Rabble Rousers and Merry Pranksters

A History of Anarchism in Aotearoa/New Zealand From the Mid-1950s to the Early 1980s

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The 1960s have been dismissed as a joke, a time when naive young people believed they could change society by wearing beads and placing flowers in their hair. This is a myth. The 1960s and – to perhaps a greater extent – the 1970s were characterised by a widespread political revolt. Social control – such as war, patriarchy, racism, sex roles, the police, schools, the work ethic, union bureaucracies and political parties – and authoritarian values in general came under attack during these decades. In particular, the late sixties and early seventies were a time of an often exhilarating freedom and creativity when many people tried to roll back authority and create a world that was more co-operative and less hierarchical. This effervescent rebellion shattered the myth that Aotearoa/New Zealand was an ethnically harmonious egalitarian utopia. It ultimately failed to transform capitalism in a fundamental manner, but it did have considerable impact. From the early to mid-1970s, watered down leftist and anti-authoritarian values permeated throughout society.

The relatively high level of working class self-activity from the late 1960s to the mid-late 1970s created a surge of interest in radical ideas. One of these ideas was anarchism (for a local introduction to anarchism, see Buchanan 1999). It has often been commented that the social movements of the sixties and seventies were imbued with an anarchic spirit. Many of the themes of anarchism, such as a stress upon participatory democracy, a rejection of centralisation and authoritarianism, a belief that the means need to reflect the ends, and a

championing of collective self-emancipation, self-realisation and workers’ self-management, were prevalent in these movements.

The innovative revolt of the sixties and seventies frequently challenged leftist orthodoxies. Owen Gager, then a prominent Trotskyist who was on the fringe of the anarchist milieu of the early to mid-1960s, regretfully comments, “I stayed with an ‘orthodoxy’ in the midst of a revolution that was destroying all orthodoxies.” The rebellions of the sixties and seventies were often independent from, and hostile to, the two major leftist orthodoxies of those decades: Leninism and social democracy. To be more specific, radicals of the sixties and seventies often attempted to create a non-hierarchical alternative to both the mini-bureaucracies of the Leninist parties and the vast social democratic bureaucracies of the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Anarchism and libertarian socialism – which I consider to be a broader term than anarchism; it encompasses not only anarchists but also libertarian Marxists and other anti-authoritarian socialists who are not involved in any party – tend to be written out of history. Leftist historians are inclined to minimise, or overlook, the anarchistic tendencies of many social movements. All too often, they solely focus upon the Labour Party. Alternatively, if they are a little more adventurous, they focus on the Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ). Groups or tendencies that are further to the left of Labour or the CPNZ are dismissed as “infantile,” “disorganised,” “adventuristic” or simply “not serious enough.”

Given the literature currently available, one could easily assume that an anarchist tendency never existed in Aotearoa in the fifties, sixties and seventies. Yet this book documents a small but vibrant anarchist and broader libertarian socialist current during this period. This tendency has been marginal – as with other radical movements in Aotearoa – but it is more important than many presume. For example, anarchists have played pivotal roles in the anti-nuclear movement of the early sixties, the anti-Vietnam War and anti-US bases movement of the late sixties and early seventies, the unemployed movement of the mid- to late seventies and the peace movement of the early eighties.

In addition, a theme of this book is that anarchists and other anti-authoritarian leftists developed a relatively new and influential form of politics in the sixties and seventies. They sought to combine protest with having fun. They were rabble rousers and merry pranksters. They rejected the dour puritanism of the traditional left, and instead took an imaginative, carnivalesque and joyous approach to politics. At best, they mixed the libertarian socialist emphasis on fomenting a class-based revolution from below with the counter-cultural emphasis on individual transformation and self-expression.

This history is a broad historical narrative of anarchism and libertarian socialism in Aotearoa from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s. It is part of a continuing effort to reclaim the hidden history of resistance to capitalism and authority. It is intended to be descriptive rather than analytical. The conclusion, however, contains some brief analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the anarchist movement. Based
on the evidence gathered in the narrative, I also reject a few common assumptions about anarchism in the 1960s and 1970s, such as that it was dominated by middle class students.

This work can perhaps be termed a “bottom-up” rather than a “top-down” history. A top-down history narrowly focuses on one or two parties or organisations, or a handful of leaders – invariably white males – that the historian considers important. In contrast, this history covers a wide variety of individuals and groups. It is primarily based upon interviews and correspondence with participants in the libertarian socialist scene. Where primary sources are available, I have given primacy to participants’ observations of the period, although undoubtedly my own prejudices and interests all too often shape the text. This work also draws upon extensive research into unpublished manuscripts, documents, magazines, leaflets and other ephemera written by anti-authoritarians. To capture a little of the distinctive and colourful political style of the period, I have also reproduced many cartoons, posters and leaflets.

While this history is wide-ranging, it is only comprehensive in parts. There are some gaps, especially given that it covers a long period of history and given that anti-authoritarian activity was often fleeting in nature. I have written more about the period 1968–c.78, simply because a larger libertarian socialist current existed during that time, and so I had more material to work with. Consequently, my coverage of other periods is sketchier. In particular, more research is needed into subjects like anarchist punk, the death of Neil Roberts and the anarchistic tendencies during the protests against the 1981 Springbok tour, among others.

_Rabble Rousers and Merry Pranksters_ will not only interest libertarian socialists, but also people who are curious about what happened in the sixties and seventies. I do not examine the relationship between anarchism and the broader social movements of the time in depth. That would require a book in itself. However, I include some brief and broad notes about the protest movements and social context of the time, firstly to provide readers unfamiliar with the period with some background material, and secondly to set the anarchist groups and anarchistic tendencies of the 1960s and 1970s in their social context, and in particular, to note their relationship to working class struggle. This background material is, I think, necessary because little has been published about many aspects of the period, including the Progressive Youth Movement, the strike waves and the underground press.

Perhaps this book will help a little bit towards overcoming the “re-inventing the wheel” syndrome. Anarchist groups in the 1960s and 1970s would form and disappear just as quickly, without knowing what had come before them. Because the anarchist movement was not continuous, knowledge and experience was not passed on to newcomers, and therefore new anarchist groups would often repeat the same mistakes of their predecessors. Hence new groups started from scratch, a situation like re-inventing the wheel.

I have roughly divided this work into four chapters. The first chapter is an overview of the period from 1956 to about 1966 or 67. The early New Left emerged in
1956; an anarchist tendency emerged slightly later. This early period was noteworthy for the beginnings of the protest movement that later was to flourish during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The second chapter covers this latter period. During this time, the anti-Vietnam War movement was at its height, and the rampaging anarchic exuberance of many long-haired youth disgusted conservatives. The third chapter examines the anarchist involvement in the “new social movements” of the early 1970s to the early 1980s, when, after the decline of the protest movement, movements such as the Tino Rangatiratanga movement – which can be loosely translated as Maori self-determination – and women’s liberation re-emerged and challenged the status quo. The fourth chapter explores the anarchist and situationist groupings of the period 1973–82. These divisions are arbitrary, and many movements and groups overlap them, but nonetheless I believe they are useful to roughly classify a lengthy and complex part of our history.

Note to the Second Edition

I have made a few very minor corrections to the text. Otherwise, the text is exactly the same as the first edition.

This book is partially based upon a much broader and lengthier thesis. However, this work is not merely a truncated version of my dissertation. It contains much new material and is more committed to the “history from below” tradition. When I began this research, I thought I would be lucky to find anything at all about anarchism and libertarian socialism in Aotearoa. After many years of painstaking research – and much of the material contained in this work was very difficult to locate, especially as anarchists left hardly any records behind – I happily found my assumption was false.

This work would have been an impossible task without the kind and generous assistance of many people who shared their memories with me. A big hearty thanks to: Sonja Antonsen, Paul Bailey, Jim Baker, Rex Benson, Richard Bolstad, Pat Bolster, Graham Butterworth, Farrell Cleary, Allan Cumming, Christine Dann, Jim Delahunty, Andrew Dodsworth, Mike Donaldson, Rosamund Droscher, Brian Easton, Margaret Flaws, Owen Gager, Bruce Grenville, Richard Hill, Murray Horton, Tim Jones, the late Bruce Jesson, Tony Larsen, Sue Lee, Grant McDonagh, Jon Markham, Fern Mercier, Graeme Minchin, Kerry Morrison, John Murphy, Cathy Quinn, Lyman Sargent, Richard Suggate, Dave Welch, Chris Wheeler, Graeme Whimp, the late Owen Wilkes and everyone else who helped me out. I especially appreciate those who let me rummage through their papers from the period or sent me original documents. I am especially grateful to the late Ken Maddock, who sent me heaps of invaluable material from Australia. I owe a great deal to Brian Roper, who carefully supervised my thesis and encouraged me to research political radicalism in Aotearoa when initially I preferred to look overseas. Thanks also to those who proof read and commented on earlier drafts of this work. I thank Justine for the fantastic cover design. I also thank the people at Katipo Books. Special thanks to Matthew Turner, whose help has been unwavering and munificent. Last but not least, ultra special thanks to Frank Prebble, without whose generous assistance this publication would not have been possible. I hope your patience has been rewarded.

All errors and omissions in this publication are mine.

Finally, as this book is written by an outsider to the period, I hope I have done justice to the anti-authoritarian left-wing milieu of the time.
## Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Auckland Anarchist Activists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Anarchist Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAG</td>
<td>Auckland Anarchist Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACUG</td>
<td>Auckland City Unemployed Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFCA</td>
<td>Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>Citizens’ Association for Racial Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHUG</td>
<td>Christchurch Unemployed Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CND</td>
<td>Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPNZ</td>
<td>Communist Party of New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNAG</td>
<td>Dunedin Nonviolent Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOL</td>
<td>Federation Of Labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HART</td>
<td>Halt All Racist Tours</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWW</td>
<td>Industrial Workers of the World</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZSSSA</td>
<td>New Zealand Secondary Schools Students’ Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZWWU</td>
<td>New Zealand Waterside Workers’ Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHMS</td>
<td>Organisation to Halt Military Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>PMA</td>
<td>Peace Movement Aotearoa</td>
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<tr>
<td>PU</td>
<td>People’s Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>PYM</td>
<td>Progressive Youth Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSA</td>
<td>Returned Servicemen’s Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Save Aramoana Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAL</td>
<td>Socialist Action League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Situationist International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIS</td>
<td>Security Intelligence Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPNZ</td>
<td>Socialist Party of New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUP</td>
<td>Socialist Unity Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>VUWSA</td>
<td>Victoria University of Wellington Students’ Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAC</td>
<td>World Affairs Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>WLM</td>
<td>Women’s Liberation Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWWU</td>
<td>Wellington Waterside Workers’ Union</td>
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Anarchism Before the 1950s

Before the late 1950s, a continuous anarchist movement did not exist in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A few groups emerged during the industrial tumult of the years preceding World War I. Most anarchists during this period threw themselves into the syndicalist movement, especially the New Zealand Industrial Workers of the World (see Prebble 1995). Syndicalism is a grassroots revolutionary union movement that is closely related to anarchism: it grew out of the European anarchist movement during the 1880s and 1890s. It attracted thousands of workers and became dominant on the left from about 1900 to 1913. As Frank Prebble notes, the “syndicalist movement had an incredible influence in this country; a degree of organisation and militancy that has not, I believe, been matched since” (Prebble, 1995: 1). Syndicalism became largely marginalised, however, after the “Great Strike” of 1913 was crushed. With the rise of the Labour Party, social democracy became dominant on the left.

Yet syndicalism persisted as an undercurrent from 1913 to 1951. Syndicalist, or semi-syndicalist, practices were confined to a few militant unions such as the New Zealand Waterside Workers’ Union (NZWWU). The NZWWU stressed internal union democracy and direct action against the capitalist class. Jock Barnes,
the President of the NZWWU during the 1951 waterfront lockout, has stated that the “Waterside Workers’ Union, particularly the Auckland branch, had a strong syndicalist philosophy” (quoted in Prebble, 2000: 4).

Very little is known about anarchists from World War I to the late 1950s. There is the odd reference to anarchists in the 1920s and 1930s, but information is very sketchy apart from the Beeville Commune in the Waikato. Beeville, formed in 1933, was one of the most successful and influential communes in Aotearoa. Some, like Lyman Sargent, have described it as an anarchist commune. Sargent states that Beeville:

managed to survive for forty years in almost constant conflict with the government of New Zealand. It deeply influenced the development of later communalism in New Zealand…[It] directly gave rise to other communities founded by people who had lived at Beeville. And it had an immense, less direct impact on the counter culture movement in New Zealand by being visited by most of the people who became important in that movement (Sargent, 1998: 2).

Sargent has also claimed Beeville was highly original: “It foreshadowed the Hippie movement with its vegetarianism, interest in Eastern religions, resistance to conscription, and practice of free love twenty or thirty years before the first Hippie commune was established in the world.” As Beeville members were pacifists, their primary political activity was opposing war. Beeville members were conscientious objectors during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Beeville thrived in the 1950s, a period of suffocating cultural conformity. In 1964, it established its own libertarian school. Beeville, at times, identified with anarchism and had some contact with anarchists overseas including the Catholic Worker Movement and Guy Aldred’s publication, The Word, in Glasgow. Commune members, however, did not have any connections with the anarchist scene of the 1960s and 1970s in Aotearoa that is outlined in the rest of this book. The Commune disbanded in 1973.

