were the worst for this, carrying on barely concealed vendettas against other female clients and social workers who disagreed with their decisions. All in the name of 'professional decisions'. They couldn't fault me on my procedure, but I was told shortly after this, that my services were no longer required.

Shortly after, I got work as an electric guitar blues tutor to Afro-Caribbean kids. It was sessional work at Acklam Road Play Centre, just by Ladbroke Grove Tube, right under the Westway flyover, you didn't breathe the air there, you chewed it! It was tough but rewarding work. I eventually decided that I had had enough of London. What I have always enjoyed about the North East is the spirit of its people, and the immediate access to coastal, and outstanding natural beauty. So I relocated back to God's Own Geordie Land, where I had a string of contacts, my daughter, and friends.

I gained work contacts teaching at Northumbria and Newcastle Universities, and laid on a ten week stress management course in at Durham Prison. On the day of the introductory session, an IRA 'terrorist' had smuggled into the prison a Derringer pistol. One half of it was in a box of tissues, and the other half up his backside! The screws were running round like headless chickens, some of them blaming it on me, and this strange Chi! I was hotly criticised

by some Newcastle anarchists for offering stress management in Prison. So often anarchists think they have a monopoly of the moral high ground. They judge by absolute values. You don't compromise 'freedom' by helping to make a 'hell hole' like H Wing more human. You introduce it, where it is possible, in the form that works. I am finding the possibilities of introducing this work more blocked by specialisation, and forms of glossy control or authoritarianism disguised as 'customer service'. In one sense the spirit of freedom is like a tributary that moves in and out of the cracks and unseen ways of the society. It helps to educate and nourish. Hiding behind rigid doctrinaire values, strengthens sectarianism, division, fear and rule. I believe that doctrine gives guide lines for action, directly a movement ossifies into the recycling of dogma, and becomes the 'received line' or mantra, it cannot grow or expand without active, directly applied imagination. Clinging on to doctrine as an end in itself, sterilises creativity. This process is inseparable from the radical, which means 'roots' or heart of the matter.

Tai Classes, H Wing, HMP Durham. Mick Martin, Senior P.E.



Instructor & Mark Newns

To return to statutory social work. Tower Hamlets was the last authority I worked with. Having worked with Corby Ward, the resources manager, I sensed along with Alan James in Liverpool, the last remnants of a genuinely principled social work were coming to an end. I found that the workers who had been Child Care Officers, under the old Children's Department, had a combination of warmth, very high professional standards, they were not frightened of taking risks, lots of humanity and above all, humour. They had that truly professional capacity, stemming from experience, to use their personalities as vehicles for creative work. It of course reflected another era, but I wonder what was being lost. Corby then was nearly retired, and went on a world cruise. Gin slings and casework memories at sundown in some tropical hideaway! My experience of the whiz kids coming in, was one of a high degree of ambition, and cyberspace documentation of all procedures. It was increasingly become a computerised 'time and motion' study. Documentation was becoming an end in itself, and social work was being defined as a product, not 'client centred' but 'cash-led'. When we know that life is a process, and not a product, based on 'improvement ratings' and 'performance indicators'. All these words and categories safeguard management's career ambitions. They mean little to the client, whose reality is existential, and reinforce my perception that the 'job' based around client need is simply being phased out. Children according to NSPCC statistics are currently dying of abuse, and inappropriate social work intervention, at the rate of between two and three a week in the UK. I indict Tony's 'Spin' for this, it is busy sterilizing all work processes with an institutional obsession with monetarism.

In between holistic health work in the North East, I would do occasional Agency work. A common theme throughout the 1990s, and 2001, coming from managers during interviews was 'The days of creative social work are over.' 'The profession that we knew is being killed off.' ... Well, if that is the case, what on earth remains? Nearly all the managers I met were in their thirties, and hot to trot up career structures, and break through 'glass ceilings'. The self-seeking was disgracefully blatant, their major concern was what my knowledge of statutory documentation procedures was, and how skilled was I in operating 'state of the art' IT. Whereas documentation, administration and technology were secondary to the 'heart of social work' which is the creative relationship, this had now become primary.

I gained a short term contract to work with Barnados in a small unit with young offenders. The case I had allocated to me was 'J' a fourteen year old

who had taken part in an attempted armed robbery of a petrol station. The work was intensive one-to-one, and I combined it with home visits, and after interviewing his Mother, friends, taking his history, and working with the school, gained some important changes for the better. This centred on him, and his value and worth as a person, and to get him to take an active interest in promoting the things that interested and fulfilled him. He was not defined as a ridiculous statistic to compete with other Local Authorities, to give a good image, and essentially 'cover arses'. Anyway, after about six months work, the manager said to me 'What have you done to 'J', it's a miracle he's improved so much, no one recognises him.' It was the usual story of working with him as a unique human being that I respected as an equal. I discovered that he had a love of animals, and this interest was encouraged, and he eventually took his place in school, and took control of his life. As I recall it, there were no computers, statistics or bureaucratic 'Emperor's New Clothes'. If there had been, he would possibly be a hardened criminal or a social casualty of some kind.

At one level I think the withering of professional social work is a situation that can only be left to die off. Evil not only destroys the good, but eventually itself, because evil is based on weakness, and attracts similar people into that vortex. It is evil because its claims to care are not true, it defends and advances the value system of acquisition, insularity, money and power that is a major force for the generation of social evil, and the problems the 'Social Services' are supposed to be resolving. Bureaucracies and accountants' competitive fantasies, had nothing whatsoever to do with the situation of young 'J' who was busy embarking on a 'career' as an armed robber. In one sense the anarchist / libertarian perspective within social work is seeing an extension of the State as the ultimate political parasite; Nietzsche wrote "The State is the coldest of cold monsters, and coldly it lies, and this lie creeps from its mouth. I the State, am the People."

It impersonates the people, and the human element within its service structure. This is being eliminated in favour of power and career image. Of course it provides some elements of care, that is its function, but as the State retrenches within its own incompetence, it is reduced to embellishing its normative political and cultural controls. A glossy 'We the People' image of democratised community care, that at the same time tightens its authoritarian market structures. The authoritarian procedures are designed to limit your capacity to think and act professionally, and yet they are marketed 'As Best Value for The Client'. The Blair duplicity is beyond vomit, and is a natural

extension of Thatcherism and the globalised psychotic belief that human life is not a process but a product. It is like trying to practice Tai Ji in diver's boots! This hypnosis forms the 'ethical' basis of all economic and employment systems. The deification of money has been taken out of its economic reality as a measurement of price, and symbolic exchange value into a transcendent project. It is part of commodification, and an iconized symbol of worship and religion within a World Church of Commerce. Everywhere people are hypnotised by symbols of dead labour power, and 'alienated passivity'. This global market popularism is not just a secular religion, it has become the new religious myth, articulated as a treadmill of acquisition, where what is desired is never the object, but desire itself. Thus the lowest and most futile elements of human consciousness have become icons of excellence and worship, as ends in themselves. Social work used to pick up the pieces, now it quantifies them, for the structures of power that generate the malaise. Understanding this new 'spirituality' and its consequences for civilization and the continuity of life itself inspired me to undertake MA research work in the History of Ideas, and current PhD project 'The World Church of Commerce'.

There is a powerful movement of global corporate cannibalism, that through its technoculture and incessant media conditioning, it is beyond question, because its total control, forms the basis of not only material survival but ultimate spiritual or religious identity, and at a very deep level of universal taboo, is the belief that you don't question God. This religion of Commodification is about conditioning and control, and such is the arrogance of its Corporate High Priests that Donald Rumsfelt and George Bush Jr can say in all unabashed sincerity "If you are not 100% for us, then you are the enemy." There is a dislocation, fragmentation, and chaos amongst the competing and enslaving fundamentalisms of the world that surfaced with the hijack suicide bombings of September 11th in America. The corporate transnational World Church of Commerce, versus Islamic Fundamentalism. Resistance to totalitarianism and tyranny, has been at the heart of anarchist doctrine, but to what extent has it become ossified dogma, a red and black freedom tradition consigned to a museum of history? Have the beliefs themselves become commodified metaphysical goods that energise the identity, but are essentially something to be possessed and held on to as an end in themselves, without relevance to the reality of peoples' lives?

After returning to England from America in 1992, I attended an overflow meeting at Mary Ward House in Holborn, London. It was a packed London anarchist meeting, and the Editors of *Freedom*, the Anarchist fortnightly, were present to discuss a generally felt lack of democracy, or socially relevant content in the production of *Freedom*. The general feeling of the editors was that they saw their job as being about transmitting traditional anarchist dogma, and not breaking new ground, but defending what remained. The editors present were Charles Crout, and Donald Room. This is fine if it means dogma in the original sense which means to teach. But so much of what is being rehashed is simply a recycling of anarchist historical icons, metaphysical 'goods'. Political ideologies that speak for freedom are marginalised by commodification and in the desperate attempt to protect them they end up becoming dogmatic commodities themselves. People do love their secular religions, for many it not only gives meaning to their lives, but it *is* their lives. Look critically at the tradition and you have taken away their identity and the very ground beneath their feet. Commodification describes a reduction, conversion, process, where initially commercial objects are converted into iconised objects for buying and selling. I believe this now includes the whole yardstick of human ethics that is vanishing into a cyberspace vortex of no return.

Reflections, Conclusions, Anarchism and Academia

It was questions like this that took me to Northumbria University where I read the MA in the history of Ideas. I had been immersed politically in anarchism from the time of 'The Spies for Peace', RSG6, Aldermanston 1963, [see 'The Spies For Peace Story', *Anarchy*, Number 29, July 1963] and through later martial arts training in karate and Tai Ji Ch'Uan, discovered that for me the spiritual basis of the arts, Zen Buddhism and Taoism are spiritual equivalents of anarchism, without of course the legacy of bomb throwing nihilistic nutters who connect with all movements of militancy. I struck gold with my Supervisor, Dr Mike Sutton who having been an Aldermaston marcher and London busker, read his PhD at Oxford in the History of Science. It helped to dispel some of my left wing conspiracy theories about academia, and I realised that, at best, you simply learn to develop a more effective and coherent argument. This led on to the PhD proposal at Durham, where I was told that it was 'the most radical proposal that Durham has accepted', but an 'idea of great importance'.

The problem is that with rigour, research and precision, and all the techniques of the academic world, you discover how many people simply think and act in terms of prejudices and stereotypes, and believe them to be the truth, rather than what is true. The research is a lonesome business, but if you can cope with it, there is a whole process of psychological change that goes with the research; it does you, rather than you doing it. It has something to do with the daemon and is in the nature of a creative obsession, or as an American friend said 'It's cruelty to dumb animals', a protracted mental illness!

What is strange about the research is that the subject matter is your laboratory of everyday life. At Northumbria we noticed that the University had become an 'educational supermarket' - "stack 'em high, teach 'em cheap". In Tai Ji Ch'Uan teaching students expect instant results, learning is now a 'logging on' experience, where they would attend class with their baseball caps and walkmans. The students were increasingly unable to activate the simple imitative learning process, through repetition and recall. Well of course academic learning and martial arts are now 'commodities' there is an increasing inability to apply discipline and follow through. That was one of the saddest things, to see students who really wanted to learn being blocked by the learning psychology that was going to get them their degree and 'good job'. For what? This pattern has been increasing and taking place for years, and culture has become more computerised and commodified. The price is on the soul. If we are being drawn into a cultural black hole of global de-civilization, where freedom is being willingly chained to a McDonalds on a computer screen, where IT and commodity exhausts our faith in reality and belief in authentic freedom, what price anarchism and social work?

Mark A Newns MA
Newcastle Upon Tyne
October 2001

Something Should Be Done **by** **Peter Good**

I write this by way of explanation of my whereabouts over the past two years. In some ways it constitutes an apology for I knew beforehand what the outcome was likely to be, and perhaps I could have used my energy to more honest endeavours. However, what follows is somewhat trimmed and glossed over as I have not wished to delve into personalities (which range from the heroic to the well poisoner) and because it would require of the reader detailed knowledge of employment legislation.

December 1976 had everything going for me. I had a plum job working with people with learning disabilities on a successful venture adapting 'work' to them rather than the other way around. With my first wife and our two kids we had a house (tied to the job alas), an old car, and just enough money to keep us content from week to week. In addition I was the senior moderator on *Anarchism Lancastrium*, an organ that fluttered around the more lunatic fringe of the movement but whose glossy production methods and sinister financial backing became the envy of the anarchist press houses.

That fateful night in December saw me in attendance at the Annual General Meeting of the hospital branch of COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees). Up to then I had been 'an active branch member'; I'd turn up to odd meetings and maybe argue the odds with someone over a pint or two. That night some silly bugger whom I hardly knew proposed me as Branch Chairman, was seconded from the floor and I accepted all within the space of thirty seconds. With hindsight I should have stood up and declared my politics or declined or even accepted and gone with the flow and gotten rich from the pickings. But I did none of these. I took the job on.

Calderstones is similar to most giant Victorian mental hospitals. Built of brick, huge three storey blocks, landscaped gardens, tucked away from sight in the depths of Lancashire's very fine countryside. Up until ten years ago it ran very much like other hospitals. Highly institutionalised staff and patients, drab dormitory wards, meal time slops and labour on the hospital farm. Then the inevitable scandal of the mid sixties, a massive injection of cash and 'new ideas'. Wards were split up, decorated, refurnished, personalised. Patients were scrubbed clean, dressed in real clothes and put to work in new Industrial Therapy Centres. And the staff were taken in by

new career structures whereby the 'best' nurses were promoted to office desks and the ancillary staff were work studied and reorganised and the hospital itself became part of the Burnley Health District which in turn paid homage to the Lancashire Area Health Authority which fell within the North West Regional Health Authority. And as each tier of authority grew came a desk, a filing cabinet, an office, a secretary. And with them came the new whizz kids of Britain's fastest growing industry - Personnel Officers, Administrators, Work Study Officers. With such a variety of new found positions power became the name of the game.

As each tier of authority grew it quickly became indispensable. It had to be referred to, be consulted. Where in the past a decision was made on the spot by a Matron, now simple queries were being referred to distant committees who would juggle the problem around in the air, leave half of it up there, then refer it on up the ladder.

While at the top of the pile managers grew fat from being indispensable no such gravy existed at the bottom.

The wards, although looking more like homes, could only reach coping levels in terms of providing nursing staff. Night nurses, mostly unqualified nursing assistants, found themselves in sole charge of two or sometimes three wards throughout the night. Young student nurses found themselves in charge of wards for days on end. On wards of elderly men a patient dies in a pool of his own vomited blood huddled around a toilet bowl without even the dignity of dying on a ward that was staffed. A young girl in the throes of an epileptic seizure traps her arm behind a radiator and suffers severe burns. It is some hours before an overstretched Sister finds her on her rounds ... the list goes on and on until it bores you into a sense of weary nausea that eventually you will shut your ears to.

However, here I am at this meeting finding myself as the Branch Chairman. Christ! I don't even know what a composite resolution is let alone how to 'negotiate' or 'have a word with management'. Were it ever necessary for me to venture near the administrative block I'd find myself making an unconscious detour. 'What the hell' I found myself asking 'had I taken on?'

Trade unionism at Calderstones had barely had a history. Odd individuals were remembered from the past as Charge Nurse so-and-so who had a cushy number or was soon promoted. Before reorganisation the Branch Chairman

or Secretary had occasionally popped in to see the Hospital Management Committee where he had got a yes, or more often a no, to a query. But if he had made any gains at all they had been made on the strength of his personality. Such questions as mobilising the shop floor or industrial action simply never arose. Every so often management held cheese and cucumber sandwich affairs on some pretext where local union officials (there were twelve different unions at Calderstones) had the opportunity to meet senior management. I went to one soon after being elected. Unfortunately I have a drinking problem. I never went to any more. No more were ever held.

There were fifteen people elected to form the Branch Executive that night, with perhaps only one with any knowledge of Trade Unionism. Proposed at that meeting came a call for 'something to be done' about our staffing levels. The retiring Chairman explained that he, along with the COHSE Full Time Officer (FTO) had taken this grievance right up to Area Health Authority level. The Branch still pressed for 'something to be done'.

From that moment on I began to soak up every scrap of information I could on Trade Unionism and the various complex power structures that contaminate the National Health Service (NHS).

I met my first FTO - Eddie Lawson. Regional Secretary of COHSE, a professed moderate, ex-Guards Sergeant Major. Recognised as a brilliant recruiter, he bullied membership up to 30,000 from 4,000 in four years. Alas, his capacities as a recruiter were not matched in his commitment to the working man and woman. When the history of the NW NHS is written, people may stop to ask what were COHSE doing about it? How could they sit back and do nothing? - Because me old mate, they were hand in glove with leading personalities in the NHS power structure.

Lesson One: Because someone wears a Union badge and is employed by you as a FTO to defend and improve your conditions, doesn't necessarily mean that they are on your side.

But back to the ranch. For some months the Unions had been allocated an office. It had lain unused with a desk, filing cabinets, a few chairs and a telephone. Much to the consternation of management I placed a large sign outside announcing a daily lunch time surgery. And as people called in I got to learn all about pay, work study, leave entitlements; in fact all the nitty gritty that goes to make up daily TU work. If I didn't know anything I'd ring

up a FTO. Looking back now, fifteen calls a day (and most evenings) were perhaps a bit much - but it took me a long time to work out the role of an FTO.

Myself and the Branch Secretary call a meeting of all the hospital union reps and put to them COHSE's resolution that something should be done about staffing levels, viz: that we should ballot the whole hospital with regard to sounding out the possibility of us taking Industrial Action. It is unwise to apply national reputations to local union branches. And our hospital was in a sorry state. NUPE [National Union of Public Employees - readers should note that Peter refers to unions which are now obsolete. COHSE, NUPE and NALGO, the National Union of Local Government Officers, all merged in 1993 to form UNISON, Britain's largest trade union - *ed*] with about 250 members (all ancillary staff and most of the night nurses) was run by old Bob, a nice enough fella who'd been doing the job for years and had a cushy number running the clothing stores, felt that it would take several months to sound out all his members. The Royal College of Nursing (a hyper-elitist organisation run by retired matrons) were not happy at all. Thus we took these unhelpful soundings back to our executive and it was decided to go it alone and ballot all COHSE members.

Years ahead of Tory manifestos we decide that the ballot must be secret. Remember we were dealing with staff who only looked on Trade Unions as some sort of insurance policy who'd be there to provide help should something go amiss. Certainly there was an overwhelming feeling (including me) that Industrial Action could not include walking out on patients.

Permission was sought and granted from management to walk around and conduct a ballot. We chose six 'responsible nurses' to monitor and carry the sealed box around the hospital accompanied by a shop steward. The steward's job was to record whether a member had voted and enter their name in a big book. Balloting was to take place over three days and two nights.

And from that first day of balloting things began to take an interesting turn. For the staff, for COHSE, the other unions, the press, management and for me personally.

The Staff. It quickly became apparent that there was massive support for the ballot. Folk would read the leaflet, exclaim complete agreement, mark

the paper with a cross and exclaim, 'at last something's being done'. It also became apparent that something was sadly amiss with our branch records. Our darling Secretary had completely ignored branch administration with the sole exception of the quarterly cheque. But perhaps more of that anon. At the start of the ballot we had an estimated membership of 190. As it turned out the ballot proved to be the best recruiting campaign of all times. Stewards had their pockets crammed with COHSE application forms. Within three days we had over 400 members.

The other Unions. The other unions had no choice but to wake up. Blissfully unaware of the TUC's Bridlington Agreement (which strictly discourages inter-union transfers) we unashamedly poached people from other unions and preached the omnipotence of COHSE. NUPE's monopoly of night staff crumbled the first night the ballot went round on night shift. NALGO's thirty nursing members were reduced to five in as many hours.

The Press. Fortunately the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* was not an anti union paper - more a benign muckraker. Whoever stirred up the muck they'd publish it, word for word in thumping great headlines that on occasions, even startled me! As everywhere our local radio was desperate for solid local news and a similar philosophy existed there.

Management. Oh dear. The management reacted differently at different levels. The hospital managers willingly passed up responsibility to the District. The District Press Officer, a young woman on £8,500 p.a. whom I only ever met once, would issue the same monotonous statement: 'No comment, it is not the policy of the Burnley Health District to discuss internal problems with the media.'

It was at Unit level that the real problems began. A Unit comprises several wards or Therapy departments, employs maybe 50 staff and is managed by a Unit Officer. We had 15 Unit Officers at Calderstones and a fair mixture of young whizz kids and jobs-for-the-boys-until-retirement is a fair summary. Only one, John our Branch Vice Chairman, was sympathetic to trade unionism, each one of his management colleagues was eventually to stab him in the back.

This level is important because it's the only level of management that the ward staff see each day. Unit Officers plan shifts, holidays, staff deployment, overtime and have a major say in promotional policy.

We'll return to those Unit Officers later but for now I'll keep to my own. Dear Trevor wasn't such a bad lad really. Young, ambitious, keen to get on he was OK provided you steered him away from making managerial decisions. His attitude towards Trade Unions was taken from yesterday's *Daily Mail* - but he was at least honest about it. Given the option I'd sooner be kicked in the teeth than stabbed in the back.

The day after the ballot started I was demoted from Charge Nurse to Deputy Charge Nurse (on administrative grounds) and forcibly transferred from my Community work project to the hospital farm.

Pendle View (the farm) was the very antithesis of my idea of work for learning disabled people. It served as the hospital showpiece where all the visitors were shown around. Rabbit hutches, landscaped gardens, giant aviaries - all of which mustn't be touched except by the chosen few patients. Patients were divided into gangs under the supervision of a nursing assistant. The pressure on the staff was to achieve results with tasks and not the patients, with the inevitable result that the nurse would do the job while the patient held his or her coat.

The unit was run by Sam. Old, ambitious, keen to get on, he was OK provided you steered him away from making decisions. His attitude to Trade Unions was just to the right of Rhodes Boyson - but never to your face. Unfortunately, old Sam was Branch Secretary of NALGO (Nursing). Old Sam gave me five of his most difficult patients and instructed me to transport 50 tons of gravel from the Works Department down to Pendle View. We were issued with two wheelbarrows and four shovels. Never one for mathematical analysis I estimated that this would take some five months on the outside.

Along with the Ballot we launched our Branch Newspaper. Unimaginatively entitled *Info* it was a chirpy mixture of employment rights, events, outrageous libel and anonymous interviews. Management described it as scurrilous and blatantly anarchistic. On two subsequent occasions the District Personnel Officer attempted to bring legal proceedings against its editors. Management refused permission for it to be distributed through the hospital postal system. When asked why I was told that they could not condone a magazine printed by the Underground Press Syndicate being circulated on Crown property.

Needless to say the staff loved it. In fact it was the only paper, amongst all the very professional union journals distributed around the hospital, that people sat down and read from cover to cover. There's a lesson in that somewhere.

The Ballot was counted in front of a packed Branch meeting. The scrutineers returned a thumping 91 per cent in favour of taking Industrial Action. Then I announced a mass meeting for the following Wednesday for all hospital staff in the Central Ballroom. News spread like wildfire not only through Calderstones but in other local hospitals. Here was a union actually calling a meeting of all hospital staff and threatening industrial action. Those few days leading up to the mass meeting at Calderstones were indeed heady days. Shop Stewards became hero figures, everyone wore a COHSE badge and the talk was all COHSE.

Come the Wednesday and the hall is packed. Natty dressed young men from the BBC and Granada sweep arc lamps across the assembled staff, as I with John stand atop a couple of tables. It's a strange feeling - power, like the goose with delusions of gander it can easily go to the head. It's oh so easy to sway a crowd packed into a confined space. Forget about the minor questions, just put your case with passion and confident logic, the feeling of the mob will take care of the rest. Each group needs its Ian Paisley, its Brian Clough, its Enoch Powell. Their reassuring logic helps you sort out your problems - so much easier to go along with the mass.

The meeting voted to commence industrial action from the following Monday. It included staff taking all meal breaks, one qualified staff to be in charge of each ward at all times. Staff were only to accept responsibility for one ward.

Things by now had almost become impossible for me personally. The press were ringing me constantly, as were a dozen different hospitals and the local SWP! Old Sam would simply announce that Mr. Good is not available and I would be plodding back and forth with my barrows of gravel and five fairly unmanageable lads. I would arrange permission from Sam to attend a meeting at a certain time and then minutes before the meeting was due to start Trevor would turn up, overrule Sam and declare that I cannot be spared. One eventually learns to live with paranoia and come to like it really.

Still Monday came and to avoid silly games I along with John took a week's leave to 'nurse' the action through. We practically lived in the union office. Rarely did the phone stop ringing and we were besieged with queries, visitors, reporters, bottles of ale and chip butties.

Within two days the District Management Team asked for an emergency meeting with all the Trades Unions at Calderstones. A packed conference room with all these impeccably dressed managers at one end and all the unions at the other; equally well dressed except me who appeared in what was to become known as my negotiating jeans. This really was the first time I'd ever seen FTOs in action. Brilliant speakers and negotiators - and really with no industrial muscle they had to be.

The Chairman opened the meeting by asking the union to state their case. An invitation my FTO accepted by saying he could do no better than ask 'Mr. Good to state the case from ward level.' Christ I nearly fell through the floor. I stumbled and stuttered and felt like a juggler very conscious of an unappreciative audience, my confidence slipping with each ball. From there the meeting went from waffle to waffle, the FTOs vying with each other to score points on eloquence yet afraid to commit themselves. And each manager trying to prove himself as having full control over his own area of responsibility.

A word though about our District Nursing Officer. Managers in the NHS who prove themselves to be incompetent are never sacked as are more junior nurses; instead they are promoted out of the way or if they are really bad they are moved sideways. The latter fate fell to our DNO who was moved from Preston to Burnley District Management Team. A move described by a senior Preston manager as 'our gain and your loss'.

Ms Blackstock is elderly, ambitious and keen to get on and OK if she can be steered away from making a decision. Alas she insisted on making such decisions with alarming regularity. As a manager she was atrocious, as each colleague she worked with admitted. Privately mind you, privately, Ms Blackstock and I never hit it off from the start.

That particular meeting ended in nothing. Management insisting that things were not ideal but their graphs showed that there were adequate levels of staff.

I learned much at that meeting. That night I took off to the woods and with a bottle of Bells for company worked it all out.

Lesson one and most important of all is that as a Shop Steward you must lose all fear of people. That includes not only management, but the press, your own members, and FTOs. Such an obvious lesson reads much easier than it is in practice. Number two is to be totally honest throughout. I knew I could never develop the art about talking about nothing (called snowing) at negotiations. Thirdly it was imperative that we develop some sort of industrial muscle. Walk outs and strikes were clearly out of the question. And it was pretty obvious that senior management were not too concerned about staff not taking meal breaks and wards could always be covered by junior management who were expendable anyhow.

So we went to town. We called a press conference in the local pub and newsmen from the *Sun*, *Mirror*, and *Mail* and all the rest got disgustingly drunk as we gave out our problems to the world. We'd worked on the statement all the previous night and had it planned down and checked to the last detail. We even had Sally there in her uniform who agreed to cross her legs at strategic points in the conference!

We announced to the world the results of staff shortages and cuts, our patients dying and being burned. That afternoon we were to call another mass meeting and ask staff to agree to a motion calling for *one week's notice* of walk outs unless the DMT came up with concrete proposals.

That evening all the locals had mopped up the story in solid black headlines and the next morning the nationals devoted a few columns to the 'horror hospital' and 'Patients die in staff starved hospital'. This, coupled with a resounding vote for a week's notice of walk outs that afternoon, was too much for the powers that be. The Area Health Authority stepped in and asked for an urgent meeting at Preston. Now the AHA is really big potatoes, based in a converted hotel overlooking the railway station, its five floors are responsible for running health services throughout Lancashire.