Although Beeville did share similarities with some aspects of anarchism, such as its rejection of leaders, authority – which they called the “control complex” – and private property, I doubt whether it can be termed anarchist. Beeville’s philosophy was far more influenced by the Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti rather than anarchism. Ray Hansen was a prominent member of Beeville. Unlike anarchists, Hansen preferred a “people’s world government.” He also supported Social Credit’s version of capitalist economics and distrusted mass movements.

In 1940, two anarchist refugees from the Spanish Civil War, Greville Texidor and Werner Droescher, arrived in Aotearoa. Both had fought on the side of the anarchists during that war and revolution. Texidor was a colourful figure who had passed through artistic and theatrical circles in Europe, New York and Argentina. In Aotearoa, she became involved in the Frank Sargeson literary circle and penned many short stories that were later collected together and published posthumously as In Fifteen Minutes You Can Say a Lot (1987). Droescher became a friend of conscientious
objector Ian Hamilton, with whom he attempted to establish a libertarian school in Northland during the 1940s. Both Texidor and Droescher departed for Australia in 1948. Texidor did not return to Aotearoa, but Droescher returned in the early 1960s, and played a fringe role in the emerging anarchist scene in Auckland (see below).

The Shattering of Syndicalism: 1951

The 1951 waterfront lockout represented a crucial turning point in radical politics in Aotearoa. After holding out for 151 days, the radical wing of the union movement was eventually shattered in a draconian manner by the combined forces of the state, capitalist class and mainstream union bureaucrats – not forgetting the tacit cooperation of the Labour Party.

Nineteen fifty-one marked the death of the syndicalist tradition in Aotearoa. With the syndicalist undercurrent left in tatters, and their leaders blacklisted, most unions became ineffectual and bureaucratic. They became fully integrated into the capitalist system, with union bosses mediating working class dissent. After 1951, strike activity declined markedly and it was not until about 1966–7 that it revived.

The defeat of 1951 helped to enforce a new “class compromise” upon working class people. Workers by and large accepted full employment, cheaper consumer
goods, the welfare state and rising living standards in return for working harder and not destabilising the capitalist status quo; capitalists were subject to state regulation and control in return for a profitable and stable environment.

Before 1951, political radicalism, apart from Maori resistance to colonialism and the enclosures of their land, was mostly centred upon the workplace. From 1951 until the late 1960s, political radicalism was generally squeezed out of the workplace. Radical activists focussed on other issues, like opposing war, apartheid and the nuclear bomb.

**The Deadening Consensus**

The temporary lull in class conflict from 1951 to the late 1960s and the post-war economic boom fuelled the myth that Aotearoa was a classless, ethnically harmonious society. It seemed that almost everyone thought that capitalism had overcome its contradictions, and that workers had somehow become “middle class” simply because they owned such “luxuries” as a quarter-acre section, a car, a washing machine and even a TV set after television was introduced in 1960. Austin Mitchell mockingly suggested Aotearoa was “The Half-Gallon Quarter-Acre Pavlova Paradise.” Yet as this book briefly outlines, a quiet discontent simmered away in society from the 1950s onwards, to eventually explode in the late 1960s, when open class conflict re-emerged once more.

Despite this hushed dissatisfaction, the class compromise played a major part in manufacturing a fairly pervasive social and cultural consensus from the fifties to the late sixties. Many, however, found this consensus to be chokingly repressive. Bill Dwyer (1933–2001), a key figure in anarchist circles in Aotearoa during the sixties, wrote:

> Despite the myth of rugged individualism which New Zealanders like to imagine is a national characteristic, the sorry fact is that New Zealand is one of the most governed countries in the world. The result is that instead of the national motto ‘Onward’ being representative, a far more accurate one would be ‘Conformity.’ New Zealand is a classic example of the Welfare State with no unemployment and no battle for survival. But it is also a soulless, heartless and virtually cultureless country where bureaucracy rules supreme and the average man [or woman] is reduced to a cog in a spiritless machine...

It might follow that this ground could never support an anarchist movement (Dwyer, 1965: 33).

Anarchists reacted against this conformity. Ken Maddock, an important New Zealand anarchist theoretician and anthropologist of the sixties, stated, “Anarchist ideas appealed because of their difference from all that was familiar and because they contrasted so sharply with the feeling that daily life was dull, organized, conformist and predictable.”
The Birth of the New Left

A major source of dissent against the rigid conformity of the fifties and early sixties was the New Left. It emerged in 1956. In that year, the USSR crushed the Hungarian revolution and Khrushchev made his revelations of Stalin’s brutality. As a result, many tore up their Communist Party of New Zealand (CPNZ) membership cards, re-appraised socialism, rejected Stalinism and formed instead a number of “New Left” organisations and informal groupuscules, the most important of which was Socialist Forum.

These early New Left groups were independent of, and opposed to, the “Old Left.” The New Left was “new” in the sense that it was in revolt against the bureaucratic and authoritarian Old Left, which in 1956 comprised the Labour Party, trade union bureaucracies and the CPNZ. The New Left is difficult to define as it was fluid and complex. I believe that its major defining characteristics were, firstly, its search for a third way beyond Stalinism and social democracy, and secondly, its search for a third way beyond the Cold War blocs of the US and the USSR. It also had many other defining qualities, including its non-sectarian and anti-bureaucratic nature, its opposition to alienation, dehumanisation and racism (and not just material exploitation), its emphasis upon extra-parliamentary methods of dissent (including direct action) and its vision of face-to-face self-managed communities run by participatory democracy.

Graham Butterworth, a central figure in both the New Left and anarchist scenes of the early sixties, described the atmosphere of the time as feeling like people “were living by false gods”; hence many questioned the conformity of the times, especially when they discovered new, fresh ideas such as existentialism and anarchism. So a wider political milieu emerged that was often sympathetic to anarchism.

The New Left was non-sectarian. For example, in Wellington during the early 1960s a community feeling developed between radicals of all shades – it was not until the late sixties that bitter sectarianism became prevalent in the Wellington radical left. Anarchists mixed with immigrant intellectuals, a few beatniks, writers, New Leftists, “communists” – I believe a more accurate term is Leninists, that is, Marxists who believe that the working class needs to be led and controlled by a hierarchical vanguard party – and others in pubs and cafes.

Socialist Forum, which was mainly composed of ex-CPNZ members as well as a few ex-Labour Party members, was formed in Wellington in 1958. It then spread to Auckland and Christchurch. Each Socialist Forum branch became quite popular – the Auckland branch had a membership of hundreds. Socialist Forum was a discussion group rather than an activist group, yet it became an important meeting ground for activists from different movements. Typical of the New Left, Socialist Forum involved independent socialists of all shades, from those on the left of the Labour Party to anarchists. Hence they discussed a broad-range of issues, from extending the welfare state to workers’ control. A few anarchists, like Bill Dwyer and Jon Markham, spoke at Wellington Socialist Forum discussions. Butterworth
was elected on to the Wellington Socialist Forum Committee from 1961 to 63. For Butterworth, this was an important experience, as he and others learnt much from older experienced activists involved in Socialist Forum like Con Bollinger.

As well, a few intellectual New Left journals appeared. **Polemic** (1961–2) was put together mainly by anarchists, and was edited by Ken Maddock. Anarchists contributed to **Dispute** (1964–8), edited by Owen Gager, as well as writing numerous articles for the most important “independent and socialist” publication of the period, the newsletter **New Zealand Monthly Review**.

### The CND

In the 1950s, very little protest activity took place in Aotearoa. Yet after the emergence of the New Left, protest activity slowly started to become more prominent. A successful campaign was waged against the death penalty. There was a short-lived but lively and popular “No Maori, No Tour” protest movement against the New Zealand rugby team’s tour of South Africa in 1960. Most importantly, the New Zealand Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was formed in 1959. With the threat of the Cold War, the CND aroused much support, and it became “vaguely subversive and definitely radical” to be a CND member in the early 1960s (Clements, 1988: 100). Like most of the movements of the sixties and seventies, the ban the bomb movement was a large-scale extra-parliamentary movement that was independent of the Labour Party and the CPNZ. It was, therefore, a major shot in the arm for the New Left and anarchism in Aotearoa.

The CND copied the British CND’s successful Easter marches from the Aldermaston Nuclear Weapons Research Centre to London – except that here there were no nuclear sites. Instead they marched from Featherston to Wellington in 1961, and then from Paraparaumu to Wellington in following years. Anarchists took part in these marches, and Butterworth became a key organiser for the CND. Butterworth, an anarcho-pacifist who was brought up as a Quaker, was a prime mover in organising the original CND Easter March in 1961 along with Alex Stafford. Butterworth helped organise other marches and CND vigils.

Despite allegations that the CND was a “communist” front, it was essentially an umbrella organisation of many different shades of opinion, all joined together in opposition to the bomb. Some tension occurred between the CND’s conservative leadership, led by people like Elsie Locke...
The Inaugural CND Easter March from Featherston to Wellington. Evening Post, 1 April 1961, p. 18, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.
and Quaker Mary Woodward, and the youthful New Left element within the CND. The CND’s National Committee wanted it to be a “respectable” organisation that attracted support from all classes and from both the left and the right. This alienated radicals. Owen Gager of the Youth CND writes:

In the CND, there were certainly differences between the younger radicals and the Christian pacifists... The YCND had elements sympathetic to the Trotskyists and anarcho-pacifists elsewhere: these were absent from the adult CND and the leadership worried about them... There was I suppose a kind of anarcho-Trot alliance in the YCND: we supported each other most of the time (though the alliance also included other radicals).

Wellington anarchists and their allies established a Direct Action Group in 1963 as a radical split from the CND. The group reprinted the sensational *Spies for Peace* pamphlet, in which a few British anarchists publicised the location of a secret bomb shelter reserved for politicians. After 1964, activists concentrated on opposing the Vietnam War. Subsequently, the CND subsided.

**The Legend of Bill Dwyer and Student Provocateurs: Wellingtonian Anarchism**

Within or alongside the New Left, a small but vibrant anarchist scene emerged in Wellington, Hamilton and Auckland. It is important to note that during this period anarchism was the principal anti-Stalinist revolutionary current in Aotearoa, as Trotskyist parties were not formed until the late 1960s.

John Murphy, who participated in the anarchist milieu in all three cities, asserts that anarchism in the early to mid-sixties was:

mainly a romantic student movement, not against international capitalism and the destruction of human values, as it might be partly seen today, but largely an expression of youthful egotism and rebellion against parental values, the ‘Christian’ idiocy that we saw our parents mired in.

It is crucial to note that the student and youth unrest of the sixties was a rebellion against the authoritarian values of their parents. But, in my view, it was not just an adolescent rebellion. It was not autonomous from class struggle, as it was also a mixed class rebellion of middle and working class youth. To dismiss all university students as middle class is misleading because many students were being trained in the “knowledge factories” of universities to become skilled white-collar workers, which some argued made up the “new working class” of the sixties.

Wellington was the stronghold for this anarchist tendency. From the mid-1950s, Ray Vinycomb, an eccentric middle-aged anarchist from England, slowly initiated an
anarchist scene in Wellington. Vinycomb had a few associates like Patrick Craddock, and together they formed an informal, loose anarchist *groupuscule*. Vinycomb probably introduced anarchism to Bill Dwyer, as Dwyer regarded Vinycomb as “the father of Kiwi anarchism.” Vinycomb returned to England by 1964, and Dwyer became the main character of this milieu.

**Dwyer and the Wharfies**

Dwyer emigrated from Ireland to Aotearoa in 1954. A *bon vivant*, Dwyer was charismatic, passionate and theatrical. Sometimes he possessed an infectious manic energy. Dwyer worked on the Wellington waterfront from 1956 to 1960, and soon became prominent in the Wellington Waterside Workers’ Union (WWWU). At tumultuous union meetings, he accused the largely CPNZ-dominated Union Executive of having “the same old rat bag policy of doing nothing,” and of “lacking guts.” Instead, Dwyer insisted that the union should be controlled by the rank-and-file. He continually put forward motions of no-confidence in the union leadership, and actually managed to dismiss a couple of them.

At first, Dwyer received little support, but his vocal stand against the union leadership eventually gathered much support from the wharfies. By the late 1950s, about one-third of the wharfies were voting for him. Dwyer caused attendances of Executive meetings to rise, and was elected as delegate to the Labour Representation Committee and the Wellington Trades Council, bodies in which he caused no end of trouble. He stood for Union President in 1960, receiving 357 votes compared with Southworth’s 839. Union bureaucrats attempted to expel Dwyer from the union several times. Alleged intimidation and assaults by union heavies meant that Dwyer used to carry a cargo hook with him in case he was attacked.

Dwyer’s activities were not confined to trouble-making within the WWWU. He also ran an after-hours sly grog business. This was quite a profitable business – until the police shut it down, that is – as the six o’clock pub closing created a soaring demand for late night alcohol. Ken Maddock has written that Dwyer “had a reputation as a mad Irishman: flamboyant, outspoken, not afraid to stick out his neck...[His] defiance of the law was intended to exemplify and promote opposition to the State...His talent was always for colourful and impulsive actions.”