Again a massive boardroom with all the same people there plus additional big time AHA. We dominated the meeting with eight stewards and really we had the AHA trapped. We demanded and got immediately extra staff for nights, an independent inquiry into staffing levels and weekly meetings with

local management to identify and solve critically staffed areas. Things certainly looked rosy.

The next day we called a meeting of all shop stewards and elected our side of the inquiry. Out of this meeting we formed the Calderstones Joint Shop Stewards Committee (to get to grips with the situation). Beset with problems from the start - COHSE FTOs refused to recognise it as did management, we excluded the Royal College of Nurses on the grounds of them being a joke organisation - but a fragile cohesiveness was held under the banner of working together as trade unionists.

Our agreement with AHA soon fell into difficulties although the thing was down in black and white. At the newly formed weekly meeting with local management we quickly fell into difficulties over interpretation. Management wanted the meetings to develop into cosy chats over long term policy. They were unwilling to be pushed into employing extra staff to cover unstaffed wards as we had agreed. We learned much later that the AHA had forbade them to do any such thing - though no one had the gumption to tell us that, even our FTOs.

Our agreement on the inquiry was that it should be formed from two union and two management nominations with a mutually acceptable chairman. As reported we had chosen our two lads and suggested a good chairman all within 24 hours. Alas the AHA interpreted the agreement differently. After much too-ing and fro-ing I eventually received a long letter from the AHA insisting that the inquiry should be formed of two management representatives only.

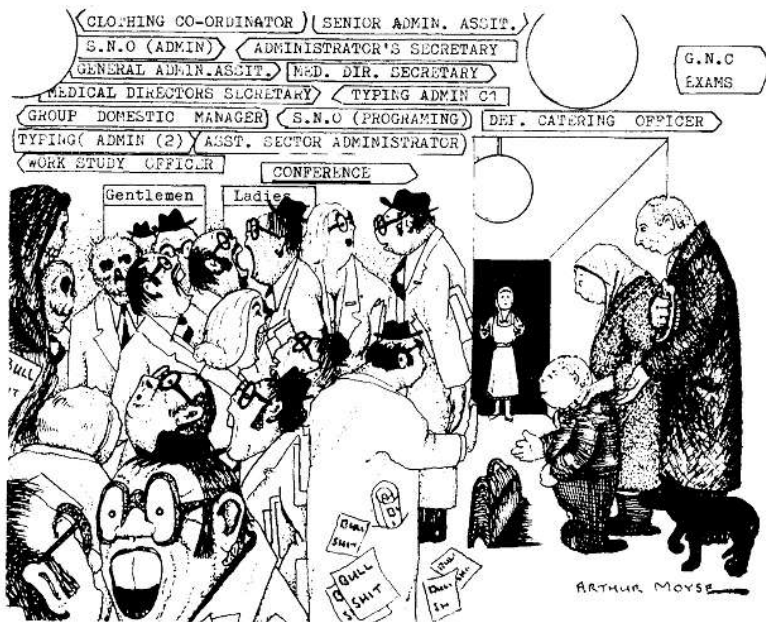
This was really too much when coupled with our growing frustration at local level. But what could we do? We'd been very cleverly out-manoeuvred by some very clever politicking. The novelty of mass meetings was wearing thin and criticism was coming from the wards that the ballot had achieved nothing.

We started to plan what was to become known as 'Imaginative Industrial Action'. Our plan was to take over Ms Blackstock's office and stay there until we received positive assurances from the AHA. We had a "shock group" of six stewards and were well loaded with food and a banner to fly from her window. Our difficulty arose in finding a spirited feminist (we were taking a small chemical toilet and a screen for Ms B.) our soundings

were somehow leaked to the authorities who greeted the threat with such alarm that we were offered an immediate reconvened meeting. A pity really, I'd always wanted to have a long chat with the lady.

At that meeting we got and agreed the terms for a full blown inquiry and official letters were sent out that day to our nominees.

Alack, difficulties were being experienced in taking our FTOs along with us and I suppose it was about time that we decided in future we'd sort the job out ourselves. Indeed our skills as negotiators were improving by the minute. My fear of anyone and everyone had long ago fluttered out of the window. I'd gotten to know all the local journalists on a personal level and I was more or less retained by Radio Blackburn to comment on health service affairs. The media prefer spokespeople to be able to give short snappy heavily biased comments off the cuff. Such a spokesperson was I.



I began to rise in the Trade Union world. Elections to Trades Councils, committees and outside meetings took place every week. Very soon I was a walking office, with files, briefcases, telephone messages at home, work and the local pub. Yet all this time I was still moving gravel from A to B and growing quite attached to my five lads.

Unions are only as strong as their local branches. Under such an adage we took over the negotiating for the hospital and wrote afterwards to our FTOs to 'keep them in the picture'.

We were back at the weekly meetings with a vengeance. Every weekend we had stewards roving the hospital monitoring staffing levels and we'd present these figures to management each Monday morning. Clearly local managers, who even at a local level had little idea what was actually happening on their own wards, couldn't cope with this. In desperation they ordered all their Unit Officers to attend each Monday meeting to account for their Unit's staffing level. For the most part harmless yes-men they were unable to deal with what was a virtual public interrogation. This exercise didn't earn us extra staff but my name permanently prefixed with "that union bastard ..."

All was not well in other departments either. The kitchens which had worked happily for years were reorganised and work studied. The two old cooks who had run the place since the war were placed under a gastronomic whizzkid and the place had rumbling indigestion from then on.

I recall one morning when a message was sent to me asking for my presence at the kitchens. Sam asked Trevor who ruled no if it were for union business. Unfortunately the kitchen staff then walked out en masse and somehow another message was sent to Trevor from way above, who came running round to tell me he'd had a change of heart and I could go at once. It transpired that the cooks had had a bellyful from the Burnley District Catering Manager and were out for six hours before we got them back.

In negotiating I'd never go in alone; I insisted on taking two cooks, elected on the spot, to go with me. A practice viewed as highly irregular by the management but in my view the only defence against selling your members out.

The weekly meetings were clearly getting nowhere in improving our critically staffed areas. The problem was put to our branch meeting and I

was mandated to write to the AHA asking for another meeting to clarify our previous agreements. We reasoned that because of the gravity of our complaint such a meeting should take place within ten days, and should it not, then the branch would consider it to be in dispute as from 4 pm on Sunday.

Thus on Sunday we sat in the union office awaiting some chance last minute message. No such communication came and at 4 pm, we entered into dispute.

The North West Regional Health Authority (really big potatoes this) occupies a massive office block leading up to Manchester's Piccadilly station. Just inside its imposing glass fronted entrance is a smallish kiosk where a very pretty receptionist sits greeting arriving dignitaries and asking them to sit down in the plush waiting area.

Dead on nine o' clock on Monday morning four of us occupied that kiosk.

Now there's a knack to occupying reception kiosks. Firstly you must all be well dressed, it's no good looking like a muppet with long hair and jeans; it creates too much alarm. You mustn't falter even for a second. We simply walked straight in with a cheery 'good morning' to the receptionist and stood in a cramped line behind her. It took exactly 21 seconds from entering the building. Peter (a Spanish ward orderly, ex CNT and weighing 18 stones) kept his hand on the door handle which ensured the place a no-go area.

Well the pretty girl was outraged. Utterly devoid of humour she screamed at us to get out. She rang 'Security' and a man came running down threatening us with damnation if we didn't leave immediately. I just kept repeating very calmly 'We are Trade Unionists in dispute with Lancashire AHA and we shall not leave until we have a date for a meeting with them', and gave him a sweet smile. Off he went and we remained saying 'good morning' to all the arriving office workers.

The pretty girl was most unhelpful. She refused to talk to us apart from periodically pleading with us to get out. In the end we just smiled at her. Outside we had Taffy as an observer and I held up a notice giving the external phone number of the kiosk. Within fifteen minutes John from Calderstones had rung through announcing that there was all hell to pay

about the occupation and that he was just going into the pre-arranged press conference.

Down came a finely suited Scotsman from the upper floors who was all very nice about it and asked what we wanted. Off he went back upstairs. Meantime the gentlemen of the press arrived and that got too much for the pretty girl. She was relieved by an even prettier girl who entered into the spirit of the thing, even giving us a sup of her tea.

Down came McKneegasper again and he said the AHA were prepared to meet us the following morning at 9 o'clock.

The next morning hardly got off to a good start for Trevor wasn't going to release me from duty. But by nine o'clock someone must have had a word with him and he had another change of heart.

It was not a happy meeting. The AHA complained of industrial relations being conducted in such a manner and we asked how else could we conduct them if letters and agreements don't appear to mean a thing. Out of a very lengthy meeting we won the major concession of working with the DMT and AHA and told them we'd expect meaningful negotiations to commence within a fortnight.

Info No 6 had by now arrived from Ian the Printer and it was a blockbuster. Some 30 hospital staff had typed, glued, written and drawn a 16 page magazine all about Calderstones. Although it was edited collectively we found it best to hold one person responsible to co-ordinate each issue. Chris had worked like a Trojan, dragging in articles from the strangest quarters to produce a magazine worthy of national distribution were it not deliberately parochial.

Ms Blackstock had been holding monthly meetings for some time now with the Trade Union reps at the hospital. She chaired these meetings in a similar manner as her meetings with subordinate managers: one was expected to sit attentively, listen and at the right moment nod one's head. My philosophy of negotiating on an equal basis and an unfortunate habit I developed of asking 'why' at odd moments produced a poor chemical mix. We never hit it off. COHSE had tried everything to get through to this woman but to no avail. Every time I addressed her at a meeting she would stare out of the window and drum her fingers on the table. In the end I used to yawn whenever she

spoke and it was agreed that the Branch should use these meetings merely to introduce new stewards to management.

We asked Sammy and Mike to go to the next meeting. It reflects well on their calibre as stewards to say that they got up and walked out after 20 minutes.

Ms B. had announced without a by your leave, that because of further cuts the nursing staff was to be reduced by 19 !

In addition the agreement reached with the AHA on reallocating resources was to be confined merely to moving around existing nursing staff. Our 'interpretation' as she called it, for opening the books and seeing where the money was actually going, was not acceptable, it was management's right to manage ...

An emergency meeting of the Executive was summoned within the hour. The next day we had 1,000 leaflets going round the hospital calling for a mass meeting the following week. That leaflet really laid it on the line. It bitterly attacked the other unions for leaving everything to COHSE and nodding through management rubbish. New members came in droves, in one day alone there were 50 resignations from other unions and by the day of the mass meeting our membership stood at over 800.

At the mass meeting we stated simply: 'Trust your executive, we have something up our sleeves, it will not affect patient care. Give us a mandate to carry on.' We got that mandate on Wednesday lunchtime.

By now we had learned the lessons of secrecy and we gathered 16 trusted souls together. Come Friday lunchtime we were all gathered in the union office with strange bundles.

At 1:15 pm exactly, we hijacked a block of hospital wards. H Block is a building set out on its own. Comprising two floors with wards H1 and H2 it houses what is known colloquially as the 'worst cases'. These are the hopeless wrecks of humanity. People who couldn't speak, were continually incontinent, highly overactive, self-injurious and in the main needed full 24 hour care and attention. We chose the word 'hijack' carefully. They are building aeroplanes to run without pilots; are they trying to do the same in hospitals and run wards without nurses? The whole block had been allocated

three staff to run from Friday lunchtime right through until Monday lunchtime - we intended to man the place with what we saw as proper staffing levels until such time as the District agreed to remove the threatened cutbacks.

As ever we had everything planned out in detail. Doors were guarded, banners made from sheets were unfurled from the top floor windows and Tony politely (as was our style) informed the Central Nursing Office of the hijack. The kitchen staff were quickly appraised and agreed with the porters that all food would be passed through the ward window in containers.

There is a knack to hijacking hospital blocks. Most importantly you need staying power and mule-like determination. Remember we were living, eating and sleeping on H block 24 hours a day, and caring for 46 patients. In addition we had press, TV and radio. We were losing pay by the hour, pressures from wives, husbands and career prospects all played a part in some hijackers calling it a day by the first Sunday. As it happened five of us never left the block for the full 13 days of the occupation, although many people stayed with us off and on for varying periods ranging from half an hour to eight days. Management left us alone for the weekend with an 'It's not the policy of the AHA to discuss internal matters with the media...' to the press, but the oil burned very late in many offices that first night.

Monday the AHA summoned Mr. Lawson, who'd read about the hijack in the Sunday papers, to a meeting in Preston. We refused to leave the block, suggesting to the AHA that we would be prepared to negotiate through the food window. Lawson rings up later to put an offer from the AHA to us: Call off the occupation and they will *consider* paying us the lost time through absence; there can be no question of the AHA withdrawing the cuts. Our reply was perhaps a little strong for a family newspaper but a loose interpretation along the lines of 'Fuck Off' will suffice.

Meanwhile we threw a party for our patients and invited a local band to come and play for us. A party from MIND came over from Leeds and we won tremendous support from them. A delegation from the North West Anarchist Federation stayed a few hours and were well received. Shop stewards from other hospitals came to help, telegrams of support, endless press visits and calls from a Marxist abbreviation (I forget which) who seemed somewhat offended that we wouldn't sign up with them on the spot.

For years at Calderstones we've had a little old lady who would come in to the hospital unpaid and teach our patients to read; she'd also play the church organ on Sunday. She said that our actions were so humble and sincere in the eyes of Christ that she felt she had to share the burden with us - and promptly moved in. Her staying power for someone in her late sixties, roughing it on a couple of blankets in the linen cupboard is courage that deserves not to go unrecorded.