Dwyer’s passion for anarchism was reflected in the names he gave his sons. One was named Peter Enrico Dwyer, after Kropotkin and Malatesta, and the other Michael Dwyer, after Bakunin. Yet he was a controversial figure, as his anarchism did not always reflect in his sometimes explosive personal life. For example, in 1965 he was convicted for neglecting his infant sons in Auckland.
After Dwyer was forced to resign from his position as union delegate in 1960, he left the WWWU and attended Victoria University of Wellington. There he founded the legendary Victoria University Anarchist Association (AA) in 1962, which between 1962 and 64 was considered the most active political group on campus. The AA was a popular club because it fitted well into the New Left’s search for an alternative to the CPNZ and the Labour Party. Their meetings attracted a wide variety of people. Various people like Toby Hill, the Secretary of the NZWWU during the 1951 waterfront lockout, and Werner Droescher, who was as noted earlier an anarchist veteran of the Spanish revolution, addressed AA meetings and events.

About fifteen to twenty people were involved. The AA was made up of mainly “middle class,” Pakeha/white, male, student youth. Very few females took part in the group, apart from two sisters, Sue and Jane Harris. Others involved were John Murphy, Graham Butterworth (who later became a historian at Massey University and wrote extensively on Maori history, including Sir Apirana Ngata (1968)), Jon Markham, Irv Hart, Stuart Hickman, Peter Shanley, Rex Benson, Joseph Fliegner, Dave Tossman, John Warren, Bill Barker, J. F. Turner and David Wright. On the fringes of this core group was a large circle of people who fraternised with the AA, some of whom were either sympathetic to anarchism, or allies of the AA, such as Robin Bromby, Owen Gager and Bill Hall (a Canadian lecturer who was later involved in the anti-Vietnam War umbrella group, the Wellington Committee on Vietnam).

Some claimed that AA members were merely followers of Bill Dwyer. Owen Gager, for instance, writes, “The Wellington anarchists, in spite of their opposition to ‘leadership,’ were easily subordinated to a classical ‘charismatic leader’ (though of a kind that might not have had much success in other milieux).” Yet both Jon Markham and Graham Butterworth disagree. Markham argues that to outsiders Dwyer appeared dominant, but Dwyer had few actual followers. He maintains most AA members were sceptical of Dwyer and decisions were largely made democratically. Butterworth asserts the group did not revolve around Dwyer, but was a diverse group without leaders and followers, and duties such as speaking were shared amongst the group.

Rex Benson, an individualist anarchist within the AA, remembers “our primary aim was the making of mischief, and in this we succeeded admirably.” The AA had lots of fun disrupting student politics. Their target was the student executive, largely composed of aspiring politicians, or in Markham’s words “foetid, mouldy, rancid, maggoty, scurfy, maculate, slimy, clinkerous, dungy, putrid, pompous self-adoring bogtrotting bureaucrats” (Salient, 11
Bill Dwyer in action during the Anarchist Association’s expulsion of the Executive of the Victoria University of Wellington Students’ Association (VUWSA).

Aug. 1964: 2). From 1962 to 64 anarchists and their allies called about twelve general meetings of the Victoria University of Wellington Students’ Association (VUWSA). Benson writes, “Our task during these meetings was to use the available procedural devices to the end of total disruption.” AA members carried out filibusters, performed stunts, made continual points of order and forced absurdities into the minutes. In 1964, they passed a motion that gave the AA a colossal sum of money. Benson continues, “The Memorial theatre would be packed, and the meetings might go on from 7.30 to midnight. General pandemonium, with Dwyer’s ringing tones being heard over everyone else. Matters came close to fisticuffs on more than one occasion.”

In 1962, the AA engineered the dismissal of the entire Executive of the Students’ Association. Dwyer called for a general meeting, and then denounced the Executive for inaction over rising fees. A rowdy meeting attended by 200 students ensued, and a motion of no-confidence in the Executive of the Students’ Association was passed. This dismissal, the second in the history of the VUWSA, caused a tremendous uproar. Letters of protest poured into the student paper Salient – but, for Dwyer, the general meetings on the waterfront were “more special” than the ones at Victoria.

Members also had some more constructive input into student politics. Butterworth, for instance, assisted with organising the New Zealand University Students’ Association congresses at Curious Cove, which he told me helped “revitalise the student left.”

The AA did not put out its own publication. Instead they distributed material from Freedom Press in London. The AA, however, used its spot on the student union noticeboard to full effect. Their noticeboard was cluttered with leaflets, flyers and posters mocking those in power. When AA members Jon Markham, John Murphy and David Wright were assigned to produce the 1965 capping magazine Cappicade, the student union refused to publish it because they feared that they would be sued. This was the first time in the student union’s history that such a ban had taken place.

The AA developed an offshoot called the World Affairs Council (WAC). The WAC became known as the anti-bomb club on campus, and it argued for direct action against nuclear weapons rather than just marches. It also discussed foreign affairs and organised the odd conference. It opposed such things as New Zealand imperialism in the South Pacific, the racist “keep New Zealand white” immigration policy and trade with apartheid South Africa. Anarchists dominated the WAC, although many others took part in it such as Cathy Benefield, who later as Cathy Wilson became deputy leader of the Values Party in 1974, the first women deputy of a political party in Aotearoa’s history.

Demonstration

A blow has been struck for freedom from imperialist shackles by the Anarchist Association. In the words of Dwyer, “a little loyal demonstration” was held in the Plaza Theatre. Dwyer, upheld by about 20 anarchist stalwarts, including Shanley and Butterworth, refused to stand for the Queen.

The Anarchist Association organised a campaign to refuse to stand for the Queen before films. Salient, 23 July 1963.
Anti-Vietnam War and Anti-Apartheid Stunts

In 1964, some AA members and associates were involved in an early and infamous protest against US aggression in Asia, called the “General’s Hat Incident.” General Hamilton Howze of the US Marines was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Keith Holyoake at Victoria University. Anarchists viewed this visit as an attempt to pressurise the New Zealand government into assisting the US invasion of Vietnam. Before Howze attended a social function, he left his cap on a peg in a corridor in the student union building. The cap was promptly stolen and taken to an anarchist flat near the US Embassy. Then it was filled with muck – to be precise, rice, corn flour, tomato sauce and kitchen cleaners – and a note was pinned to it condemning the US military presence in Vietnam, Korea and Laos. Finally, it was thrown into the nearby grounds of the US Embassy. This incident caused some consternation at the university and in the press. A myth later developed that the cap was filled with excrement. In court, Jon Markham claimed dettol disinfectant was poured into the cap to give it a “nice, clean smell.” Two anarchists were convicted of wilfully damaging a military cap.

In 1964, forty anti-apartheid demonstrators greeted the South African cricket team when they arrived in Wellington. Two anarchists from the AA decided to make a more dramatic and effective stand against sporting contact with apartheid South Africa. The night before a cricket test between New Zealand and South Africa, they crept into the Basin Reserve and proceeded to dig up the pitch with trowels. The next morning, they woke up to national pandemonium. Prime Minister Holyoake exclaimed the sabotage was “unnecessary, objectionable and distasteful” and Ray Nunes of the CPNZ condemned it as “irresponsible” and “adventurist.” The match still got underway on time after the groundsman frantically patched up the pitch. The game was a painstaking draw and some rumours surfaced that it was drawn on purpose to prove that the sabotage was ineffective. The offending anarchists were banned from the student union for a term because they brought the university into “disrepute.”

Jon Markham leaving court after facing the charge of damaging a US General’s cap. The “General’s Hat Incident” was an early anti-Vietnam War protest by Wellington anarchists. 

NZ Truth, 30 June 1964, p. 3, ATL.
The Beginnings of Carnival Anarchism?

The AA was an original group. It was a forerunner to the playful style of politics that became prominent in the late sixties (see next chapter). Anarchists overseas, such as the Provos – short for provocateur – and Kabouters in Holland, helped to popularise these innovative ideas and practices (for an introduction to the Provos and Kabouters, see Stansill and Mairowitz eds., 1971). Markham remembers the AA's disruption of student politics was “Provo-like pure theatre.” Perhaps the AA can be called a carnival anarchist group because of their theatrical political manner and emphasis upon stunts.

I define carnival anarchism as both a distinctive style and a distinctive type of anarchism. Its major characteristic was its blend of the New Left’s protest politics with the anarchic elements of the counter-culture. Carnival anarchism was neither a purely counter-cultural type of anarchism, nor a purely traditional left-wing type of anarchism, but an invigorating mixture of the two. Carnival anarchists rejected not only the apolitical elements of the counter-culture, but also the puritanical, semi-religious element within the New Left. Hence further defining characteristics
of carnival anarchism were its mixture of having fun with protesting, its aim of encouraging both individuality and collectivity, and its aim of combining the cultural revolution with a socio-economic one (I have borrowed the term “carnival anarchism” from John Englart (1982), but I define it differently from Englart).

The AA represented a combination of the new and the old forms of anarchism. Even though the AA had a carnivalesque wing, it also adhered to traditional anarchist ideas. This was evident at an AA-organised public meeting in central Wellington in 1963. According to different reports, 40 to 100 people turned up. People attending the meeting voted for a number of propositions, including internationalism; “We embrace wholeheartedly the concept of a classless society”; opposition to all governments; opposition to royalty (as there was an upcoming Royal tour); worker control of industry; abolition of the wage system “as essential to the liberation of the working classes”; direct action by forming co-operatives in education, industry, agriculture and housing; opposition to voting in parliamentary elections and:

We proclaim the ideal of a society based, firstly, on LIBERTY for the individual to achieve the fullest development of his [or her] personality and character uncurbed by human authority and privilege; secondly, on EQUALITY for all in that the wealth of the world shall be held in common by its people without discrimination as to occupation; and, thirdly, on FRATERNITY, so that all shall be conscious of the common good, and, inspired by Mutual Aid, everyone will contribute to society what they are capable of, realising that the welfare of each is completely bound to the good of all.

That we call on all workers to unite in One Big Union, ignoring wage differentials and other disintegrating factors, to work for a society free of inequalities, exploitation and injustice.

The meeting was called to set up a new city-based anarchist group in Wellington, as Dwyer thought Wellingtonian anarchism was becoming too intellectual and university-based. The city-based group was formed, but little is known about it. Dwyer claimed in 1965 that about half of the anarchists in Wellington were in the university-based AA, the other half in the city group.

Unlike most carnival anarchists who emphasised spontaneous action, the AA was, in Markham’s words, “A well-read group...everyone read a hell of a lot.” Members studied the anarchist classics as well as the more modern liberal anarchist literature by Alex Comfort, Herbert Read, Paul Goodman, Colin Ward and the London-based Freedom group. Many AA members subscribed to Anarchy. Overall, the ideology of the AA was a loose synthesis of the different schools of anarchism, so it is misleading to view it as a purely carnival anarchist group.

By 1964, the AA began to decline, possibly hastened by Dwyer’s departure for Auckland in mid-1963. It became an informal social group that lasted until about 1966 or 67. In 1966, it was briefly revived when Dwyer moved back to Wellington for a few months. A few packed meetings were organised at Victoria University, with Dwyer as the principal speaker. As Benson notes, the “Dwyer legend...was still potent.”
RATIONALISM, ANTHROPOLOGY AND FREE SPEECH FIGHTS: 
ANARCHISM IN AUCKLAND

As in Wellington, a loose circle of anarchists and assorted fellow travellers was formed in Auckland, although this grouping did not come into existence until the early 1960s. They met informally at pubs and parties. Ken Maddock remembers drinking was the centrepiece of anarchist gatherings in Auckland. Most involved in the circle were students at the University of Auckland.

Several members of this grouping took part in the New Zealand Rationalist Association, including Maddock (a lawyer who became an anthropologist in Australia), Terry Keenan and David Miller. The Rationalist Association campaigned on issues like freedom from religion in schools. In 1961 Maddock, Keenan and Miller helped put together the revamped organ of the Rationalist Association, called Polemic, but the Rationalists promptly sacked them on the grounds of cost. They produced the magazine independently for one issue in 1962 before it folded.

Others in the Auckland anarchist groupuscule at various times were Neil MacDougall, Mike Grogan, Graham Jackson (a doctor who was involved in the Auckland CND; he became an anthropology lecturer at Auckland University), John Woolf and Roger Oppenheim (who also became an anthropology lecturer at Auckland University; he penned Maori Death Customs (1973)). Several in the circle were not anarchists, but were somewhat sympathetic to anarchism, like John Sanders (a Jewish intellectual who was a controversial editor of Craccum in 1964), Mike Morrissey (later a well-known fiction writer) and Owen Gager. As in Wellington, the group was open, informal and mixed with others such as the German intellectuals Werner Droescher and Odo Strewe.

Droescher returned to Aotearoa in 1961. He became a lecturer in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literature at Auckland University. Droescher was not inclined to push his anarchist views, but he was an important influence on the Auckland group, especially given his first-hand experience of anarchism in Spain (see Droescher 1978 for his account of the Spanish Civil War and Spanish anarchism).

Maddock was the most prolific and widely published anarchist writer from Aotearoa during the period of this study. In the sixties and seventies, he wrote eighteen articles about anarchism, mainly for the Sydney Libertarian publication Broadsheet, on a wide variety of subjects including Emma Goldman, anarchist illegalism, Max Nomad and anthropological articles about “primitive” anarchic societies.

Maddock’s writing critically questioned anarchist orthodoxy. For example, he argued that anarchistic societies and movements often had authoritarian characteristics, and he believed this authoritarian tendency would not disappear in an anarchist society (see, for example, Maddock 1966). In “Primitive Societies and Social Myths” (1963, reprinted in 1987), he asserted that true liberty, fraternity and equality have only really existed in some “primitive” societies, such as the Land Dayaks of Sarawak and the Nuer of Sudan. He argued that the utopias of anarchists
and communists bear “a close resemblance to past primitive society”:

In speaking...of the ‘withering away of the state’ and the ushering of a society based on the principle ‘to each according to his [or her] need, from each according to his [or her] ability,’ anarchist and communist writers are projecting into the future a form of social existence, the like of which has been approximated to only in the past (Maddock, 1987: 59).

Maddock argued that orthodox anarchism aimed for an unrealistic, utopian myth: a classless and stateless society. However, he believed this “myth” could spur people to action, and contrary to the more pessimistic Sydney Libertarians, he noted, “I think that we can take some faltering steps in the direction of liberty, equality and fraternity.”

Maddock moved to Australia in the mid-sixties, where he became an important
anthropologist. In his *The Australian Aborigines* (1972) he interpreted the Aborigines as having a “kind of anarchy,” a society that was characterised by mutual aid and an absence of coercive institutions like the state, although he noted that some older men possessed more power than other Aborigines. Les Hiatt, who, like Maddock, was involved with the Sydney Libertarians, has called it an “influential textbook [that] brought the anarchistic representation of Aboriginal political life to its apogee” (Hiatt, 1996: 94).

With the arrival of Bill Dwyer from Wellington in 1963, anarchism in Auckland took a new turn. In 1964, the Auckland Anarchist Group (AAG) was formed at a large public meeting at the University of Auckland, although the group was not university-based. In the student paper *Craccum*, Jim Hawkins of the AAG was described as a “bearded anarchist bard” and Dwyer an “anarchist firebrand.” The AAG organised a public debate with leading unionists on the subject of the relevance of anarchism to workers. Dwyer also attempted to push anarchism at his workplace, the Hydra Meat Factory.

The AAG held public meetings every Sunday in 1965–6 in Myers Park, the then designated “free speech” area of Auckland. Dwyer was a regular speaker, as were Bruce Babington and John Sanders. Dwyer had a lyrical Irish voice and could be, at his best, a brilliant and fiery orator of the standard of Tim Shadbolt. Dwyer soon found free speech in Myers Park was not so free, as in 1966 he was convicted for using offensive language. While speaking to a crowd of 100 people about anarchism,
Dwyer called the Queen a “bludger,” churches and the YWCA “brothels,” and read a Baxterian poem with “rude” words in it.

Jon Markham remembers Dwyer as:

extremely articulate on occasions. At his best he was a brilliant orator and – in the 1960s – he believed passionately in the possibility of an anarchist revolution and the pivotal role of the ‘instigator’ a la Bakunin. He got bored easily and craved action...He was romantic, sociable, generous...He was a natural stirrer.

Yet later in Britain in about 1973, when Dwyer looked back on his time in Aotearoa, he did not see himself as sociable: “On reflection now I can see I was a sort of Steppenwolf, a lonely and desperate person notwithstanding ideals of a free and co-operative society where the basic dignity of every human being would be acknowledged” (Dwyer, 1986 [1973]). As a way of overcoming this desperation, Dwyer said he “devoted” himself “to the sort of social activities – participating in demonstrations for peace and social justice, contributing articles to papers and addressing meetings – which I believed would bring about a better world for all” (Dwyer, 1986).

As a propagandist, Dwyer was a better orator than a writer. His writing generally lacked the flamboyance of his speeches. Nevertheless, his writing provides some indication of his views. In his 1968 pamphlet, *Anarchy Now!*, he urgently called for an “unceasing battle against authority...every individual must repudiate the claim of anyone else to rule and exploit him [or her]” (Dwyer, 1968: 2). He put forward
a classical view of anarchism, with a few modern twists. He viewed institutions such as capitalism, the state, church, army and police as the “enemy of the people” because they were unnatural institutions imposed from above (Dwyer, 1968: 5-12). He claimed “anarchists were basically socialists in the true sense of the word” and that anarchism was essentially a working class movement. Yet, typical of many sixties anarchists, his view of anarchism was eclectic: he thought that there were no fundamental differences between contradictory anarchist schools, such as anarcho-syndicalism and individualist anarchism (Dwyer, 1968: 27). As such, he viewed anarchism as “primarily a philosophy for the individual” but also argued for “worker control of industry” (Dwyer, 1968: 15-6). His perspective on the revolutionary potential of different groups in society was also eclectic: he saw revolutionary potential in workers, hippies, kibbutzes and students. He claimed “the hippies have many anarchic characteristics – it is not too much to say that many are, basically, anarchists” (Dwyer, 1968: 17). Later Dwyer became a prominent hippy anarchist in Sydney and London.

It appears that the AAG died down after Dwyer moved to Sydney in 1966. Dwyer was not as successful in Auckland as he was in Wellington, and perhaps frustration and restlessness contributed to his departure for Australia. In Australia and England, he caused even more of a stir (see below).

**Anarcho-Cynicalism**

In the mid-1960s, a unique and humorous brand of Australian anarchism called Sydney Libertarianism or “anarcho-cynicalism” took root in Aotearoa. The Sydney Libertarians used the term libertarian at a time when it was still synonymous with anarchism rather than free-market capitalism, so they should not be confused with current neo-liberal “libertarians.” The Sydney Libertarians were called “pessimistic
anarchists” or supporters of “anarchism without ends” because they asserted that a perfect classless and stateless society was impossible, and that there will always be an authoritarian and elitist social structure. Because they maintained an anarchist utopia was unrealistic, they accepted Max Nomad’s notion of “permanent protest” and “permanent opposition” to authority.

They emphasised permanent criticism of the ideologies widespread in society, and small groups trying to live as freely as possible in the here and now – perhaps epitomised in the “Sydney Push,” a vibrant social scene that involved hundreds of people, such as feminist Germaine Greer and art critic Robert Hughes. Sydney Push members are remembered for their sexual freedom, their drinking habits and their off-beat humour (see Coombs 1996 and Moorhouse 1980). The Push prefigured the counter-culture of the late 1960s, yet it was all the more scandalous during a period of sexual repression and suffocating conformity in society – that is, the 1950s and early 1960s.

The Sydney Libertarians sometimes described themselves as a “lumpen-intelligentsia,” and romantically identified with down and outs, yet many of them were academics. They were free-thinkers, combining the views of a wide variety of thinkers like John Anderson (the Sydney philosopher), Marx, Freud, classical anarchist writers, Wilhelm Reich, Vilfredo Pareto, Robert Michels and the renegade Marxist Max Nomad into a complex philosophy of “anarchism, atheism and free love.”

A number of Sydney Libertarians moved to Aotearoa in the mid-1960s. Jim Baker and Alan Olding moved to Hamilton in 1965, and John Matheson and Jane Illife lived in Auckland for a year in 1966. Baker was a central figure in the Sydney Libertarians. Many considered him to be the protégé of John Anderson (see Baker 1979 and 1986 for Baker’s view of Anderson’s philosophy). Baker was the inaugural Professor of Philosophy at the University of Waikato from 1965 to 68. Olding was a lecturer in the same department.

In Hamilton, a small group of five to ten anti-authoritarian academics – including Baker, Olding and Arthur Sewell – and students mockingly analysed events from the beer garden at the Royal Hotel in Hamilton, which they called “critical drinking.” John Murphy, who had been a member of the AA in Wellington, was also involved – he was a politics lecturer at Waikato in the mid- to late 1960s. The historian Michael King, who was a student at Waikato, remembers Baker as:

> a comet that flared briefly over Hamilton’s dullish firmament, [Baker] was clearly the leader of the group. He was a powerhouse of ideas, conversation and off-beat humour, inspired...by doctrines derived from John Anderson of Sydney University, Marx, Sorel, Freud and Reich, in a tradition of philosophic free-thinking (King, 1992: 32).

Baker recollects the grouping was “quite like a small ‘Sydney push’ scene.”

Sydney Libertarianism was also influential in Auckland. As noted previously, Maddock was highly influenced by them. In 1966, Maddock and Terry Keenan formed the short-lived Auckland School of Critical Anarchism – Sydney Libertarians
sometimes called themselves “critical anarchists.”

Sydney Libertarianism was a controversial form of anarchism. They criticised other anarchists for being uncritical, authoritarian, utopian and religious. For example, Maddock criticised Dwyer for quoting a slogan from the Spanish anarchist Buenaventura Durruti at the 1965–6 Auckland conference: “Tactful silence was maintained on the heart-chilling massacres perpetrated by Durruti and his ‘new world’ zealots.” Some Sydney Libertarians viewed Dwyer as a religious fanatic who uncritically “preached” at people in an attempt to “convert” them into a new faith: anarchism.

In return, Dwyer criticised the Sydney Libertarians because he thought they risked becoming “armchair phonies” who shunned any form of activism. Should anarchism be reduced to an intellectual exercise of mocking society from the safety of the pub? English anarchist Albert Meltzer was scornful of the Sydney Libertarians because they rejected traditional working class anarchism and instead opted for a sanitised, quietist middle class philosophical exercise of permanent protest. If there is an “iron law of oligarchy,” as the Sydney Libertarians maintained, I believe there is also a historical tendency for people, and not just a few intellectuals, to rebel against that oligarchy.

The New Zealand Federation of Anarchists

Beyond the informal contact that existed between the Wellington, Hamilton and Auckland anarchist groupings, there were some attempts at formal, national co-ordination. In 1965, Dwyer established the New Zealand Federation of Anarchists. Dwyer was co-ordinating secretary. Two groups were involved, the AA and the AAG, although it appears that the Federation existed more on paper than in actuality. A conference was held over the New Year in 1965–6 near Auckland that Dwyer called the “first annual congress of the New Zealand Federation of Anarchists.” This was probably the first nationwide anarchist conference in Aotearoa. About twenty-five attended the entire week, with a few others dropping in. Talks were given by Maddock, Owen Gager, Butterworth (on utopias), Bill Hall, Dwyer, Droescher and Jim Baker (on Sydney Libertarianism). Another conference was planned for the next year, but it seems that it was not held.

Aftermath: Dwyer the Anarchist Acid Freak

By about 1967, this anarchist tendency had all but vanished. The anarchist groupings split up, especially as people moved overseas. By the late 1960s, no traces of these anarchist groupings were left, which meant there was no continuity between these early anarchist groupings and the later ones of the 1970s. Anarchists in the seventies did not know these groups even existed, apart from one or two rumours.
Many involved in this first wave of anarchism in Aotearoa departed for Australia, where there was a much larger and more vibrant anarchist scene. John Murphy became involved in the Kensington Libertarian scene in Sydney and an occupation at the University of New South Wales. He helped produce scandalous issues of the student paper *Tharunka* for which Wendy Bacon was imprisoned in an “obscenity” trial.

When Dwyer arrived in Sydney in 1966, his carnival anarchist antics took a new twist. He spoke about anarchism in the Domain dressed as a clown, witch and Santa Claus. He also sold LSD. By mid-1968, he was selling 1,000 tabs a week. He was regarded by many Sydney Libertarians as a circus and by many of the more “serious” anarchists as a sham. He alienated many Sydney anarchists and Libertarians because he linked anarchism with LSD – and was said to have equated the two. After he was imprisoned for selling LSD in Sydney, John Murphy queried him from prison about the connection between LSD and anarchism, and he soberly replied:

> There is generally no connection between LSD and the achievement of an anarchist society, but I believe acid is a symbol of the rejection of the status quo, taking the hippies as a good example. My view of the hippies is that they are partly anarchic; they reject the worship of materialism and engage in constant protest against war etc. However I clearly distinguish between my espousal of anarchism and acid. The only direct connection as far as I was concerned was my use of the latter to raise funds for the former…I fully agree with you that the use of any drugs is unlikely to change or greatly affect one’s political opinions, or lack of them.

Yet later, during an acid trial in London, he ecstatically exclaimed LSD did transform people’s lives, and indeed, was *the* key to opening people’s minds, overcoming sexual repression and creating a free civilisation. He claimed LSD was:

> A love machine…I believe that L.S.D. is a wonderful invention and antidote to the cruelty and insensitivity of modern society with its wars, pollution and senseless rush for unnecessary products…I believe L.S.D. is the most revolutionary weapon in the world. A weapon of peace and love (Dwyer, 1986 [1973]).