Alack, we fell foul of our local hospital manager. With our guard relaxed on the evening of Day 4 the man saunters in, does a very swift inspection, makes some sarcastic comments to the incumbent staff, then disappears. A letter is dispatched to him pointing out that any doctor can walk in when they wished to see a patient. Such a right (after all, H Block is our home as well) certainly did not extend to nursing managers. A reply was asked for by 10:30 the next morning, agreeing to this principle; otherwise the dispute would be escalated. No reply was received. Thus at 11 am, we stopped the catering staff from bringing tea and biscuits to their offices. Not perhaps the most alarming escalation in the history of industrial disputes but the press did wonders with it. He never came back for another visit.

The dispute ended by courtesy of the Independent Inquiry, sitting for the second time on Day 13 of the hijack. They demanded to see the Chairman of the AHA and said (a) we cannot conduct an inquiry if an industrial dispute is taking place and (b) it is entirely improper for the AHA to carry out cuts in staffing levels while an inquiry is taking place. Unless (a) and (b) were not reversed then the inquiry chairman was prepared to call an immediate press conference to announce the end of the inquiry as being pointless.

Mr. Lawson made his first visit to the hospital that day. Day 13 at 1:45pm. He came down to see us to put newly offered terms from the AHA to us. Entirely to our satisfaction we took down our banners, said farewell to our patients and retired to Clitheroe Working Men's Club where, literally exhausted, we drank of Lancashire's finest.

Back to work on the gravel train again which seemed silly somehow. Once you have tasted total control over your work - which was what the hijack was - anything else becomes unpalatable.

The Independent Inquiry reported a month after H Block and said basically that the hospital was running at 250 staff short of what was required and strongly recommended that ACAS (the Arbitration, Conciliation and Advice Service) be called in to hammer out some Industrial Relations procedures.

In a press statement we blamed entirely Ms Blackstock for the appalling state of industrial relations and called again for Calderstones to be withdrawn from the Burnley Health District. It was agreed that we hold a series of working parties to discuss the implementation of the inquiry recommendations. It was at the first of these meetings that I met Bob Quick. Christ what a difference. A junior FTO, the elders having given us up, he saw his role as an advisor to his members and not some omnipotent god who had his members safely under control.

At these meetings we agreed to call ACAS in. We made interim agreements on industrial relations matters and the recommendation for 250 extra staff would be considered by the AHA urgently.

Sadly, for my tale is reaching an obvious conclusion, the AHA is still considering those extra staff today.

Come December 1977 and my first AGM, I was elected Branch Secretary. With 12 months' history we hadn't done badly for novices. In addition I was elected to COHSE's Regional Executive (big potatoes that) and to be the delegate at the national conference in June 1978. Yet more promotion, I was elected Chairman of the Burnley Health Districts Shop Stewards Committee and I became the local Trades Council Secretary. An offer came from another NHS union to become a FTO which I declined and all seemed set to alter the course of trade unionism in Lancastrium. And the latter was no idle boast; we saw it as the responsibility of the trade unions to get to grips with the NHS - why not use bus workers, engineers, teachers in cooperating in a cross fertilisation of ideas?

At a local level we began to hammer out the branch into a living entity. As we saw it, a centre of free thought and imagination. We offered free education courses to our members. We roped in local firms to give us discounts. The TUC runs a travel club offering ultra cheap holidays. We got all our student nurses cut price rail cards. Working through the Trades Council we got a couple of engineering apprentices to convert a NHS wheelchair into a simple mechanically operated machine, which they did at

a twentieth of the MRP. Two of our stewards worked (albeit unsuccessfully) on a research project to convert all the administrative offices into patients' living quarters, moving the managers into an open plan office complex. We started an under-fives play group and initiated and led a Tenants Association that was to win some major concessions in tied crown property.

February 1978 and the AHA announced that they were withdrawing the nurses assisted travel schemes. Calderstones was one of four large mental hospitals in the area, all of them miles away from population centres, and to encourage under-paid staff they had for years run a scheme whereby a percentage of a nurse's bus fare was met by the AHA. We met as shop stewards from all four hospitals and wrote to the AHA demanding a meeting within 10 days. Predictably no reply was received, so one sunny morning 33 stewards from each hospital occupied the foyer of Lancashire AHA's plush office block. Unfortunately the musical instruments, accordion, mouth organs and much percussion, with which we planned to 'entertain' the office workers got forgotten somewhere. We left after three hours with firm dates for negotiations without FTOs and uncontaminated with the presence of the RCN.

Round about March 1978 a minor but important development took place. Local management announced that in future shop stewards requiring time off to attend to union business should seek permission from their unit officers and not their immediate superiors. In effect this meant that I should ask permission from Trevor and not Sam who had by now given up on me.

Trevor approached his new found task with the zeal of a senior boy scout leader. Each request became a major investigation and things rapidly became hairy between us.

We approached management about the change in an agreed procedure and they claimed it wasn't a 'change' but an 'interpretation' and were therefore able to make the move safely. Such is the nonsense of TU / Management jargon. We appealed to the next line in the hierarchy. Ms Blackstock. who totally agreed with the new interpretation, but kindly consented to pass the appeal up to the AHA.

By now really strange things were beginning to happen. My local manager called me into his office, to be precise at 4:15 pm on 22nd May 1978, and quietly warned me to be extremely careful over my trade union activities,

particularly those relating to time off, as the Burnley District Management Team were after my blood.

Tony, our Branch Chairman, foolishly overstayed a lunch break by an hour, which he admitted to his Unit Officer on his return. The following day he was up on a disciplinary charge and was demoted and thrown off his ward. We began to receive reports from members that several Royal College Nurses were reporting COHSE stewards' activities and conversations to management. Two stewards were told not to apply for promotional posts because of their union allegiance.

Four officers were now present from ACAS and although they were experts at discretion and listening, they let it be known that they were alarmed at the level of harassment taking place.

ACAS's technique is to listen to management and stewards and eventually fit them into a ready made set of procedures. They are loath to report on anything that one side will see as contentious, lest that side reject the report in total. By now wise to committees and earnest young chaps in suits we wrote them off as a dead loss long before the eventual report was published.

My personal fortunes were fairing no better. The gravel was finally finished and I was set to work constructing a perimeter path around a nine acre field with my lads. Things took an interesting turn when I discovered quite by chance that Trevor had for months been submitting reports to higher management that read, 'Mr. Good's patients returned to the wards because he is again on union activities.' Each report failed to mention that on each occasion I had been granted permission and it was either Sam's or Trevor's managerial decision to return the lads to their wards.

Equally, Trevor was being supplied with information from a higher source. For instance I'd return from a meeting with the District Management Team eight miles away in Burnley, and he'd call me into his office and demand to know why I hadn't returned at 1:30 instead of 2 o' clock because the union de-briefing finished at midday.

He'd also begun calling in my work colleagues - swearing them to secrecy and asking them to sign a prepared statement on my union activities. The second nurse he got to sign came and told me and I subsequently won a

copy of it through the Grievance Procedure. It remains in my possession today as a living example of juvenile nonsense.

All this happening within the space of a fortnight was really too much. We published yet another 1,000 leaflets that accused management of blatant harassment against COHSE stewards, inviting all members to attend the next branch meeting; we'd place the full facts as we saw them before the pleasure of the assembled branch.

Tony returned in the meantime from the appeal on permission for time off with the Area Health Authority who had ruled that the interpretation on consent for time off was 'non-negotiable'.

At the branch meeting it was proposed that as equal partners in a joint agreement we should take a leaf from management's book and adopt our own interpretation on the Time-Off Procedure. Thus a letter was sent to management on 7th June 1978 (and take note of these dates, they get important) saying that should a Steward require time off he or she should INFORM their immediate superior that they were going off. As such we were in dispute with management.

Now let's digress a little. As reported I was elected as a delegate to the COHSE National Conference which was to be held in Scarborough the third week in June. Now Scarborough is 113 miles away from Calderstones and I know, for I walked every inch of the way. For some months I'd been pacing the lanes of Lancashire in training for my four day trek - and Christ was I looking forward to it. Every single day since that original AGM I'd spent some period of time in the hospital. I looked on the walk as some sort of psychological enema and I loved every minute of it. Across Lancashire and Yorkshire by day and at night I drank myself senseless in some b + b pub. Each mile was sponsored in aid of the union benevolent fund.

I'd always wondered how union conferences could attract such large numbers while more humble movements had relatively only a handful. The answer is simple. Each delegate is paid a handsome backhander.

I was paid £10 a day plus rail fares for the wife and kids - it was our first holiday in nine years of wedded bliss. And by Allah I wasn't alone, union conferences are made up of folk who annually holiday for a week at some such resort and receive a paid holiday on behalf of the union.

So the conference gave me a standing ovation for the walk - it was soon to know me better. I was up and down like a bridegroom's bum off that speakers' rostrum. I spoke for this and against that and was singularly successful in getting my own resolution through, amidst furious debate, in getting COHSE to actively work towards Joint TUC affiliated union committees. I laid it on the line about having to work with such useless groups as the Royal College of Retired Nurses and the Association of Superannuated Chiropodists. All of which means little to the outside world but it meant that COHSE had taken a more radical turn. For my troubles I was heavily slagged in the national nursing press of June / July 1978. But by then I had other problems.

Returning from conference (by train this time) I'm informed that no COHSE steward had met with any problem in taking time off. Even Chris, whose pedantic loyalty to democratic union decisions, had informed his Unit Officer on 8th June what action he was required to take, had remained unscathed.

Monday morning on 26th June I arrive back at work. I've been moved off the gangs and put into a classroom teaching patients basic reading skills. Paranoiacs amongst you will notice that the classroom is next to Trevor's office. Come 11:30 I see to it that my patients are fine, ask the nurse in the next class to keep an eye on them, inform the Sister in charge that I'm off on union business and go off to attend the Monday meeting with management.

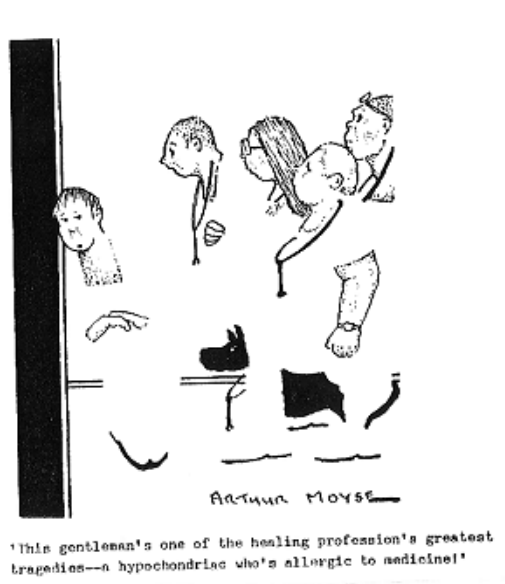
On my return Trevor is furious and I politely (as is my style) inform him that under the terms of the dispute I am required to INFORM and not ask. He moves me back to the gangs. Throughout the rest of the week I, with the other stewards, am left untouched. I simply inform Sam that I'm off and I go. At the time we didn't attach too much importance to management's attitude to us. We thought they'd merely make a few preliminary noises and let the dispute drift into nothing pending the ACAS report. It was not to be.

The following Monday (3rd July) Tony, the Branch Chairman, returns from his holiday and both of us inform our immediate superior that we are going off to attend the weekly meeting with management.

After that meeting ends I am waiting outside the boardroom to meet the District Catering Manager about the latest hiccup in the kitchens. The

meeting had been convened under the agreed Grievance Procedure. As I wait up pops the Personnel manager with a letter for me from Ms Blackstock - you have been reported absent from duty and I am stopping your pay for the period of time in question - that's it, no right of appeal, no hearing, no nothing.

Still, in with the Catering Manager but within ten minutes in bursts a Personnel Officer who states she has orders to close this meeting immediately as management 'will not be a party to false pretences'.



I summon an emergency Executive meeting. The lot of us have had a bellyful of this. Thus at 3 pm, in front of all the other stewards, I telephone the head Personnel Officer and tell him that COHSE is withdrawing from all agreed procedures, viz: the Grievance Procedure, Disciplinary Procedure, all meetings and committees. I also write to him confirming our telephone conversation and making enough copies to give to each steward. That letter is on his desk first thing Tuesday morning.

That Tuesday afternoon myself and Tony are simultaneously handed letters telling us to attend a disciplinary hearing, clearly emphasising it is to be held under the auspices of the disciplinary procedure, on Thursday, to explain why we had been absent from work while we had been attending a meeting with them.

Wednesday evening (5th July) is our regular branch meeting and there's about 40 in attendance. We put the developments to them and they vote to support the Executive decision to withdraw from procedures and agree that under the terms of the dispute the Branch Secretary and Chairman cannot attend the hearings the following day.

Come Thursday at 3 pm and a phone call from Tony. He had just been ordered to attend the Nursing Manager's office; he went and found a whole posse of them there. Asked to explain why he was 'late' for his hearing, he reiterates the Branch's letter of 3rd July and leaves.

Half an hour after my hearing is due to start I'm instructed by phone to come to the office immediately.

'No sir.'

'Then I am informing you that you are suspended from duty from this moment and you are to leave the premises at once.'

'Thank you.' (as is my style)

Tony gets similar treatment and we meet up at my place for a stiff bottle of Bells and await developments.

Now get this. Within *minutes* of us being suspended management have sent out leaflets to every ward and department in the hospital (itself a mammoth administrative task); these leaflets 'appraise staff of the facts'. Equally management call one person of each ward to a mass meeting where they are again 'appraised of the facts' and sent back to the wards.

Elsewhere in the hospital the Executive call an emergency meeting and they call a mass meeting of the whole hospital for Wednesday 12th July. Management are informed about this the next morning. That afternoon we both get sent registered letters telling us to attend further disciplinary hearings (to explain why we had refused to attend the day before). These hearings are to be held on Tuesday 11th July.

In come our senior FTOs who advise us most strongly to attend these meetings. We bitterly disagree saying that only our members can reverse a branch decision, and the earliest that could be done is Wednesday.

Well, the press went to town on this. Our pictures were blasted from the headlines above an extensive summary of the hospital's industrial history. Calderstones was dubbed as having the worst industrial relations record in the North West. Our house was turned into an HQ. The phone literally danced 24 hours a day. Visitors, stewards, meetings, press, bottles and bottles of plonk.

The Executive call in Bob Howard, Secretary of the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils, and asked him to mediate in the matter. Now Bob's a straight guy, as honest as they come and an expert on Industrial Relations. His report of the mediation with management is worth recording if only to illustrate the quality and integrity of NHS management.

Halfway through his meeting with management a Personnel Officer bubbles out '... we think Good is being backed by a political group.' He is immediately interrupted by the other managers present with a 'You'd better keep quiet about that.'

At the end of his meeting Bob is told, 'We cannot agree to a postponement of the Tuesday hearings but we will give you an assurance that there will be no hasty action, no sackings.'

Come Tuesday and we do not attend the hearings as requested by our members. Wednesday all the hospital is waiting for the lunchtime meeting, the porters filled the hall with chairs and the electricians had rigged up a PA system. Two hours before the meeting is due to start management again leaflet the hospital. This leaflet informs everyone that they have sacked us.

There is furious debate within the Executive about taking the hospital over immediately. As Eddie Lawson arrives for the mass meeting and it is made known to us under no account must we enter hospital premises. We do not attend that meeting.

Now one must go back to my earlier thoughts on eloquent people swaying a mob. Eddie was playing games. He spent 40 minutes passionately spouting

his own innocence in the affair. He pleaded for the branch to allow him to fight our dismissals through the correct channels and that he would fight to the end for our reinstatement.

And that chums, carried the day, despite some bitter heckling, it was resolved that the two dismissed officials should appeal against sackings.

And really that's the end of my little tale. The decision of the meeting was more than a disaster for just us two. It saw the end of trade unionism at Calderstones. A lot of very sincere people got frightened off or eventually threw in their lot with management. But perhaps more of that anon.

In all we battled through five levels of appeal. Here's a brief resume.

Interim Relief Is a little known section of the Employment Protection Act whereby a FTO of a union can apply for immediate reinstatement for a shop steward if he can convince an Industrial Tribunal barrister that it seems likely that the dismissal was due to trade union activities. That hearing took place 10 days after our dismissals as required under the EPA. Eddie Lawson and his deputy were called in with management into 'chambers' to put our case forward. Some time later out pops Eddie's deputy who puts to us a request from the barrister that we should withdraw our case and go for a full Industrial Tribunal because (a) he does not think our dismissals were due to trade union activities and (b) he said that management have an extremely difficult case to prove and he strongly advised them to reach some sort of settlement before a Tribunal hearing. Naturally we withdrew our applications. Later, when it was too late, the FTO in question denied that he ever said such things to us.

Appeal to the Area Health Authority is hardly worth reporting on. Eddie gave a brilliant emotional speech that seemed to constitute an apology more than anything else. We lost.

It was soon after the AHA appeal fiasco that the jigsaw started to take shape. Eddie was required to submit a full report to COHSE's National Executive Committee on the events surrounding our dismissals. This report was judged by the NEC to be so blatantly biased that they despatched a National Officer to investigate the matter. His investigations won us each a union 'victimisation award' of £1,000. One began to hear disturbing rumours that Eddie had worked a deal with the AHA that our employment was not

only an embarrassment to them but to the union as well. Among his trusted confidants he told two people too many that 'COHSE would be better off without those two.'

I sent COHSE a polite letter saying that it would be in everyone's interest if I conducted our defence personally at the forthcoming Industrial Tribunal. Now this letter upset them for some reason. Here was a major case that was all the rage amongst management and staff throughout the North West and the defendants had dropped their union. The letter soured already tense relations to such an extent that we ended up fighting COHSE as well as management.

So I set to work. Days and days spent in the legal departments of various libraries. Long bus rides to lobby respected Trade Unionists, nearly all of whom helped immensely. I wrote and rewrote draft after draft of opening statements, statements of case and closing addresses.

In the best traditions of British justice Tribunals take months to arrive and ours was no exception. But first let's have an undercover look at these Tribunals. They sit to hear cases mainly about unfair dismissals. Led by a barrister as Chairman and flanked by a trade union and employer nominee, their task is to determine whether a dismissal was fair and reasonable under all the circumstances. The Trade Union nominee is the amusing post. All unions are required to submit a list of nominations to the Secretary of State who then *selects appropriate* nominations. In practice almost all posts go to retired FTOs and competition for a place on a Tribunal is fierce amongst ageing TU men and women.

In my time I attended some two dozen Tribunals as an observer, witness or advocate. Only twice did I come up against 'useful' Trade Union bench members. Two reasons make these posts plum jobs. The first is accountability. They are accountable to no-one. Two years ago the North West TUC were refused access to a list of all TU Tribunal members serving in Lancashire on the grounds of it not being in the public interest. Not to be outdone a sympathetic MP obtained the register. The most startling discovery was that the Secretary of State classed the National Farmers' Union as a Trade Union! NWTUC planned to hold a private meeting of these people to put forward mounting concern over the conduct of TU nominees at Tribunals. It says much for these folk when over a third refused to attend on the grounds that it would not serve the best interests of

justice ... And the second reason is the job itself. A day that starts at 10 am, finishes at 4:30 with two hours for lunch and, depending on very generous travelling expenses, produces a flat fee of £50 per day - well, everyone has their price and what better way to while away your days as a tame rabbit on a barristers' bench.

Slightly under one third of applications to a Tribunal (and I'm working from the TUC Industrial Law Review) result in a favourable result to the employee. And even if the poor sod should 'win' they are likely to receive £643 on average by way of compensation. Equally it's interesting to note and draw lessons from who actually uses Tribunals. Certainly not the tightly organised smaller unions. NATSOPA, SOGAT, the miners and the dockers hardly figure in the reams of legal books on Industrial Law. By far the greatest users are those unions with little industrial muscle. The public sector, the shopworkers, clerical staff and places of work where union branches are weak.

Latterly there are a fair number of people who turn up and defend themselves. Classed in several expensively published guidebooks for company executives as 'oddballs, mavericks and timewasters who see their own case as a lifelong crusade'.

Into such a category were placed your heroes, albeit tacitly, by the bench.

A crammed Tribunal hearing. A barrister in the chair who we discovered had just returned from South Africa as a circuit judge; to his left sat a very tame rabbit indeed - he hardly uttered a word throughout.

We based our case on three points:

- (1) That some other substantial reason lay behind our dismissals.
- (2) That we had been selected for dismissal while taking part in an industrial dispute. viz: ALL COHSE members had withdrawn from agreed procedures when we were placed on disciplinary charges.
- (3) Our dismissals were unfair and unreasonable under all the circumstances.

Well, we didn't stand a chance. I'd presumed that one should keep to polite, straightforward, honest questions and statements. How wrong I was. Management lied and lied through their teeth. If they didn't lie then they 'couldn't quite remember' or 'I must have been away at that time' or 'I don't know.' Throughout they were propped up by the chairman, who from time to

time would throw in the odd biased remark, cut short questions and declare things I saw as being totally crucial as merely irrelevant. It took all day for management to present its case and for me to cross examine them. Then the Chairman called a halt announcing that a resumed hearing will be held at a future date. A future date turned out to be four crippling months away; by that time our dole had run out and uncomfortable pressures were emanating from the benefit office.

Come the resumed hearing and management had done their homework very carefully. Only two Personnel Officers were present for their side, effectively preventing me from recalling essential witnesses. Even Ms Blackstock, (whom I'd subpoenaed on a witness order) failed to arrive because I had not observed a minor legal technicality. My argument that I wasn't aware of such technicalities carried no weight with our friend on the bench. There then followed what the local press described as 'a series of clashes' between myself and the bench, whereby I was implying dirty tactics on the part of the managers and he began to threaten me with costs should I demand an adjournment. He knew damn well that we could afford neither the time nor the costs.

Further 'clashes' occurred when the bench refused to accept ACAS's lengthy report on Calderstones as evidence. Much of this report contained direct observations on COHSE and the fact that management objected bitterly to me referring to the ACAS report perhaps illustrates which side the report favoured. How the hell do you prove to a court that you have been dismissed for trade union activities when they refuse to consider observations like 'management were trying to compromise (and perhaps hinder) the COHSE Branch Secretary ...' (see ACAS Report on Calderstones Hospital 1978) When it became obvious that we would have no alternative but to withdraw from the trial, he accepted the report. But we battled through with our witnesses, carefully producing verbal and written evidence that I felt (and still do) proved management were corrupt, dishonest and not worth a post on a third rate quango. Perhaps the saddest aspect happened towards the closing of the trial; I say 'sad' because I no longer feel angry about it. It became evident that COHSE had briefed management on one or two minor items of interest. Ah well, life must go on, I suppose.

At the end of the trial I submitted a nine page written summing up. It was the result of ten months' painstaking research - at the very least it deserved consideration. At the end we retired to the waiting room while the bench

went to consider its verdict. It took them all of 20 minutes. In retrospect I don't know what we were hoping for as we sucked at our bottle of plonk, but one holds on to straws.

The Tribunal found that we had been dismissed fairly, that we were guilty of attaching an inflated importance to our positions as branch officials and that we and our witnesses had been lying.

That night I sat slumped in our old battered armchair, took the phone off its hook while Sue found enough for a bottle of Scotch and I sat through the night right up until the postman delivered a curt letter from the hospital administrator giving us a month's notice to find other accommodation.

Blacklisted

Your average working man cannot wait ten months for a trial and live on the dole. True we each had our £1,000 but that rapidly got divided up between electricity bills, trips to campaign meetings, legal libraries, research lobbying and a rainy day fund. The dole was quite sympathetic - their advice to me was that I should get out of Lancashire as quickly as possible. Going for a job was a joke. Apart from applying for nursing posts I applied for a total of 26 labouring / unskilled vacancies over an 11 month period.

There is no law that says a company *must* employ you. A fact of life that allows personnel officers to open up and be honest with you. Remember that I was Ribble Valley's Trades Council Secretary and my name had been featured in the local media more often than Blackburn Rover's Manager had. Really, going for an interview was a farce. But I tried, Christ, I tried. An interview for a job bagging up caustic soda crystals lasted an hour and a half while I discussed the merits of the Employment Protection Act with some finely suited Personnel chap. In the end he shrugged his shoulders and said I'd stand a better chance if I were an ex-prisoner. The Garage owner's face, whose expression I'll never forget, when I suggested that I'd be the ideal person to man his petrol pumps. He told me very politely, 'Look piss off mate'. The haulage company that rejected me with a 'No thanks we're a non-union shop here.'

Each interview went on and on like that. In the end I became convinced that I must be a very dangerous person indeed.

Tony has perhaps fared worse than I. While I had dipped my oar in most things, he had only his nursing certificate. Since our dismissals he has applied for nursing jobs in all four corners of Christendom - he's not even secured a single interview in any hospital. It has been made known to me, indirectly, but authoritatively enough, that I'll never work as a nurse in the NHS again.

But the decision of the Industrial Tribunal began to needle me. I began to lose sleep over it - even several pints wouldn't remove nagging questions and glaring inconsistencies. I decided to go one rung up the ladder and make an appeal to a Crown Court on the Tribunal decision.

Tony's disillusionment with British justice was complete and after lengthy discussion over several jars he opted to have no further truck with future charades.

Now, Appeal Courts are essentially the province of black suited barristers and the Law Society discourages mavericks (as I found out later) from attending. I popped round to the nearest solicitor in an attempt to secure myself a brief in a wig. The practice referred me to its most junior partner who turned out to be most helpful but blissfully ignorant of matters industrial. He wrote off and secured quite easily a date for a Crown Court hearing - 5th July 1979 - the real problem arose in getting a decision from the Law Society for me to be represented. My solicitor wrote several times asking for a decision even to the extent of submitting an emergency application.

That process took the best part of three months. Two days before the actual hearing we received a polite little memo from the Law Society turning the application down. Without legal aid and the 'several hundred pounds' it would cost me to secure a brief I said 'balls to 'em', thanked the solicitor for all his help and wrote off to say that I would be defending myself.

I set to work immediately drafting and redrafting my defence. I kept at it solidly for eighteen hours until I ripped it all up in frustration and went out for a few jars.

I do not like court buildings. Somehow you can never approach them on an equal footing. You always seem to be looking up from down below. Perhaps they are designed that way. I went to Chester Crown Court on my own.

Some sort of kamikaze mission to get the whole thing out of my head really. As such I turned up there without any feelings of fear or timidity.

The usher greeted me: 'Ah Mr. Good, you are representing yourself I understand' - he went on about my hearing in court number Two - 'Starting probably at about eleven ... I see your case is only scheduled to last two hours ... if you'd like to take a seat in the corridor.' He directed me to a line of those ubiquitous tubular chairs where some worried-looking skinheads sat looking odd in newly purchased suits.

'Sorry mate.' I said. 'I want a room to put my papers together.' He began to view me with distaste.

'We only have rooms for barristers.'

'If my adversaries have got a room then I want one. If I'm not to be granted the same facilities as the barrister I'm up against then I intend kicking up shit in that courtroom.'

In less time than it takes to occupy a reception kiosk I was given a large conference room on the second floor to myself. I again attempted to organise something on paper but that only lasted a minute. Instead I spent an hour pacing up and down trying to walk off a grade eight hangover.

Number two court at Chester Crown Court is oak paneled all the way up to a ceiling fifty foot high. I was before a chap called Mr. Slynn, who I note from the judgement papers has the first name of Justice. I open by pleading that the Tribunal totally failed to take into consideration our case that we were taking part in an Industrial Dispute and in their (8 page) judgement had chosen to merely paraphrase management's opening statement.

Well from then on strange things (as they say) began to happen. The words bubbled out from me, reference points sprang to mind from a mass of documents, I brought up questions framed in the most precise legal terms. I really laid it on the line.

Suddenly the Judge took up my points. He threw questions at the barrister representing the North West Regional Health Authority like 'why can't union members withdraw from agreed procedures as a form of industrial action ...' 'What ... you mean to tell me is that these union officials were actually attending a meeting with management, who then deemed them to be absent from work?' and 'So that must mean they were taking part in an industrial dispute.'