In Sydney, Dwyer became a key figure in “The Cellar,” which became a sort of anarchist social centre for young hippies. Dwyer’s LSD profits from The Cellar financed anarchist activities and propaganda. He installed an ingenious precaution against police raids. Murphy writes:

> He had a cage of iron bars built in Sydney from which he sold his acid with a self-explosive box, in which he kept the acid tabs he was selling, so that he couldn’t be busted. If the police came into “The Cellar” where he was selling acid and preaching anarchism…he would, theoretically, be inside this iron cage, temporarily unassailable, and would have time to blow up the acid tabs…Ironically, he was busted in the street.
In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many people besides Dwyer believed in the liberatory effects of LSD. This US cartoon was reprinted in the Christchurch underground magazine *Ferret*, 4 (1973).
Police had infiltrated The Cellar dressed as hippies who feigned an interest in anarchism. Dwyer was sentenced to eighteen months for selling LSD. A front-page headline in a tabloid newspaper screamed, “The Rat From the Cellar Has Taken His Longest Trip.” In 1969, the Australian government deported Dwyer to Ireland.

Dwyer soon moved from Ireland to London and became heavily involved in the anarchist, squatting and counter-cultural scenes there. He wrote a column for Freedom and was part of the Anarchy (second series) collective. He changed his name to Bill Ubique Dwyer, and was known as Ubi – meaning everywhere. Dwyer became enthused about the subversive potential of free music festivals after attending the final Isle of Wight Festival in 1970. Some of the 250,000 festival-goers spontaneously tore down security fences and declared a free festival as a reaction to overpriced food and admission tickets, an act that Dwyer believed was a spontaneous example of anarchism in action (see Dwyer and Moss, 1972).

This experience sparked Dwyer into organising the most spectacular act of his political career. He was the founder, and key organiser of, the Windsor Free Festivals of 1972 to 74. George McKay in his Senseless Acts of Beauty (1996) notes that the most subversive aspect of these popular festivals was that they were held in Windsor Great Park under the shadow of one of the British royal family’s estates. It was an effort to “reclaim the commons,” as royalty had enclosed the land for hunting centuries before. A police riot broke up the final festival in 1974. For his part in organising that festival, Dwyer was sentenced for “inciting people to commit a public nuisance,” the first ever conviction for this charge in British history.
Bill Ubi Dwyer with friend in Windsor Park.

Photo: © Al Lyons.
CHAPTER TWO

The Great Era of Radicalisation: The Late 1960s and Early 1970s

The Youthquake, Protest Movement and Strike Wave

A real political, social and cultural ferment existed in Aotearoa/New Zealand by the late 1960s and early 1970s. An anti-establishment movement emerged that swung the political pendulum to the left. This was an international phenomenon. Many people, especially youth, were inspired by working class revolts overseas, particularly the near revolution in France in May-June 1968.

There was a tremendous feeling of liberation, a feeling that “the times were a changin’”, which produced an electrifying spirit of creativity and enthusiasm. Indeed, many felt that “revolution was just around the corner” although that was, in retrospect, an extremely optimistic belief. The unrest was confined to a minority of the population. Nonetheless, it created a renaissance in radical ideas and movements, including anarchism. People revelled in new political ideas and counter-cultural practices. The “sexual revolution” took off. Psychedelic drugs offered a fresh, luminous perspective on the world. People often demanded a “total revolution,” a revolution that was simultaneously social, sexual, cultural, economic and political.

Immediately after the National Government of Keith Holyoake committed New
Zealand troops to Vietnam in 1965, that war became the major focus of protest in Aotearoa. Around 3,000 New Zealand troops fought in Vietnam, of whom 40 were killed. The “movement” started slowly, but grew rapidly by the late 1960s. In mid-1968, inspired by events in France, a combined demonstration of about 6,000 workers, Maori and students converged outside parliament to protest against various issues (namely, the “nil wage order” or wage freeze, the disenfranchisement of Maori land and the proposed US Omega spy-base). The unruly protest occupied parliament grounds against the wishes of union officials and forced the cancellation of the outdoors ceremony to mark the opening of parliament. In 1969, demonstrations against police brutality during protests and police raids against radicals eventually resulted in the liberation of Albert Park in Auckland, a remarkable and spontaneous festival of thousands of people who ignored repressive city council by-laws that banned freedom of speech and political assembly in that park. Thereafter “Jumping Sundays,” as the festivals were called, took place every Sunday in the park. In 1970, police “rioted” at an Auckland protest against visiting US Vice-President Spiro Agnew. Another “police riot” occurred in 1970 at an anti-apartheid march in Wellington that was named the “battle of Willis Street,” resulting in 46 arrests (see Taylor 1970). After the nationwide mobilisations of 1970 to 72, the anti-Vietnam War movement became a genuine mass movement that involved tens of thousands
of people. The largest “mobe” (mobilisation) was in June 1971 when 35,000 people attended protests across the country. Public opinion shifted to opposing the war by the early 1970s.

Demonstrations against the Vietnam War fuelled protest about other issues, such as the US military presence in Aotearoa. Major protests were held against US military bases in Aotearoa in 1968, 71, 72 and 73. The 1968 anti-Omega demonstrations were noteworthy for being successful, in that they helped to stop a US base being built in Aotearoa. The Organisation to Halt Military Service (OHMS) was set up to end compulsory military training, as many young males who had been conscripted into the army feared they would be sent to Vietnam (however, only volunteers fought, not conscripts). OHMS also supported those who refused to be conscripted.

As well, a substantial anti-apartheid movement emerged that focussed upon stopping New Zealand sporting contacts with apartheid South Africa. Anti-apartheid protest was a catalyst for questioning racism in Aotearoa and provided some impetus for the renaissance of the Maori struggle for self-determination in the 1970s. The first Waitangi Day protest of modern times was in 1970. Radical groups like the Polynesian Panthers (formed in 1971) emerged.

By the early 1970s, women’s liberation groups re-emerged. The ecology movement came into being, and gay and lesbian liberation groups were established. With universities becoming less elitist and more open to the working class, a protest culture emerged on campuses. Thousands of university students demonstrated

Left: Organisation to Halt Military Service poster. Eph-E-Peace-Ohms-01, ATL.
against authoritarian university regulations and demanded more say in university affairs. Prisoners insisted on better conditions – there were at least three prison riots in 1970, including a riot at the maximum-security prison at Paremoremo. An anti-psychiatry movement surfaced as well. High school liberation groups were formed. In addition, there was a small but vibrant libertarian schooling movement and in 1970 a free university was established in Auckland.

Contrary to common perception, this revolt was not confined to youth, hippies, students and anti-war protesters – it also involved thousands and thousands of workers. Many workers were annoyed with declining real incomes and the boredom of repetitive work. Consequently, from the late 1960s, strike activity increased markedly for the first time since 1951. By 1968, the temporary class compromise was over. Particularly important was the successful revolt by workers against the Arbitration Court’s attempt to impose a “nil wage order” in 1968. A popular grassroots strike movement, often outside the control of union officials, erupted against the wage
freeze. As a result, capitalists backed down, workers gained a 5% wage increase, and the state’s arbitration system lost credibility. After 1968, unions tended to negotiate with employers directly rather than use the court. As well, workers gained confidence in acting outside official union channels to press their demands.

The late 1960s to the early 1970s represented one of the highest periods of strike activity in Aotearoa’s history, only to be surpassed by the unprecedented strike wave of the mid- to late 1970s. There were many signs of worker dissatisfaction with not only wage-slavery but also unions. Direct action and wildcat strikes became common. Workers sometimes formed “illegal” grassroots organisations such as job and strike committees. These committees were built by workers out of their concrete needs, rather than imposed from above. As workers often found that unions overlooked many important issues on the job, they used these committees to organise “illegal” actions. For instance, a committee might instigate a go-slow over safety issues. Some conflict developed between these independent committees and union bureaucracies after union officials attempted to stamp out this unauthorised action. For example, 400 rank-and-file timberworkers marched on their union office in Rotorua in 1969, demanding the resignation of union bureaucrats they thought were incompetent.

However, this shopfloor militancy was generally muted and sporadic. It did not develop into broader political confrontations as in the mid-1970s, apart from maybe the deregistration of the Seamen’s Union in 1971. The strike wave did not escalate into factory occupations and sit-in strikes as it did in Britain, nor did it erupt into a general strike as it did in Australia in 1969. Further, the strike wave did not develop into a movement that questioned more fundamental questions about capitalism such as the lack of democracy in the workplace, although some pushed for workers’ self-management.

Therefore by the early 1970s – Aotearoa was then a few years behind the Western world – an astonishingly broad movement, or series of movements, emerged that...
questioned almost every form of authority in society. A generation seemed to be in revolt – although only a small minority were involved. Aotearoa was then run by a very conservative business elite. Farmers were prominent in the economy and the government. New Zealand culture was seen as terribly stultifying, conformist, racist and sexist. Chris Wheeler, who produced the infamous underground magazine *Cock* and was a member of the Wellington Committee on Vietnam, described New Zealand as a:

> proto-fascist, National Party-run, RSA foreign-policied, 6’oclock swill, Rugby/Racing/Beer lunatic asylum…The Old Left and the Young Left…were sick to the back teeth with the bloody grey old men running the place…We were fish swimming in a sea of rebellion against old, grey, warmongering, RSA, Keith Holyoake New Zealand.

In general, the radical student and youth movement questioned the lack of democracy and the quality of life (or alienation) in society. The welfare state, relative “affluence” (for most Pakeha, but not for most Maori and Pacific people) and full employment meant that most people’s basic material needs were fulfilled. Hence people could question other issues, such as people’s lack of control of their everyday lives. Grant McDonagh, an important figure in the anarchist/situationist milieu of the mid-1970s, maintains there was:

> profound disillusionment with society…There was specifically disillusionment with the Vietnam War, with capitalism and with work. [I] Hated work. Work is forced labour, just another form of slavery really. And there was this general kind of free-floating idea of a better society that was out there. LSD was part of that.

**The Later New Left and Anarchism**

During this period, anarchists generally took part in the New Left rather than put their energy into forming separate anarchist groups. Hence for the sake of this book it is important to outline the New Left and its relationship with libertarian socialism. The “later New Left” of the late 1960s and early 1970s differed from the “early New Left” of the early and mid-1960s. It was more lively, exuberant and less intellectual when compared with the early New Left. The later New Left was more of a loose, informal political scene; it rejected formal, highly structured groups.

The later phase of the New Left was a product of the protest movement, and in particular, the often acrimonious split between militants and moderates in that movement. The big debate within the movement was over whether to mobilise as many people as possible – from all classes and backgrounds – around specific issues, or whether to provoke, disrupt and confront authority. New Leftists had been radicalised by their experiences on demonstrations, and so were sceptical of moderate approaches. They claimed the “mobes” were necessary, but tended to
New Leftist satire of the *People’s Voice*, paper of the Communist Party of New Zealand.

be passive, solemn processions that lacked radical content. They preferred to push
the limits of acceptable protest, and make action more effective than a stroll down
the street. So they took direct action against specific targets, especially against targets
relating to the Vietnam War, such as US bases, embassies, consulates and warships,
as well as New Zealand army recruiting centres. What is more, they were frustrated
by the attempts of older leftists to stifle and control their activity. To be fair, however,
most New Leftists wanted both mass mobilisation and disruption. Hence they often
helped out with the “mobes” while still organising their own direct actions.

There were many other tensions in the movement as well: between liberals and
Leninists, between different Leninist groups, and between older leftists and radical
youth (especially over Old Left opposition to counter-cultural lifestyles, and counter-
cultural opposition to the “straight” lifestyles of most older leftists).

Rather than present a broad-ranging account of the movement, I shall concentrate
on its anarchistic wing. Many people have asserted that the New Left was implicitly
anarchist. They note that the New Left was for workers’ and student control, was
sceptical of leaders and political parties, and took direct action. Furthermore, the
New Left thought the Old Left was out of touch, dogmatic, unimaginative and
authoritarian. Cock, for example, asserted “that the only threat offered by the Comms
to the National Party’s stability was that of boredom.”

A good example of the anarchistic wing of the New Left in action was during the
second Radical Activists Congress in Wellington in 1970. They colourfully and
successfully disrupted the grand debate of the Congress, titled “Mao or Trotsky:
which way forward for the New Zealand revolution?” CHAFF summed it up: the
debate was “obviously doomed to be a riot as the ideologies displayed their wares to
the derision of the anarchist/hippy/yippie/jesus freak coalition.” Murray Horton
of the Christchurch PYM remembers it as the “Communist Party men in grey suits
fighting the bloody Socialist Action League...We were the anarchists up the back
and we were literally throwing stuff.” Pat Kelly of the expelled Wellington branch of
the CPNZ said that the “juvenile” disruptors should have their pants pulled down
and their bottoms smacked.

However, I believe it is mistaken to over-emphasise the anarchistic qualities of the
New Left. The New Left was a loose, non-sectarian movement that borrowed from
many different philosophies. Often New Leftists playfully picked up slogans from
anarchism, from liberalism and from Marxism, and mixed them together. This meant
that the New Left whipsawed between the three ideologies. It could be patently anti-
authoritarian one day, and exalt “third world” dictatorships such as China the next.
Its inspiring internationalism was mixed with anti-US nationalism. Its anti-capitalist
streak was muddled up with its championing of state capitalist regimes in the third
world.