This was all heady stuff and I could literally feel the posse of Personnel Officers sited behind the barristers squirming in embarrassment. The Judge pursues this line of questioning for half an hour, then stops to confer with his aides.

"We," he announces 'are of the opinion that this has a more complex background than appears on an initial reading.' He calls for a two hour adjournment so that the bench can retire to re-read the evidence presented. Such action is apparently highly unusual in legal processes. It had my heart racing and sent the Personnel Officers scurrying to the barristers' chambers.

Eventually we were recalled and the judge puts to their barrister that my dismissals stems from something really quite trivial, offers a short speech on the national nursing shortage and asks that I be taken back, letting bygones be bygones. 'No don't bother asking, I can see by the expressions behind you that that won't be possible.' With this Justice Slynn slams his documents together and announces an adjournment for lunch giving management a look, that only judges can, that appears to say they're guilty of kicking his pet cat. As we stand for them to leave the atmosphere is electric. The posse again scurry into chambers and I feel like finding the nearest grog shop to rehearse a premature celebration.

I did drink that night but for different reasons. The case ploughed on throughout the afternoon getting very bogged down in legal niceties. But if one plays the legal game it has to be played to their rules. In the end the court ruled, amidst much legal verbiage that my application for a reconvened Tribunal was dismissed with the exasperating rider that:

'We have had from Mr. Good an admirable and careful presentation of the case, and it may be that before the Industrial Tribunal the matter was not perhaps put as favourably on this particular point or perhaps so precisely as it has been put before us today.'

But I did walk from that court with my head in the air. That day saw the end of my adventure in Trade Unionism.

Workpoints

Trade Unions: The fact that COHSE were more of a hindrance than a help to us doesn't mean to say that they are the worst of the Public Service unions nor indeed are any different from other Trades Unions. NUPE, despite its much maligned press image, are the greatest cut throats of them all. Equally,

not all FTOs will sell you out - though an awful lot will. Three FTOs stood by us to the end, one of whom seriously putting his job in jeopardy in the process.

If you are wronged by a union, don't waste your time appealing against it. All unions are expert at closing ranks. You stand a better chance and fairer treatment if you are nursing a grievance, by appealing to the management side. Frequently in the old days there was much talk of us forming our own union. The more we explored the possibility the more problems we saw. In retrospect we should have had a go.

NHS Management: In a field in which even the people (McKinley Business Consultants) who worked out the reorganised structure, admit it was a basic mistake, it's not unnaturally a shaky occupation to be in. Not unsurprisingly much fear exists in its ranks. There is much pressure on managers to cope with headline budgets. Hence the ones who seek promotion are the ones who cope and can get by without raising too much union / public pressure. Certainly one of the most upsetting tactics that led to our dismissals was our practice of running managers up the Grievance Procedure ladder. As a tactic it hit at the very root of modern management theory - viz avoid at all costs showing a superior manager that you have problems handling employee / union grievances.

Imaginative Industrial Action: Works extremely well. A small number of people can launch a dispute quickly with maximum impact. Disadvantage, the workforce comes to rely on it to solve all disputes. It doesn't involve the workforce in participating in direct industrial action. The national press are only interested in industrial action that harms patients.

Calderstones now: Union activity is non existent. COHSE has collapsed and the reliable grapevine reports that privately management gloat on how easy the place is to manage. But still there are wards being run by one nurse ...

The Police: Long ago we learned, interestingly from a young lady who was having an affair with a constable, that our Executive was being 'monitored' and indeed all industrial disputes in the area were noted by the 'branch' (Special Branch) and files kept on key people involved. There were occasions, and particularly the period just after our suspensions when

something strange was happening to our telephone. But I must have been drunk, I can't really believe things like that can happen ...

Politics: Now this is a hard one. There are a lot of Marxist abbreviations knocking about in Trades Unions - the majority get labelled as such, and once management or a Trade Union can slot you into a category then you are much easier to deal with. From the start I moved on the basis that it was my job to *represent* my members' views. As such I kept my politics to myself as say, a Christian would. I met many Marxists in the movement but never once an Anarchist. There exists much sympathy and enthusiasm for anarchist methods of doing things. Once you attach the label 'anarchist' to them, people become frightened.

I always objected to people applying the label 'militant' to me. I said then and now that I was not a 'militant' nor a 'moderate'. I was someone who was attempting to be 'honest'.

An interesting anecdote about this case was when one of my friends tackled a manager involved in our sackings. Admittedly they were both propping up the bar but during the conversation out came this little gem:

'People with political views like that shouldn't be employed in hospitals.'

'What political views?'

'Bloody Anarchists.'

To Date

Tony managed to get a job in a moulding factory on bread line wages. He is still writing to hospitals who are short of nurses. We still meet for a jar or two - we've seen much together. Folks interested in reading further in this case should look into the legal section of any large library and ask for a copy of *INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LAW REVIEW*. If you sit in the legal department long enough (as I did) you will eventually meet many people (as I did) who are defending themselves at a Tribunal, each one accuses a Trade Union of 'selling them out'. Why oh why doesn't someone do 'research' on these people.

I eventually got a job as a bus driver. I find it mind killing but I'm grateful for the work. We've been rehoused and now live on the edge of a large council estate in Clitheroe. But there's always something on the horizon and news is that big Doreen Frampton SRN has been released and we plan to press out the next edition of *Anarchism Lancastrium*.

The National Health Service: The answer to this mess is too simple. Put the power and the decision making back on ward level. There will still be a need for administrators but their role should be urgently redefined as back-up support for the front line troops. In the last analysis there is no reason why patients and relatives cannot run their own wards and hospitals, working with the medical staff. I know from my ten years of nursing experience that people with learning disabilities and those classed as mentally ill are very capable of running their own lives on one hundredth of the present budget.

In the meantime we have a morass of Divisional Nursing Officers, District Personnel Officers, Sector Nursing Officers, Area Administrators, Deputy Nurse Education Officers, Clothing Co-ordinators, Unit Domestic Managers, Unit Nursing Officers amongst others all standing in the way.

Really, something should be done about it

Peter Good

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The Cycle of Deprivation

by
John Evans

In my days of innocence I had believed my impulses were fed by the Christian influence in socialism. I was unaware of the existential necessity of freedom untainted by whatever stage of class dominated Christian socialism has been reached. There will be no Damascus on the road to market domination. Nor will Marxism advance on Bakunin's enlightened prophecy that Marx would replace Bismark's state by his own.

I entered social case work and then state controlled community work much as Dostoyevsky's idiot entered Petersburg society. I thought caring was enough but found simple faith inadequate. I had expected the community work context to be more free than casework and so it was until the system's acceptance of village green organised events by community workers were replaced by conflict actions in which the workers encouraged the protests of the community.

Social work education tends to assume a fundamentally benevolent liberal democracy and so it is if you are in the right market place within it. The more orthodox practitioners in training and therefore the more likely to be employed, do not believe the state acts out of class interests. They tend to favour a pluralism of interests with some conflictual elements which are seasoned by religious and humanist influences. This third way thinking pre-dates New Labour.

Experience teaches that the dominant need of the system is to control and regulate. 'All in the best possible taste', as the late comedic anarchist used to say. Educators mask this with terms such as enabling, empathy and any other unproblematic use of the lexicon.

However, as the moderate form of liberal capitalism turns to welfarism a new emphasis on personal responsibility will find expression in social work literature albeit in a language that will sound familiarly like 'enabling' or 'self motivation'. Indeed, language itself needs constant deconstruction before it settles barnacle like around the ship of state.

At best social work tends to psychological or pathological manifestations of behaviour. It is only on this level that it is able to relate. Inequality is not so much ignored as seen as beyond the remit of social work practice.

Ever reformist social work has become increasingly bureaucratic. An inevitable outcome of inadequate resources which are themselves the outcome of 'the rationality' Weber analysed in the social democratic society of his day and which is more than ever present in a normalised form in late capitalism. There is no acceptance of alternatives to welfarism and it's 'deforms' (the undeconstructed word being 'reform'), because the state itself is the prime cause of the problem. It is the parent responsible for the families social work is involved with.

The project which I will discuss was set up by the state to investigate and no doubt substantiate the ideology which would justify it's own meditations on the inadequacies of lower class families. Given that the Home Secretary at that time was the late Sir Keith Joseph, Thatcher's guru, the word 'Meditation' is wholly appropriate.

The Calcot Project

This action-research project was set up in the early years of Thatcherism. Joseph was notorious for his well heeled agonising over the state of the poor. They were responsible for their sorry plight as it was passed down over the generations of inadequacy and, presumably, self-deprivation. It is tempting to write that this is somewhat akin to the passing down of inherited wealth.

Unsurprisingly there is no evidence of Home Office action-research projects on Belgravia families or on the dangers of inheritance tax avoidance (deconstructed work-dodging) among royals. This is most reprehensible given the very serious examples of pathological inadequacies among the ruling class.

I found the 'Cycle' concept difficult to adjust to, not only in principle but in the linguistic sense. It is amazing how language conveys certain images which reality then dispels. At one level, at least, I had the image of badly maintained bicycles abandoned on run down estates. This was discovered to

be partly true and the seemingly ludicrous image was in the event less ridiculous than the philosophy behind the project.

Dysfunctional families are found on working class estates (forgive the terminology, this construction of language is no longer fashionable and gives anarchists a problem - they get angry with one another over it.) Other dysfunctional families are more difficult to research in depth though we have anecdotal and even visual evidence of their behaviour. The children in these families are away at Eton, acquiring all the anti-social behaviour to be found in institutional settings. However, they are not perceived as being a burden on the state, though they will eventually rob it blind when they enter politics and the city.

When I arrived at the project some eighteen months into the three year timescale; the mother and toddler group, the pensioner club and the youth work had been established. Child care, diet, cookery and bingo had been initiated. Reports were made on groups and individuals: they make youth worker's reading like sub-Marlowesque scripts for 1940s film noir with him as the world weary hero keeping the kids from damnation.

I felt there was a need to develop other initiatives. I was uncomfortable with the cosy community work and the youth work which tended to concentrate on the specific needs of several troubled young men. No doubt this latter work provided prodigious copy for the researchers in London, the problems of a few young men, fictitiously coloured by the youth worker, enabling 'uncontaminated objective analysis' to take place. It was upon such heroic work (literally heroic as far as the youth worker star was concerned) that the cycle of deprivation could be confidently proven.

It seemed that people were being examined through a cracked microscope. Influenced by my previous contact with welfare rights I decided that such knowledge would go some way to alleviate the economic deprivation in the community. This form of deprivation was unsurprisingly absent from the original brief.

The dissemination of 'The Chronic Sick and Disablement Act' 1969 seemed a good way of 'enabling' people. This raised the pencilled eyebrows of some of the Lady Bountifuls there as aid missionaries in the project but living in the up-market areas of the town or some rural hamlet in the Vale of Glamorgan far from the madding crowd. I was living on a tough estate in Ely, Cardiff, but before I sound too pious, I knew that eventually I would get

out of where I lived as well as this estate. This is emphasised because so much 'objective' research on our fellow humans tends to leave out where the researchers are coming from as regards their backgrounds and class affiliations. This contamination will out under stress.

There was a feeling that by advising people to find out about their rights, let alone demanding them, I was somehow threatening the state. Much of this feeling is not by any means a reaction of fear but a genuine belief shared by many people in Britain that it is audacious to demand anything from the state even when it has been paid for. In this we are unlike the French and I can only conclude that it is something to do with the fact that we have no actual Bill of Rights, have had no more than a revolution of the landed classes and that too long ago, that we have retained royalty and seem to want it like a comfort blanket, and are irredeemably feudal. Could it be that we have the consciousness of the peasantry rather than the class affiliations categorised by Marxists and others?

This feeling that I was challenging the state was enforced after an elderly councillor, who was suffering from pneumoconiosis after a life in the pits, helped me distribute information throughout the estate. It is an interesting observation that when government passes legislation that puts burdens on local councils, particularly when it is of the type that distributes wealth but slightly to the less well off, it causes concern. I had no problem with the authorities over this but local officers told me my actions were putting a strain on the social service budget. This was to become a problem nationally as large numbers of the sick and elderly were persuaded to take up these benefits, especially televisions and phones provided by the local social services. The publicity was too good, the take-up too great. Of course, this generosity was eventually cut back.

My crisis arose when I became involved with a mental health matter. Three ladies, two of whom were employed by the project as cleaners, were living in a house on the estate. They had previously been in Bridgend mental hospital but were now part of the community. This was one development the project had positively influenced well before my involvement.

Suddenly without notice, as in a totalitarian regime, the ladies vanished. One day they were in my office, the next they were gone. It was like the Hitchcock thriller, only instead of one woman vanishing there were three.

Naturally other women involved with the project were concerned and asked me to investigate.

Central office would not tell me anything other than that they had been returned to the mental hospital. I was told patient confidentiality meant that we could not be told any more. The local mental health officers told me that the system had been centralised and that whereas previously there had been a closer tie to the community it was now absent and they were themselves out of the picture.

Subsequently I allowed a woman to contact a woman councillor from my office. Economic deprivation meant that she did not have her own phone and the youth worker's troublesome three had vandalised the public phone. As I saw it I should encourage 'the deprived' to think for themselves when faced by bureaucracy. It might have been felt that this action would rid the culture of deprivation more effectively than any amount of observational reporting. Not that the lady was in anyway deprived other than not having a phone.

However, when she phoned she turned to ask me for advice. The lady councillor immediately interpreted that I had put the other lady up to it. Labour councillors, even more than Tories, tend to think that their fellow citizens are too stupid to think for themselves and also tend to be more subservient towards authority than Tories or Liberals. Perhaps this tells us something about the long term deprivation of the Labour party.

I was hauled before the Directorate. The National Children's Bureau senior researcher, the tragically late Arayeh Leissner, arrived to support me. The project being a joint enterprise. Arayeh lacerated my accusers. It was as if one of those great Jewish actors, Lee J Cob or Rod Steiger were playing my counsel. After he had pointed to some truths about democracy and had then told the Director to shut up the case was dropped. Probably the poor man had his own version of Arayeh seeing him as a member of the Jewish mafia.

I am not sure that there would be the same outcome today as I believe that democracy has dwindled despite the pretence that we live in a uniform consensual society. The project was wound up a short time later as the three years were up. I tried to leave behind some community involvement but the estate sank back into its hill top isolation: a neither fish nor fowl sort of place on the very limits of Barry, there on the road to Cardiff but very much

a place on its own. It had been used then left to its devices, even to its deprivation.



Orpheus in the Underworld

by
John Evans

It is unwise to turn back or to be blinded by sentimental patriotism. A Welsh colleague once told me that I had a second generation Welshman's illusions about the homeland. This distortion was passed on by my émigré father who lived in a Celtic mist and preferred myth to reality, probably as a result of marrying a Bristolian. Enough, I am taking this playful thing too far.

The Afan Community Aid Council was formed in Port Talbot in the early eighties as a response to unemployment. A study was made by a researcher at Swansea University. His report concluded that there should be three distinct units within a project to serve local needs. The management of each unit being under an overall 'Director'.

There was to be a community work unit, a voluntary service unit and an employment unit. This corporate illusion attracted the interest of the churches and local politicians. West Glamorgan County Council and Afan Borough Council offered limited funding which should have warned off the vainglorious had they known anything about the real world. However, being priests and politicians they were as ignorant as the cloistered academic fool who had drawn up the report. A devious worldly villain would have saved a lot of bother by resisting the project, these grubbers stepped into a mire which those less than angels would have feared to tread.

The West Glam authority had wanted to control the project as it was putting the most cash into it and because it had its own community work personnel. The local committee had their own agenda so W.G. left them to it. The committee selected the town's Catholic priest as chairman, probably banking on divine intervention if necessary. The vice-chair was a protestant of some sort or other; the treasurer the local milkman, who was assisted by the Workers Education Officer. The rest of the mob being made up of Labour councillors anxious to maximise their expense claims by sitting around at as many meetings as possible. There was a chap from the steel works and one or two other anonymous beings but, as might be expected in a community project, no women. Apart from any consideration of fairness, this meant an absence of basic common sense and practicality on the committee.

No one had a clue what to do though the Chair and Vice Chair showed great enterprise in spending funds itemised for the pensions of employees, to furnish their own offices with cabinets. Just how this sad action was allowed to take place was never explained, nor was the fact that the vice-chair was soon to retire, therefore having no case at all for taking the item. This happened before my arrival in the project and was to be an early example of what I was up against. As I indicated above, a clever villain would not have considered this. The priests had the insouciant mixture of stupidity and greed which enabled them to do things others would see as beneath them. I have encountered a considerable number of sinners attracted to the collar and the cloth just as I have found them in mainstream politics. If then they represent a cross section of society we are all damned.

At some point before my arrival in the project the three unit concept had slipped out of focus: that is, there would not be three teams but the Director and his Assistant Director, doing it all between them. With the inverse logic that permeated the sorry farce, the Asst. Dir. had been appointed at the beginning of the project some six months earlier. Why this had happened was never clear but she was a local woman who had just finished university when she had been appointed and obviously had all the qualifications and experience for her post. I never found out what that was but she had been involved with the appointment of the secretary, both having become close in a sisterly way before my arrival.

I was interviewed along with others at the Afan Lido hotel. This arrangement conveniently avoided the candidates seeing the premises they were to work in. It also provided a night out for what seemed a very large crowd to interview and appoint. Most probably expenses were involved. Someone was appointed ahead of me but wisely dropped out (oh lucky man!) Naturally, I was really the best candidate they told me at a later date. This was probably said in the sense that the best fly is the one who gets suckered into the spider's trap.

Perhaps they saw the sign 'Stupid' on my cap or picked up on my blurbings that it was so good to be back close to the Swansea valley of my father's childhood. Anyway, with the hope of the foolish I arrived some weeks later expecting some help in settling in. After all was I not 'The Director'!? Oh, poor fool! Had I been so desperate to get back into full time work? How disadvantaged we are by our social circumstances, qualified or not. I was compelled to rent a chalet in the Goitre valley. It was only available because

it was the winter season but it was expensive. It was cold and bitter in that valley. I was back in the Land of My Fathers but far from my wife and children and I was to learn that the myth of Welsh warmth is just another myth like that of Welsh rugby.

I applied for a temporary one room flat, sixteen miles up the Afan valley. A full council at which I attended resoundingly rejected my application. Again, councillors on the project committee were present but it seems they had not come to help me but to guarantee their own expenses. Against this background I struggled to make sense of the project.

The post was for three years initially and was advertised as PO1. I assumed this would be incremented each year. How wrong I was and indeed as unworldly in my own way as those I have castigated in this sordid tale. My plea is the naively innocent one of trusting that the funding authorities would guarantee this. In truth I had not used a modicum of common sense as regards my own interest. A typical fault in those who seek to change the world to fit with their own hazy idealism.

My office turned out to be an ex-venereal disease clinic. My own room was windowless and the green paint was peeling off the walls giving the unfortunate impression of similar coloured skin peeling from the private parts of a VD patient. Nothing had been done about this during the six months prior to my arrival. My simpleton good nature (which no longer exists) led me to believe the illusions of a well meaning member of the committee who worked in the steelworks and who insisted that facilities would become available for the project. There would be office space and other accommodation. The committee believed this as I was told that the VD clinic was temporary. Obviously, no attempt had been made to verify the facts. For me to do so would seem impertinent so early in the post.

When in junior school I had been entirely convinced by another boy that he would produce full cowboy outfits for several of us. We would have real guns and horses. The steel works man possessed the same vivid imagination. There are many artistic talents in the valleys and on the coast, certainly in the immediate vicinity around the Afan valley. Their Celtic genes blur fact and fiction. They do not lie but actually believe what they are saying. This is no threat to society when they are actors or writers but if they are politicians they are doubly dangerous and inventive committee members a definite liability.

The project's financial problems emerged in a desperate yet somehow comic scene in my VD office one dark night in late autumn. A certain comedy, that called Black Comedy, is only realised in the course of time. Proust's *Recherche du Temps Perdu* as farce. The milkman and the W.E.A. man had come along to enlighten me. In truth they were trying to enlighten themselves, for though good men, they were confused souls fallen among thieves. Plainly embarrassed they could not say what they really felt. Assuming they knew what they felt. Perhaps they thought I could throw an immediate light on the situation.

A jumble of paper was scattered over the desk. There was no semblance of order. The milkman produced bits and pieces from his back pocket and talked in a high pitched voice. I was reminded even then of a comic character in a Welsh radio production many years ago. It was called 'Welsh Rarebit'. The W.E.A. man, who had a beard as might be expected of a WEA man, struggled with abstract formulae scrawled on soiled and crumpled paper. He might have been a man struggling with Marx's formulae in *Das Kapital*. The only clear information which arose was the name of an accountant who had been involved at some stage, and the cheering news that my 'butties' (mates) of the evening were resigning. They were abandoning ship and I had that sinking feeling. I did not find this bit funny in a comedic way at the time but I found it 'funny' in the black sense.

The accountant was a life raft if only for a short time. His professionalism and genuine concern enabled me to focus on where monies came from, and how the grants were paid, what should be in this column and which in that. Not a financial man myself I was pleased with my detective work as I proceeded to question the District and County officers. However, while nourishing my intellect, their answers undermined my confidence in my situation even further. I felt like a martyr who had discovered his truth but must burn for it.

Money had not been paid because no reports had been sent in the previous six months. No one had taken any responsibility for this. The graduate had been fluffing around the edges and apart from occasionally arriving in the office as if to give it a benediction, the Chair and his Vice Vicar, seemed to have done no more than filch eight hundred pounds itemised for the pension fund of the Director and his assistant. There was a basis for the involvement of the fraud squad. Perhaps these men were too stupid to realise what they

had done. However, the authorities washed their hands of the matter. It would have been embarrassing to do otherwise with councillors and priests involved in serious mismanagement. Moral intelligence is now fashionable among New Labour. Anthony Giddens is well into it: it takes the place of ideology and is evident in Blair's sermons. However, the *a priori* concept of Kant regarding morality is itself ideological. There is no evidence of an absolute morality or a specific piece of tissue in the cortex of the brain labelled morality. Therefore we can be fairly certain that moral intelligence does not feature in the CV of local government officers.

The next Augean task was the Employment Unit. More Orphaic in my poetic misery, less than a Hercules, this was beyond me. Actually it would have been beyond the latter who would have found the modern world too complicated for his muscular approach. Indeed he would have gone the way of heavy industry. This was the problem in South Wales and elsewhere. The Thatcherite furies brought about a situation which could not be patched up by hole in the wall projects running on a shoe string. It was a macro-economic problem. After the second meeting I informed those present that there was no purpose in continuing this unit. The people involved were not the usual expenses crowd and there was a woman present as well as people from education and business. They looked at me with some relief. Obviously they had realised this for some time but it took my child-like self to point out that the emperor had no clothes.

All that was left was to develop some support for local groups by utilising whatever job creation exercise was in fashion at the time. I say this with no apology for not recalling which one it was. It might have been YTS or any other combination of first letters to make a meaningless acronym. The one I was involved with was a classic of Dept of Employment reasoning and accountancy. (Though it may not have been the Dept of Employment in those days. It was probably another acronym. As Hamlet says 'Words, words, words...')

I thought I was on to some good. Young people in particular were anxious to get a job working in the community getting youth work experience and other skills. It was possible to start with about ten working to a formula of 'X' number of hours over a defined period. Fair enough, but the system was structured in such a way that made it necessary to dismiss workers arbitrarily every couple of weeks.

I confess that my Master of Social Science degree was of no use to me. There was a twisted logic at work. My graduate assistant could understand it, she was of the modern world. I was limited by the concept of reason which I understood the Enlightenment had passed down to us. I could not understand the logic which required me to lay off some hopeful kid every few weeks because the god Formula required the sacrifice.

So I was running out of purpose and this meant the project had no purpose. I was becoming unpopular with the committee. I had not been popular before but now I was pulling the scales from their eyes there was discomfort. There were people who had hoped to gain prestige from the project. It was painful facing reality when you believed a piece of bread was Jesus Christ and you hoped to become Bishop of Cardiff as a result of your sterling work for the unemployed of South Wales.

A winter of despair set in. I was alone in my freezing chalet. On weekends I travelled back to the Midlands. My daughter was anorexic. The only sanity left in the world was my wife. Then a feisty lady from the valleys offered me accommodation with her family just around the corner from the house Richard Burton was born in at Pontrhydyfen.

There was more drama to come and I'd rather have had Richard Burton playing it than my living it. Despite the nonsense I had put up with in difficult personal circumstances I had attempted to do the job to the best of my ability. In fact I felt some guilt in not producing miracles. However, I had politely asked the Chairman to recognise my incremental upgrading claim. This would not have become active until the following September. It resulted in the priest consulting at official level and the next thing was the production of a piece of paper demanding my signature to a directive containing my present condition of service. I refused stating that I disagreed but in any case I was not refusing to do my job. What followed tells a lot about Church and State and about intelligence in general, never mind the moral kind which some might think, wrongly, should be a prerequisite in a priest.

I was given earthy moral support from my lady friend. She said they were a load of bastards and were known to be by one and all. She propped me up which was just as well because the local Socialist Worker NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) representative lived up to the SWP reputation of being useless with regard to concrete matters demanding organisation.

Apparently I was not in the local branch being employed in a separate project.

More missives followed and then without informing me the committee turned up one evening to hold a meeting in another room in the VD clinic. They came mob handed not just for the expenses but because their dull lives required some excitement: A lynching. I was asked to wait in my office despite their failure to notify me about the impending Kangaroo court.

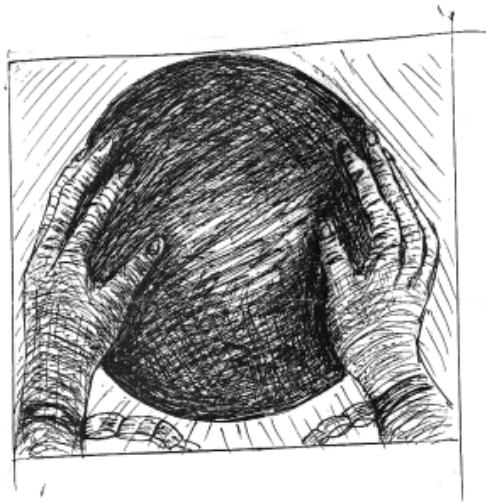
After some time a solicitor came into my office holding a paper stating my 'Gross Misconduct'. This puzzled and appalled me then, the first time I had encountered it, just as it appalls me when used against other employees. I have seen councillors get away with rank corruption while local government workers are charged with a terminology which suggests child molestation. Indeed the terminology would be more appropriate when used to describe the actions of priests.

For a moment I had the feeling that Jekyll and Hyde like I had been doing strange things round the misty waterfront of the port. After all I had been unwell of late. Logic told me that this terminology could not possibly be used for lesser misdemeanours. But it was being used, as it still is, in gross misuse of language and reason.

The solicitor, a steel works solicitor, who was out of his depth and not really up to being a mouthpiece for the mob, then solicited me to sign the original paper again. Though upset I was gaining in confidence for I had done my homework. From my drawer I produced a Dept of Employment leaflet. I asked him to read it. It read to the effect that no employee, most certainly not one responsible for other employees, should sign a condition of service. To do so would mean accepting the conditions when it was one's right to challenge them. A contract was a different matter but did not pertain to this situation. Further more I was protecting my employers by recognising that they could jeopardise themselves at a tribunal by forcing an employee to sign. The solicitor went a paler shade of pale and returned to the other room. After a brief time he emerged, not with an apology (come come!) but with another piece of paper asking me to sign that I had received my conditions of service. Not that I agreed to them. This was now complete farce: the final outcome of chapters of it.