Therefore by the late 1960s many youth had participated in exhilarating direct
action, had experienced police brutality, had become radicalised and had found
Leninism to be stale and hierarchical. Yet few notable libertarian socialist groups
were formed. This was possibly because the later New Left was not concerned with
theoretical reflection, but with action. New Leftists placed supreme importance on what they were doing. As Richard Suggate notes, “The anarchists were more interested in organising media events and direct action – burning effigies, occupying buildings etc.” Only a few New Leftists openly identified with anarchism – or Marxism, for that matter. It was not until the mid-1970s that an organised nationwide anarchist movement emerged. Peace researcher Owen Wilkes notes that when people talked about anarchism during the late sixties and early seventies, “It was small-a anarchism they were referring to – ie. anarchy rather than an ism...Very few would have a clue what [theoretically heavy big-A] Anarchism was about.”

An example of this was the high school anarchists in the New Zealand Secondary Schools Students Association (NZSSSA) in the early 1970s. Richard Bolstad, an anarchist within the NZSSSA, recollects that about thirty NZSSSA members identified with the rebellious label anarchist, but they did not know much about that tradition. Nevertheless, the NZSSSA marched against the war and apartheid, and opposed rigid school regulations. They aimed for student-teacher control of schools. Phuck, an illegal underground high school magazine, wrote “Phuck the Establishment! Long Live the High School Revolution!” Big issues in the schoolplace were compulsory religion, strict dress codes, long hair – often males were not allowed to grow their hair long – and the lack of democracy.

The Shock of the New:
The Progressive Youth Movement

The Progressive Youth Movement (PYM) stormed on to the stage in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The PYM used innovative direct action to generate publicity and controversy. The media created a myth about the PYM. For example, the Christchurch PYM organised a free rock concert at which 500 turned up. Yet the media reported that the PYM had 500 members! The PYM exploited, and sometimes tried to live up to, this myth. By 1969, the PYM had replaced the “red peril” of “communism” as public enemy number one. Labour and National politicians blasted the PYM. In 1969, the National candidate for Palmerston North claimed that the PYM was “no different from, and certainly no better than, the Hitler Youth” (Evening Post, 22 Nov. 1969).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the PYM was perhaps the most well-known, notorious, and militant radical youth political group in the country. However, other youth-dominated radical organisations, such as the anti-apartheid group HART (Halt All Racist Tours), OHMS and the Trotskyist Socialist Action League (SAL), were probably more effective and influential than the PYM.

The tabloid New Zealand Truth claimed that the PYM was “communist” led, and thus “communists” were exploiting New Zealand youth. Yet the PYM differed from centre to centre. Richard Suggate of the Wellington PYM notes, “The Auckland PYM...[was] most dominated by the CPNZ and the Christchurch PYM the least. In
Auckland PYM “Youth Manifesto,” 1969. According to Bill Lee of the Auckland PYM, it was a toned down version of a leaflet that was originally written by Auckland anarchists. The PYM swapped “fuck” in the original for “damn.”
practice, the Christchurch PYM was the most spontaneist and non-hierarchical – a good dose of ‘yippieism’ mixed with the leftism.” It is also impossible to speak of the PYM as a nationwide organisation as it was never organised into a national body. Each PYM branch was autonomous. Besides Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, PYM branches were set up in Whangarei, Hamilton, Rotorua, Kawerau, Hawkes Bay and Palmerston North. Documentation about the PYM has concentrated upon the activity of the PYM and has overlooked its often anarchic spirit (see, for instance, the otherwise excellent video Rebels in Retrospect). In this section, I focus on both the Wellington and Christchurch PYMs, because they had an influential anarchist presence within them.

There was some dissent within the Auckland PYM. An article in Earwig noted that some "Rebel PYMers” attempted to form an Auckland PYM that was not under the control of the CPNZ. Earwig, 8½ (c. 1973).

The Auckland PYM was the unofficial youth organisation of the Maoist CPNZ. It was known to many as the “junior CPNZ.” It was the first, largest and longest running PYM (1965–77). It gained much notoriety after numerous incidents, including a scuffle with police at a demo in 1967 outside the US Consul’s residence in Paritai Drive in which a policeman was pushed over a cliff, occupying a US warship and being charged with “inciting violence and disorder” for publishing a recipe for Molotov cocktails in one of its magazines. In the late 1960s, the Auckland PYM was an exceedingly active protest group and it attracted many young people into its ranks. However, because of its Maoist ideology and its ban on drug taking, not everyone was attracted to it; indeed, there was some tension between the wider Auckland New Left and the Auckland PYM (see Boraman 2002).
THE GREAT ERA OF RADICALISATION

It is difficult to give the Auckland PYM much space in a book about libertarian socialism. However, it should be noted that the Auckland PYM was often at the centre of events in Auckland. It helped push movements in a more radical direction, despite the efforts of moderate leftists to control and repress its actions. And, as shall be explained below, many rank-and-file Maoists during this time were anarchistic. For example, the Auckland PYM anarchically stated:

We believe that parliament is a fraud…We believe that working people should build up movements and organisations outside parliament to represent their interests, struggle for their needs, and build the kind of society that serves the interests of the working people…DON’T VOTE, STRUGGLE! (“Presenting the Parliamentary Circus,” Auckland PYM leaflet, c. 1976).

In the late 1960s, especially after the inspiring near revolution in France in 1968, it became fashionable to talk of a worker-student alliance. It is important to note that the PYM was unique when compared with the New Left overseas, in that the PYM was not campus-based, apart from the Wellington PYM. The Auckland PYM was a working class youth group, and the Wellington and Christchurch PYMs were worker-student groups. Richard Hill, one of the founders of the Christchurch PYM, remembers it was explicitly formed as a joint worker-student group, and so it was established off-campus, in contrast with the campus-based Radical Students’ Alliance. The Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch PYMs had links with the militant wing of the union movement. The Christchurch PYM had an alliance with the Lyttelton branch of the Seamen’s Union. The Christchurch PYM supported the Seamen when they were deregistered in 1971, and the Seamen often supported the PYM. For instance, Lyttelton Seamen routed the Outcasts bikie gang when the bikies attempted to disrupt an anti-Vietnam War demonstration in 1969, knocking out Outcasts leader “Filthy Phil” in the process (see Locke 1992: 224-6).

Yet these cases of co-operation between workers and radical youth were sporadic. The PYM and the New Left generally focussed their attack upon international issues, such as Vietnam, apartheid and so on. They tended to overlook domestic class struggle – although many New Leftists experienced a dawning awareness of the importance of class, and supported various workers and union demonstrations. Overall, I believe the youth movement was largely a reaction to the rigid social conservatism and puritanical traditional moral codes that pervaded Aotearoa at the time, rather than a movement against capital. Some New Leftists viewed class struggle as outdated, and instead asserted that youth, students and hippies constituted a new revolutionary class.

Photo: © Dave Wickham, D. Wickham Collection, PAColl-4944-01, ATL.

The Wellington PYM produced a children’s colouring book that did not paint the police, the government and capitalists in a good light.
The Wellington PYM stood for VUWSA student elections in 1970 under the Radical Activists Ticket (RAT). They were unsuccessful and George Fyson of the SAL criticised their campaign for lacking radical content. From left to right: Richard Suggate; Tony Larsen; Lesley Jacobs; Matt Bennett; Therese O’Connell; Bill Logan; and Evan Thomas. *Salient*, 5 Aug. 1970.

The Wellington PYM

The second version of the Wellington PYM was formed in 1969 by Sally Lake (a much smaller CPNZ-sympathetic Wellington PYM was founded earlier in 1965, yet it had disappeared by about early 1968). The Wellington PYM had a shorter life and was smaller in size, with a core of about twenty members, than both the Christchurch and Auckland PYMs. The Wellington PYM was held together by taking direct action, primarily against the Vietnam War and apartheid. “There were a whole lot of us who were into making trouble,” explains Tony Larsen. It was responsible for umpteen demonstrations, including the first stunts specifically designed for TV cameras in Aotearoa when Wellington PYMers burnt an effigy of Nixon outside Holyoake’s home in 1970. It organised weekly protests against the Vietnam War outside the South Vietnamese Consulate, protests that were part of their unsuccessful campaign to shut down that consulate – the Wellington City Council attempted to outlaw these demonstrations by passing by-laws. Wellington PYMers broke into the South African Consulate in 1970, distributing anti-Springbok tour leaflets around the office. As well, the Wellington PYM launched a campaign against poor housing conditions and exorbitant rents in the inner-city Wellington area. They also distributed free firewood to pensioners.

A Wellington PYM leaflet epitomised the spirit and the agenda of the New Left:

> the oldies are fucked in the head...we’re freaking them out in the streets/everything is happening and nothing is happening...PYM. wants headmasters kicked out. apprenticeships ended. free grog, grass and contraceptives. cheap rents and records. prices frozen. factories controlled by the workers. american bases kicked out of New Zealand. the land to belong to all New Zealanders, not just a few. the troops out of South East Asia. the cops controlled. no ties with apartheid. an end to racial discrimination in New Zealand. John Bower freed. Holyoake and Muldoon beheaded. parliament blown up (“PYM Owes Government $350,” 1971).
The Wellington PYM’s energy and imagination was its main attraction. Richard Suggate of the Wellington PYM has said:

People were attracted to the [Wellington] PYM because there was a group actually involved in direct action of sorts as distinct from rather passive demonstrations...And a belief...by individuals that if they got involved in that sort of action that they could effect change – more so than just the more mass movement type of activities...We were just for whatever action that was going to make the maximum amount of publicity or impact.

The Wellington PYM had little emphasis upon theory. For example, Roger Cruickshank, an anarchist within the Wellington PYM, used to quote Yippee Abbie Hoffman that “ideology is a brain disease.” Cruickshank was so opposed to programmes that in 1971 he declared the Wellington PYM “dead” after they set up membership fees and adopted an anarchistic manifesto that aimed for workers’ control. The manifesto was “addressed to all young people who are opposed to authoritarian policies and prepared to rebel against authority.” Yet overall Tony Larsen claims the Wellington PYM was not concerned with formal political programmes or formal organisation; instead it was “wonderfully anti-everything with a few utopian glimmers.”

The Wellington PYM was not CPNZ-dominated. There were a few Communist Party members in the Wellington PYM but they had limited influence. The CPNZ members in the Wellington PYM unsuccessfully attempted to stop the drug taking of other PYM members. The CPNZ viewed the Wellington PYM as an ill-disciplined rabble. In response, and to poke fun at the Auckland PYM’s publication PYM Rebel, the Wellington PYM named its magazine PYM Rabble.

Overall, the Wellington PYM was a loose mix of Maoists, Trotskyists of the Spartacist League, anarchists, bohemians and radical leftists without any ideological commitments. Suggate notes, “Wgtn PYM...had CPNZ/Trot/Anarchist sympathisers within it. Marxism was more popular than anarchism because PYM was ‘new left’ in orientation. Anarchism was as old as the ‘old left.’ Cohn-Bendit would be the most popular philosopher.” Daniel Cohn-Bendit was a prominent anarchist during the French uprising in 1968 (see Cohn-Bendit, 1968).

By 1972, the Wellington PYM had faded away. According to the Christchurch PYM magazine Rag-Tag Rabble-Rousing Mickey Mouse Stuff, the Wellington PYM died “after it was reduced to an unholy marriage between, incredibly, Maoists and Anarchists” and claimed that the Anarchist Brigade, which involved Cruickshank, had picked up on its decomposed

Roger Cruickshank.
remains. *Rag-Tag* also reported some ex-PYMers had pulled off a takeover of the Victoria University National Party Club. A large crowd of “hairys” descended on the meeting and outvoted the two “Young Nats” who were present. Suggate was elected chairman and immediately the “Young Nats” called for “workers’ and peasants’ soviets to be set up throughout NZ” (as reported in the *Dominion*, 6 May 1972). There was an attempt by anarchist Peter McCormick to re-form the Wellington PYM in 1972, but little eventuated from it.

**The Christchurch PYM**

The Christchurch PYM was an amazingly dynamic protest group. From 1969 to 1971, monthly, if not weekly, demonstrations were the norm. It brawled with police, burnt US flags at demos, marched against police brutality, the Vietnam War and the Security Intelligence Service, cut down the goalposts on Lancaster Park before a trial rugby match as a protest against sporting contact with South Africa in 1970, staged a 5-day hunger strike by Grant Mawson for peace in the Square in 1970, hung a US flag decorated with swastikas from the Cathedral balcony and then threw anti-Vietnam War leaflets into the Square in 1970 and carried out a sit-in at the local army recruiting centre in the same year. They also performed some stunts, such as burning money: “If society finds it acceptable to burn land, books, people’s homes, people themselves, why can’t we burn money…Please commit this minor symbolic act of anarchy – it’s for a good cause; the abolition of money” (“Fire!,” Christchurch PYM leaflet, n.d.). The Christchurch PYM even had its own “junior PYM” in the form of the Christchurch branch of the NZSSSA, the secondary school student group, whose members were also mainly anarchist at that stage.

Undoubtedly, the Christchurch PYM’s most controversial deed was laying a wreath “to the victims of fascism in Vietnam” during the Anzac Day ceremonies of the early 1970s. This act enraged the mayor Ron Guthrey and other members of the Returned Servicemen’s Association (RSA). Scuffles with RSA members resulted.

The Christchurch PYM argued that the times called for a:

> new militancy – in the streets, in the factories, in the universities, in the schools – everywhere. There must be more action, more sabotage, more involvement, more education…We are the vanguard of this country’s revolutionary youth. By uniting young people we can win (“Wanted – A New Militancy,” Christchurch PYM leaflet, 1969).

On first impression, the activities of the Christchurch PYM seem confrontational. However, Murray Horton of the Christchurch PYM cautions that their strategy was to “provoke and shock more than confront.” Horton continues that the Christchurch PYM did not go out and “charge head first at lines of policemen, which is what I see as confronting…Confront with something, not necessarily physically confront because the odds were against us.” The Christchurch PYM stated:
We believe in action. Naturally the press distorts our efforts to push accepted standards of protest to their furthermost limits. Our aim is now to channel the latent energy available in the giant mobilisations into more effective protest action (wurzil, hog [Tony Currie] and bloflee [Murray Shaw], Christchurch PYM Report on Activities etc. 1969–1971, c. late 1971).

In 1969, with nationwide hatred of the PYM at its zenith, the Christchurch PYM launched the “white bikes scheme.” This was a copy of a scheme first proposed by the Provos, a Dutch carnival anarchist group. It involved painting a number of bikes white, and declaring them public property so anybody could pick them up and ride them. Theoretically, once somebody finished riding a white bike, they would leave it on the footpath or in a bike stand for someone else to use. The proposal was a provocative affront to private property and pollution, and it seemed highly appropriate to flat, smoggy Christchurch. The public were shocked: here was a novel, seemingly harmless, constructive idea from the PYM. The PYM took the proposal to the Christchurch City Council, and the CCC carried out some feasibility studies, but they ultimately stonewalled it. An editorial in the Christchurch Press objected to the
Christchurch PYMers about to lay the PYM wreath to the “victims of fascism in Vietnam” during the Anzac Day ceremony, Christchurch, 25 April 1970. Murray Horton (left) holds the wreath. 
*Canta End of Year Supplement, 1972.*

Conflict during the 1972 Christchurch Anzac Day ceremony. 
*Christchurch Star, 26 April 1972.*
proposal on the grounds that if it failed the “P.Y.M. could always retrieve its fleet to form a mobile brigade of mounted demonstrators.”

The Christchurch PYM was the primary organiser of the important protests against the US military installations in the South Island at Woodbourne and Mount John. The Mount John demo in 1972 was one of the most spectacular protests in New Zealand history. Peace researcher and “honorary” Christchurch PYMer Owen Wilkes had discovered that the Mount John US Air Force satellite tracking station probably would be used in the event of a nuclear war (see Wilkes 1973). Around 300 protesters converged on Mount John, a remote mountain near Lake Tekapo in South Canterbury. The site soon resembled a bloody war zone as police assaulted protesters on the mountaintop with police dogs, causing many wounds. One protester was bitten on his penis. Many more were injured as they fled down the rocky mountainside. Tony Mansfield, in charge of the Dunedin Anarchist Army’s medical unit, claimed he treated three-dozen protesters for injuries, of which ten were serious. In retaliation, protesters sabotaged the only access road to the spy-
base. The Mount John “rock festival” commenced. Demonstrators wheeled huge boulders and rocks onto the road. It took bulldozers to clear it.

The SAL took a strong dislike to the Christchurch PYM. The SAL viewed them as impatient and infantile “ultra-leftists.” One PYMer managed to get hold of a secret SAL report on the PYM, wherein the SAL called them “rag-tag rabble-rousing Mickey Mouse stuff.” Hence the Christchurch PYM launched – in honour of such a description – a magazine of that name.

The majority of Christchurch PYMers, such as Murray Horton and Dave Welch, identified with anarchism. Horton notes that the “Christchurch PYM... had an anarchist bent (the CPNZ didn’t like us) but not in any organisationally definable way...We defined ourselves as Left libertarians.” Richard Bolstad of the Christchurch PYM writes, “The Christchurch PYM consisted mainly of people who would have described themselves as anarchists.” Horton was one of the main characters in the Christchurch PYM; Welch remembers him “as the nearest thing to Shadbolt in the South Island.” Speaking at Shirley Boys High School in 1971, Horton divided protesters into two camps, the first being those who aimed for Revolution with a capital R, which he equated with Marxism, and the second being those who aimed for freedom, which he equated with the PYM. This speech was Bolstad’s introduction to the PYM.

Yet overall, the Christchurch PYM is best described as a New Left group rather
than an anarchist one. A hallmark of the New Left was its theoretical eclecticism. In 1972, Welch wrote in the student paper *Canta*, “The [Christchurch] PYM message was extremely vague. This was inevitable in a group orientated towards action and not to ideology...If PYM has a collective philosophy it is one that steals from every political doctrine.” As Bolstad writes, “All political divisions [within the Christchurch PYM] were secondary to having a good time!”

The Christchurch PYM thought that a well-defined theoretical stand would make their actions less effective and put a brake on their energy. Wilkes writes:

> I agree that the NZ ‘new left’...was theoretically vague. But this was also its great strength. It was unconstrained by ideology, and could move from issue to issue with a speed and vigour which often left the establishment reeling, and which was very effective, and which I believe accounts for much of the success of the NZ left...When I went to Scandinavia in 1976 I was very impressed by all the high quality theoretical journals that the left published, but then I discovered that the left was so bogged down in ideology and theoretical debate that it never accomplished anything.

However, the Christchurch PYM did publish a few manifestos in which they opposed private property, money, racism, apartheid and foreign military bases, and supported such things as total revolution, workers’ councils, the Black Panthers,
the National Liberation Front in Vietnam and the “introduction of liberal law reforms relating to such things as contraception, abortion, censorship, drugs and homosexuality” (Journal of the Christchurch PYM, 1 (Oct. 1969): 6).

Like many groups of the period, the eclecticism of Christchurch PYM could lead to some confusion. For example, in one manifesto, they supported the abolition of private property and “worker control of industry, student-teacher control of schools and universities” and then claimed in another “all land will be taken by the State.” Such a view was shared by the Auckland PYM. But from an anarcho-syndicalist viewpoint, workers’ and student control is incompatible with state ownership, as the state is a fundamentally coercive and hierarchical body. Perhaps this lack of coherent theory was one factor that contributed to around half of the Christchurch PYM becoming sympathetic to Maoism, as shall be outlined later.

In 1973, the Christchurch PYM faded away. Yet a year later, there was an attempt to re-form it. An anonymous article stated, “The important thing is that its policies will be determined by the people in it, not by outside forces or internal dominators ie. leaders or hierarchies” (Assistance, 27 March 1974: 2). This raises the issue of the way decisions were made in the PYM. Welch remembers, “For an organisation that espoused equality there was a lot of subtle hierarchy and autocracy.” Although there was a hierarchy and a few strong leaders like Horton and Rooney, he has stressed it was overall run on an anti-bureaucratic and democratic basis. “If people,” Welch continues, “did not like his [Horton’s] particular idea, they would say so and it would be discussed and either be dropped or adopted.” There was no compulsion to follow leaders or to take part in actions one disagreed with. Horton has written, “We had meetings, there were leaders…but democratic consensus was the procedure. I doubt if women got a fair hearing.”

From Protest to Resistance: The Resistance Bookshops and Anarchism

There were important Resistance bookshops in Auckland (1969–74), Wellington (1970–7) and Christchurch (1972–c.77). There was also a Resistance bookstall in Dunedin (1973–4), which was an attempt to eventually set up a Dunedin Resistance bookshop, but this did not eventuate. The Resistance bookshops represented a new, more constructive phase – the Resistance era – in the later New Left, away from the more oppositional protest tactics of the PYM towards a more educational and long-term strategy. Wellington and Christchurch Resistance bookshops largely grew directly out of the Wellington and Christchurch PYMs respectively.

The ideal of Resistance was to be a non-sectarian centre for left-wing radical activity. It did not organise as a separate political entity, but was supposedly a neutral umbrella organisation for other radical groups. Farrell Cleary of Auckland Resistance writes:
Resistance seemed to incarnate New Left zeitgeist, owing as much to the American yippies as it did to Cohn-Bendit. We hoped to bypass the kind of doctrinal splits between Marxism and Anarchism which had riven the revolutionary left for a century...Meetings were run according to what we fancied were Maori tikanga with no chair and no interruptions of whoever was speaking.

An article in Critic stated “the various Resistance shops...[are] generally ‘new left’ in political colour, there are generally Anarchist and Marxist overtones without a specific commitment” (Critic, 10 July 1973).

They were not just bookshops. They also provided printing facilities, meeting rooms, organised food co-ops, operated a library and so on. Their facilities were used by a wide-range of activists and groups, including women’s liberation groups, high school liberation groups, the anti-conscription group OHMS and tenants’ protection groups. As such, Resistance was a hive of activity. Although Resistance did not aim to organise activity themselves, they sometimes did so in an informal, ad-hoc manner. This was particularly the case for Auckland Resistance...
in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Auckland Resistance stalwarts were often at the centre of protest activity in Auckland during this period, such as the liberation of Albert Park. Auckland Resistance became a focal point for Auckland’s young “independent left” or New Left, who, unlike the Auckland PYM, were not aligned with any political party.

Some people lived at the shops, and Resistance became a social centre for a broad-range of activists. Sue Lee from Wellington Resistance has said “I remember it as being quite a buzz…it was really good. There were always people in and out. In some ways, it didn’t focus on the bookshop, but on the people who were there as far as I remember.”

The Resistance era was pivotal in the anarchist revival of the 1970s. It represented the first time a wide-range of anarchist and libertarian Marxist literature was made available in Aotearoa during the era of the New Left (by libertarian Marxist, I mean Marxists who reject not only the state as an avenue to change society, but also the authoritarian Leninist vanguard party). Before then, anarchist and libertarian Marxist material was extremely difficult to acquire. The bookshops carried the full ideological spectrum of the left on their shelves, so libertarian socialist publications sat alongside Stalinist books such as the two-volume *Short Biography of Kim Il Sung* about the North Korean dictator.

There was significant anarchist involvement in the Resistance bookshops. At one stage, all the Resistance bookshops were managed by anarchists: Graeme Minchin in Auckland (1973–4); David Homes, Andrew Dodsworth and Sue Lee in Wellington; and Richard Bolstad in Christchurch. The Dunedin bookstall involved
Dave Welch, Malcolm Gramaphone and the Harold brothers, Alan and Dennis, both of whom later took part in the Auckland anarchist milieu. Dave Welch remembers the Harold brothers as a “lovely bunch of lively bohemians.” Richard Suggate, a key figure in Wellington Resistance from 1970 to 75, where he was manager for much of the time, was sympathetic to anarchism and later became an anarchist in Sydney during the mid-1970s. Suggate, comparing the PYM with Resistance, has written “each PYM had members that were explicitly anarchistic in behaviour even if they did not identify themselves as such. The anarchist influence emerged more strongly in the Resistance bookshops [than in the PYM].”

Anarchist groupings emerged from the demise of the Auckland and Wellington Resistance bookshops. Anarchists from Auckland Resistance established Solidarity in Auckland, and the anarchists who congregated around Wellington Resistance, such as Dodsworth and Lee, helped to form a short-lived anarcho-situationist groupuscule that produced KAT magazine in 1978 (see Chapter Four). Anarchists in Auckland and Wellington inherited many of the resources of the Resistance bookshops. For example, Wellington Resistance’s Tom Fanthorpe Memorial Library, a library of radical material from Aotearoa, was inherited by Wellington anarchists. It was named after the mythical spokesperson of the Wellington PYM – they used to tell the media that Tom Fanthorpe was responsible for the Wellington PYM’s actions, when no such figure existed.

Yet this is not to overestimate the anarchist current in Resistance. Typical of the New Left, Resistance was a loose amalgam of druggy, hippy, Marxist and anarchist elements. The influence of these elements varied over time. For example, in the early years of Wellington Resistance, Suggate remembers, “both Stalinism and Anarchism were less popular tendencies...Mao to Trotsky was considered the most popular political range...direct action anarchism and druggism co-existed with Marxism from 1970 onwards.” Yet the anarchist influence became more pronounced in later years. “You could say [after about 1972] that it was kind of like 50% drug culture, 50% politics, I mean sort of left anarchist politics in terms of its orientation,” said Suggate. Andrew Dodsworth, who became involved in Wellington Resistance in 1975, notes that from 1975 to 1977 “I did most of the ordering for [Wellington] Resistance, and probably did move the general trend in a vaguely anarchist direction,” although Resistance retained its broad, non-sectarian range of stock. Auckland Resistance’s top sellers were the Little Red Schoolbook and Shadbolt’s Bullshit and Jellybeans. Besides the anarchist groups, many other groups emerged from Resistance, such as the left-nationalist group, the Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa – although CAFCA can also be seen as a partial outgrowth of the Christchurch PYM. The Christchurch Resistance Bookshop and Action Centre eventually moved in a more Maoist direction in the mid-1970s, and was renamed the Christchurch People’s Union.

The Resistance bookshops tended to fade away once the protest movement lost its steam. In times of a large protest movement, people could easily come together and unite around various causes, and so non-sectarian centres were valuable
assets in such a climate. Yet once these issues waned, people retreated into their own groupings, and no longer used nor needed Resistance facilities. For example, they developed their own printing resources. Consequently, as Graeme Whimp of Auckland Resistance has said, that bookshop could be seen as “an attempt to build an organisation without doing the ideological spadework.”