The solicitor turned to go but I called him back. Now for my bit of drama. I felt like the doctor in the novel by Cronin, set in a Welsh mining community. The committee had persecuted the doctor for a number of reasons. He then demonstrates their ignorance and more or less tells them to get lost. He then resigns. I told the solicitor what I thought of the committee and offered him a piece of paper. My resignation. Oh my joy when I left the nether land, never to return, never to turn back again. Up over the Brecons and to - well not freedom but to further employment.

You do not beat ignorance and stupidity especially when it is institutionalised. You have your moments and you are conscious of being an individual. Without this freedom you are no use to yourself or anyone else. It is better to sell yourself short, painful as it is, than to sell out. The conformist has a limited vision; he smells the odours around him. The individual may be in the desert but he can see his shadow: the only stink other than that of nature, is his own and he can do something about that.



New Town Story

by

John Evans

I started work with Telford Development Corporation on January 1st 1975. My title was Senior Community Development Advisor, the loftiest title I have ever had, the reason for this being the necessity to do as the Romans do in organisations. Community Worker would have been enough in normal circumstances but in a government quango it is essential to match up to the 'real' professionals like Commercial Officers, Solicitors, Architects and so on; all the people who create sterile New Towns.

Very soon I clashed with Labour councillors, though, as is the case with the brainwashed as much as with the brain dead, I still had this curious belief in the party, despite my experiences in Wales. Not yet New Labour these councillors merely exhibited the traditional ignorance and parochialism which was bearable when their power was confined to small urban councils or district councils. Though a quango the Development Corporation, totally undemocratic and unelected, brought into being to create a town dedicated to profit and not much else, was a citadel of reason in comparison to the local council. Thus making a case for Plato's philosopher kings as opposed to the rabble thrown up by parties. This argument may seem to skate on thin ice but then I suspect that anarchist thought is somewhat elitist. Let us be honest and admit that we believe ourselves to be superior to the collectives of convenience known as parties.

My employees tolerated my actions, which was good of them considering that colleagues spent considerable time swinging the lead, shopping in working time, etc. It was very easy in a new town context just to wear a smart suit and look professional. Indeed clever people were promoted for doing this and all the above. It was said at a promotion interview that a committed hard working community worker colleague was too active in the community and therefore would find it difficult to turn from poacher to gamekeeper. The logic being that a foul mouthed coxcomb who, when not shopping, hung around the offices laughing and fawning, was promoted. Ironically the active man had been a priest but had seen the error of his ways, while the coxcomb, who had failed at all things, went on to become a priest having sold out his job for thirty pieces of silver and his colleagues' jobs with it.

I had upset the leader of the council, who was on the board of the development corporation, by organising local activity on his patch. This activity was very reasonable and brought together business people, solicitors, some rational councillors and among others, mothers and toddlers group representatives. This threat to civil order was too much for the leader who believed that a few hundred votes every three years from the few who bothered to vote gave him *carte blanche*, perhaps, more correctly, *carte rouge*, to oppose any consideration not originally conceived by the party at council level.

This man objected to requests for the use of the former urban council offices for community purposes. When the development corporation backed the community, he and his party colleagues made use of the premises. He also opposed the setting up of a town wide committee to promote the urban parish review which had been passed through parliament by Peter Shore who was then responsible for local government and in the same party as the local leader.

The most interesting clash arose after I started to work with the West Indian community, which wanted to use an unoccupied former butcher shop as a community centre. It is a maxim that reasonable requests became a problem for bureaucracy which exists for its own preservation and therefore is geared to the interests of the higher order.

The leader of the West Indian community wanted a building in which early learning could develop along with cultural interests. Music would be important as well as general interests, elderly clubs etc. The building would not be exclusive to the West Indian community. Everyone would be invited to participate, the leader wanted to enhance his peoples' sense of identity as people who could use their own self-awareness to meet with other people at a place which was theirs' rather than a centre controlled by the authorities.

Naturally, this perfectly logical request was frowned on. The local authority was certainly institutionally racist. Leaving aside outright racists, who can actually be directly confronted, this endemic racism is a major problem because it is institutional. Thus the gatekeepers take the defensive position that the ethnic group is isolating itself by seeking its own centre. The same gatekeepers had failed to act on evident racism against Afro-Caribbeans in working men's clubs. Somehow or other this had not been dealt with.

There was also the perceived identity of the ethnic group. Obviously, they were what is called black but there was another factor at that time. Most of the community were associated with a labouring status at local works. The new town had only recently commenced so 'Middle Class' professional blacks were not present and were not politically active, a state of affairs that has persisted with Afro-Caribbeans, though less so with people from the sub-continent. Experience is there are exceptions to this rule but it is not part of this particular history. It is enough to say that though the leader of the West Indian community had been trained as a professional man, he had worked on the factory floor knowing he could not make a living as a chiropodist in this town.

Given the low status image of the ethnic group and their total lack of representation on the council, it was easy to dismiss them. Especially as there was a real problem in identifying suitable properties in the immediate neighbourhood. Also, the empty butchers shop, which had contained family premises, was next to an abattoir.

Discussions with council and development corporation officers were fruitless. They said it was unhygienic to have a cultural centre near to the abattoir. As the butcher had lived next to it I concluded that they worried the West Indians would spread disease to the flies. This of course was very unfair of me. How could they think this way? Rather, they did not think at all. There were no other buildings available so we were apparently stymied.

It was not possible to ask the group's leader to take a radical stand on this refusal. He was a conservative man, a Christian and a gentleman: virtues which put one at a disadvantage in this wicked world if the conservatism is with a small 'c' and ones' Christianity is genuine rather than institutional. Therefore I took an opportunist line via the local paper. Perhaps it is ego which allows some to put their heads above the parapets. Logically I should have made more effort to get someone from the West Indian community to speak for themselves but I could not resist the local papers' interest in my views. I told the reporter that I felt that both the council and my employers were, perhaps unknowingly, racist.

This went down a treat on the part of the aforesaid. However, I was lucky. My immediate boss had been a community worker before he had taken shelter behind a desk. He called me to his desk brandishing the 'bosses racist' headline. He said I was the best community worker he had met but

surely I had gone too far. I agreed that it looked that way and gave my version of the truth, which was that I had merely responded to questions about the cultural centre by saying that others might see certain attitudes as racist. Of course I had been misreported. In any case the matter could be dealt with by the corporation proving they were positive about discrimination.

I was not suspended but it seemed that my vainglorious effort was in vain. However, there was a strange outcome which had more to do with chance than the best laid plans of mice and men. Though it required a commitment to the cause to seize the opportunity presented to me.

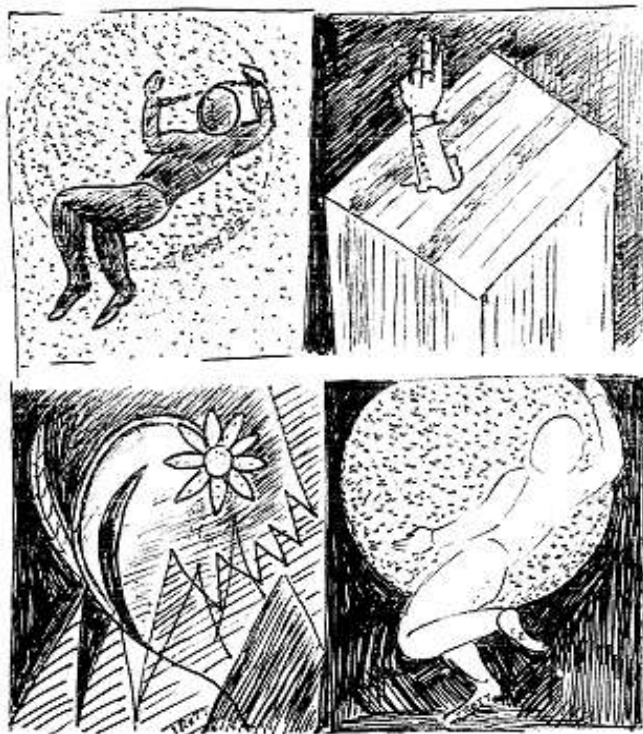
The chairman of the corporation was an opportunist Labour MP who had been made a Lord. I was invited with five other members of staff to dine with him. I cannot recall this happening to anyone else and I did not know why I was chosen. Perhaps it was to the credit of the corporation that I had not been sidelined and was thus able to get the chairman's ear. He was an amiable man who had taken many gay holidays in the West Indies. At first he was a little patronising, saying they should mix in with the host community but after I had explained the matter in more detail he agreed to meet them.

Showing some style he invited the West Indian community to his home. Wine and food was available and the guests were dressed to kill. It was some show on all sides and the chairman had demonstrated that despite all the sell outs, it is possible for a politician to retain his human side. I think he was something of a loner who had a need of people and these people needed him. The consequence was that they were given the butchers shop: the impossible became possible. His Lordship spoke and the bureaucrats did as they were told.

What was specifically anarchistic in any of my actions? I don't know! However, I can assert that those who tend to challenge for a principle are not party political people, for the party, however radical, will control the actions of a member. Inspirational individualism is the strength and weakness of anarchists. An anarchist is by nature a permanent revolutionary. Trots and the like are not: theirs is a position and a line. Anarchy is freedom, so it should be as playful, as creative and daring as art. If there is a need for a tongue in the cheek approach then use it. Radicalism can be fun. Alinsky demonstrates this in 'Rules for Radicals'. He argues that the classical Marxist

approach is directly confrontational and that a more subtle approach is required, particularly when confronted by a powerful enemy like the State. As with most arguments, this is oversimplified. However, if the back door is conveniently left open why continue knocking at the front?

John Evans



Poetic Interlude

Two social workers in a canoe
Said 'What shall we do?
We could float like a stoat in a coat, in this boat;
I leave the decision to you.'

A social work student from Delft
Said "I'll be good at mental health
Carefully study law and psychiatry
And then I can section myself".

MSG

Whistleblowing in the NHS

by

Doreen Frampton SRN

Commencing a career in medicine is more like joining a club than a service. Membership carries a lifetime badge that will forever forge your identity. As a doctor, a nurse, or a superannuated chiropodist you will have entered into a powerful pecking order. Class and hierarchy simmer on every ward and every corridor. Protocol governs every transaction. Initiates learn quickly how to adopt the appropriate professional persona. You are now a member of a group that believes there need be no conflict between the individual and the organisation's wishes. Hence a stiff upper lip and the ability to know one's place are useful aids to survival on the clinical circuit.

It takes a particular type of person to step outside the protection of this structure. It's not a good career move to criticise clinical practise or to challenge a powerful figure. Airing disagreement in a case conference will place the individual into a position of conflict.

The Whistleblower of course, is an extreme example of one who breaks ranks. Going outside the control of your Master to expose a malpractice not only puts your career at risk but also your state of mind.

Once the Whistleblower has gone public a recognisable pattern begins. Official reaction will always start with a voice of liberal concern. Administrators issue bland statements declining to speculate upon individual cases. Pertinent questions will be deflected by a refusal to breach matters of patient confidentiality.

Very soon senior people will confront the Whistleblower. They will want to know why official complaint procedures were not followed. And even if they were, the Whistleblower will stand accused of not using the procedure properly: the complaint wasn't formulated correctly or it was submitted to the wrong person.

If some sort of reconciliation cannot be achieved at this stage then the personal assaults begin. Hints about professional jealousies and capabilities are seeded. The Whistleblower's own reality is severely tested. *Did you*

actually see this in the way you have described? Have you not been under a little stress yourself lately? Isn't all this just a simple personality clash?

In the hospital itself this process of marginalisation accelerates. Colleagues move away. The coffee break becomes awkward. Invitations to meetings and social events suddenly dry up. One learns so easily how airing disagreements in a case conference can corrupt and desensitise some otherwise well-intentioned practitioners. Too many members enslave their minds to this exclusive club without being aware that they give up their freedom to be themselves.

In the meantime, those who refuse to remain as spectators are shunted away onto an extended period of paid leave. This action will be justified on the grounds of pursuing enquiries and wanting to avoid embarrassment to the parties concerned. In reality it's a time-gap that will eat away at the Whistleblower's confidence. Looming ahead will be the intimidating prospect of a panel of enquiry. Whatever the outcome the Whistleblower knows his or her membership is at some sort of end.

Salute the Hero! Curtsey the Heroine! Pay Homage to the Fool!

Doreen Frampton SRN

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FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

Direct Action, PO Box 29, Manchester M15 5HE

Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane London WC1N 3XX

The Cunningham Amendment, 1005 Huddersfield Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD12 8LP

Total Liberty, 47 High Street, Belper, Derby DE56 1GF

Northern Voices, 46 Kingsland Road, Rochdale Lancashire OL11 3HQ

Green Anarchist, Steve Booth (who we thank for helping with the layout and design of this book), 9 Ash Avenue, Galgate, Lancaster LA2 0NP

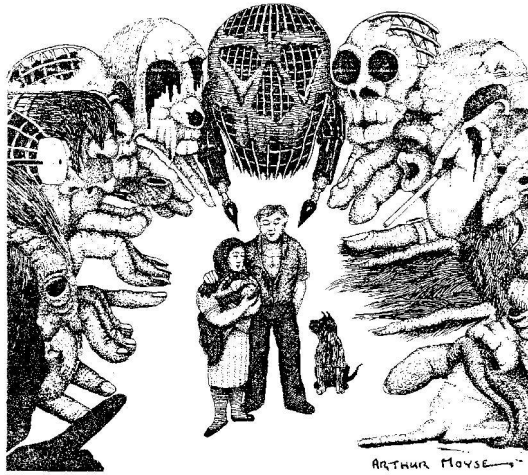
Barefoot Social Worker, barefootsw@radical.org.uk

The Radical Social Work mailing list, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rswsg>

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Considering the state of social work today, our publication's messages are as relevant now as they were when the contributors experienced its raw material first hand in the 70's, 80's and 90's.

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