The Underground Press

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the underground press flourished in Aotearoa. No less than eight major underground papers were published – *Cock, Earwig, Counter-Culture Free Press, Ferret, Uncool, Midnight Rider, PD Barb* and *Itch*. As well, a number of “anti-establishment” campus-based publications emerged in the same period. The underground press was anti-authoritarian in tone and so a brief overview is necessary here.
Heather McInnes and John Milne edited and printed *Earwig* (1969–73), an Auckland-based underground magazine. *Earwig* was hippyish, with a “peace and love” view of revolution. Its content ranged from poetry and short stories to stories about marijuana and women’s liberation. In *The Earwig Free Blurb*, *Earwig* described its stance as anarchist. Milne, who was later involved in the Public Services Association, certainly knew about anarchism, and some regarded McInnes and Milne as “hippy anarchists.” *Counter-Culture Free Press* (1972–4) was the most explicitly anarchist underground publication. It was edited by Malcolm Gramaphone in Waitati (see below for an overview).

*Cock* was the most effective underground magazine. It was based in Wellington and ran for seventeen issues from 1967 to 1973. The main aim of *Cock* was to expose the absurdities and scandals of the New Zealand system, to “help overthrow the NZ government – by ridicule.” Chris Wheeler, the editor, has commented, “The ‘51 lockout had provided the example of what could be done with a simple little

printing press hidden away in someone’s basement.”

*Cock* irreverently targeted the leadership of the National Party, the SIS (Security Intelligence Service, an “intelligence agency” of the government), Christian puritans, the RSA, the Rugby Union and the culture of “rugby, racism and beer” for colourful lampoon. It published lists of SIS staff and the secret telephone number of the SIS, forcing them to change their number. Wheeler has described the overall tone of *Cock* as anarchistic and anti-authoritarian, but he was also influenced by many other sources, including Camus’ philosophy of the absurd. Therefore his political stance was “stupidity rules”: to treat those in authority as absurd and to laugh at them. *Cock* ridiculed all political parties (National, Labour and Values), trade union bureaucrats and the sometimes hilarious antics of, and expulsions from, the Leninist sects.

Like much of the New Left, the underground press was anti-authoritarian in nature – apart from its sexism – but it was not anti-capitalist. Its audience was limited to youth, students and hippies. Its political agenda was confined to calls for a less
repressive society (especially in its demands for freedom of speech and the abolition of censorship); it did not really question the fundamental inequalities that underlie society. Nevertheless, it provided many youth with an exciting and alternative take on the world.

Third Worldism and Direct Action Maoism

By the early 1970s, a small minority within the New Left were drawn into Leninist parties, particularly the Maoist ones. The majority of Christchurch PYMers, for instance, were originally anarchists and opposed to the CPNZ; yet by 1972, many of them became sympathetic to Maoism and the Communist Party – although only a few actually became members of the CPNZ. Richard Bolstad has stated, “Maoism started in the [Christchurch] PYM almost as a joke. All of us had Mao badges because the [Communist] party supplied them for free, and it was a bit like bikers wearing swastikas as far as the reaction it evoked in conservative New Zealanders.”

Maoism was more influential in Aotearoa relative to other countries because the main Leninist party in Aotearoa – the CPNZ – was Maoist. Frank Prebble, a central figure in the anarchist movement of the 1970s, has claimed that in that decade the Maoists had an image of “being more anarchist than the anarchists.” Maoism in Aotearoa, particularly the CPNZ’s brand of it, was paradoxical. On the one hand, the CPNZ was an ostensibly authoritarian Stalinist party. The CPNZ’s bureaucratic and hierarchical structure mirrored the prevailing capitalist and state structures that it sought to replace. The CPNZ supported dictatorships like China, pushed for a nationalist alliance between the working class and New Zealand capitalists against foreign capital, and crudely equated nationalisation with socialism. On the other hand, in the early 1970s the CPNZ was going through a somewhat anarchistic phase: it encouraged working class direct action (within certain limits however, as the party aimed to guide and control that action), was critical of union bureaucrats, viewed parliament as a bourgeois circus, talked of workers’ control, pushed for more militant protests and discouraged union officials from joining the party. This has been called “direct action Maoism.” Dave Welch, a Christchurch PYMer who moved from anarchism to (non-party) Maoism, remembers, “I now think it is an atrocious disaster in China but I still liked him [Mao]...They [the Maoists] were very idealistic.” Reflecting on his time in the Christchurch People’s Union – Christchurch Resistance was renamed the People’s Union in the mid-1970s – he described Maoism as
“almost religious” with a strong moral commitment to “serving the poor.”

It may seem remarkable from today’s perspective that so many well-meaning radicals supported one of the greatest horror stories of history – like Stalin, Mao’s regime killed millions of peasants and workers. Yet in the late 1960s and early 1970s, most knew little of what the Chinese regime was actually like, and many believed that the Maoist regime was decentralised, anti-bureaucratic and classless. Richard Bolstad of the Christchurch NZSSSA, PYM and Resistance remembers:

The crap that was coming in about what was going on in China was just incredible…I mean you’d think it was bloody utopia already the way that people would talk about it, they’d go over there…and they’d talk even more about how wonderful it was and how it sounded like an anarchist paradise.

Criticism of China from an anarchist – or left communist or Trotskyist – perspective was either ignored or treated with hostility. An example of this was Bolstad’s pamphlet, An Anarchist Analysis of the Chinese Revolution (1976), which was written in response to the anarchists in the Christchurch PYM who became Maoists. Bolstad argued that China was not socialist but still a capitalist society – a state capitalist society, to be exact – based upon class exploitation.

Besides the image that Maoism was anarchistic, there are many other reasons why Maoism – and other forms of Leninism – became popular amongst a minority of New Leftists. Leninists actively attempted to recruit from the New Left, and they offered a more comprehensive ideology and a better-organised milieu than the New Left. The lack of well-organised left-libertarian groups in Aotearoa was also a contributing factor. Further, the anti-US nationalism of many New Leftists meant it was an easy step to adopt the anti-US left-nationalism of the Maoist groups. And most especially, New Leftists took inspiration from the successful resistance in the third world to US imperialism. Horton of the Christchurch PYM, Resistance and CAFCA states:

I was very involved in a movement that was protesting against the war in Vietnam, and the war [in Vietnam] was fighting communists, and I could see that they [the Vietnamese] were fighting an enemy which was…imperialism…So we were waving Viet Cong flags and all this sort of stuff.

New Leftists viewed the Vietnamese resistance as heroic. Some took this a step further and started to identify with the leadership of the resistance, which was dominated by Stalinists. They also romanticised Stalinist North Vietnam. As such, this anti-US imperialism, in my view, often resulted in a romantic identification with state capitalist dictatorships in the third world such as North Vietnam, Cuba, China and even North Korea.

However, one should not get too carried away with this analysis. The vast majority of New Leftists did not become Leninists. It was more common for New Leftists to join...
“new social movements,” or become involved in unions, the Labour Party or Values Party, than join the Leninist sects. Indeed, many New Leftists were instrumental in forming the new social movements of the 1970s.

The Revolutionary Committee and Council Communism

Splits and expulsions were common from the Maoist (and other Leninist) parties of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some expelled groups and individuals took a turn towards libertarian socialism. One such example was the awkwardly named “Revolutionary Committee of the CPNZ (Expelled).” This Auckland-based group, which included Steve Taylor and John Dickson, was expelled from the Communist Party in 1968 for questioning the lack of freedom and debate within the CPNZ, as well as the CPNZ’s participation in elections.

The Revolutionary Committee gained some influence in Auckland. It was not an activist group although Taylor went on a lengthy hunger strike in Albert Park against the Vietnam War in 1970. Its influence was intellectual. The Committee published much material, including several magazines, namely the Bulletin (1969–70), Dare to Think (1970) and Compass (1971–4). These were possibly the first libertarian socialist publications printed in Aotearoa since the syndicalist press of the early twentieth century. Compass, a small gestetnered publication, ran for at least 38 issues, making it one of the longest running libertarian socialist magazines produced in Aotearoa in terms of issues produced. They also published a pamphlet by Taylor called The Anatomy of Decision (1974), which was a careful analysis of the political decision-making process.

The Revolutionary Committee was the first, as far as is known, council communist group in Aotearoa. Originally, the Committee’s outlook was Maoist, and their criticism of the CPNZ was limited to a few issues. They soon largely broke with Maoism, however, and adopted most aspects of council communism after they were introduced to the ideas of Solidarity (a British-based group), the council communist Herman Gorter and the anarchist communist Guy Aldred (through much correspondence with Aldred’s long-time associate, John Taylor Caldwell). In Compass, they reprinted excerpts from Solidarity pamphlets.

As shall be outlined in Chapter Four, Solidarity was highly influential in the anarchist and broader libertarian socialist current of the 1970s because they published a persuasive series of well-produced pamphlets. These pamphlets, unlike most anarchist material of the 1970s that consisted of tired reprints from the classics of the nineteenth century, were up to date and hence were more relevant to the conditions of the time (see Brinton 2004 for a collection of material written by one of Solidarity’s most prolific members). Solidarity was a libertarian socialist network that was highly critical of Leninism. Because they emphasised the direct democracy of workers’ councils, they can be called council communists, as opposed to party “communists” who believed councils ought to be subservient to the party, such as
Leninists (for an introduction to 1960s and 1970s council communism, see Gombin 1975). Solidarity believed that party bureaucrats had implemented *bureaucratic* capitalism, not communism, in the Eastern bloc (and anywhere else that claimed to be “communist”): “East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work and manipulated in consumption and leisure...The ‘Communist’ world is not communist and the ‘Free’ world is not free.” Despite these anarchistic beliefs, Solidarity, like the Revolutionary Committee, did not identify with anarchism; indeed, both openly rejected anarchism.

The Revolutionary Committee rejected the Leninist vanguard party form and, indeed, all political parties. Instead, they called for “Soviets not parliaments!” and “Socialism will demand all power to the soviets, and no power to the parties” (*Compass*, Sep./Oct. 1974: 22). They stated, “Revolution will have to go outside the parties to create a new consciousness in the people. The parties are full of people scrambling for authority in parties which have none” (*Compass*, Sep./Oct. 1974: 16). The Committee viewed the USSR and China as bourgeois class societies. However, the Committee did not fully break with orthodox Marxism. For example, Taylor accepted “dialectical materialism” and aimed for a “workers’ state” – although that state would be composed of workers’ councils or soviets.

*Compass* was a thought-provoking, well-argued publication that was notable for its complete lack of censorship – they stated, “suppression in the field of ideas is the father of oppression in life” (they were reacting to the CPNZ’s suppression of views that contravened their party line). Indeed, the title of one of their periodicals, *Dare to Think*, was a satire of the CPNZ’s slogan “Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win.” Their ideas were, at times, innovative. “Our expulsion from the C.P.N.Z. and our ‘splendid isolation’ has its obverse side in that we have had unrestricted freedom to think and draw conclusions” (*Compass*, 6 (Sep. 1971): 1). For example, they advocated wages for housework. Taylor argued:
The value created by the labourer at the workbench contains immanent within it the labour of the woman in the home, the wife and mother and she is not paid for this work… The woman in the home is the true slave of the capitalist system and her deprivation of rights, beginning with economic rights, is the deep root of all exploitation under this system (Taylor, 1974: 24-5).

They reprinted an article by Marxist feminist Selma James on wages for housework. In contrast, most radical groups overlooked unpaid domestic labour and its role in the reproduction of capital.

The Revolutionary Committee also called themselves “anti-parliamentary” and “anti-union” – a novel stand when most Marxist groups contested elections, gave critical support to the Labour Party and advocated boring from within the unions. They argued that participating in elections helped to keep alive the illusion of parliamentary democracy. They also believed that leftists who supported the Labour Party, such as the Socialist Unity Party (SUP) and the SAL, helped to keep alive the “illusion of parliamentary socialism and the way out through parliament” (Compass, 2 (1971): 10). The Committee considered unions to be instruments of “working class servitude.” They urged workers to leave them and instead form independent shop committees. Taylor maintained, “The answer to bourgeois methods is not through bourgeois methods, but outside and against them.” He argued that trade unions and parliament “are machinery for conciliating the working masses to the wars, guilt and oppression of their own capitalist class.”

**The Fun Revolution and Anarchist Groupings**

Yippees in the US such as Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin popularised a new theatrical style of acid protest that combined the New Left with the counter-culture (see Hoffman’s Revolution for the Hell of It (1968) and Steal This Book (1971), and Rubin’s Do It! (1970)). Although they were not anarchists, their views resembled those of the carnival anarchists. The Yippees combined vaguely anti-capitalist and anti-statist views with the absurd and comical. They rejected the puritanical streak within the left and instead believed life should be lived to the fullest. They rejected formal organisation and theory in favour of spontaneity and the creative disruption of authority.

Historians have often marginalised the role of fun revolutionists, as they consider them too frivolous. Instead, they focus on the role of pacifists, left-liberals and Leninists within the anti-war movement. While the sacrifices of these orthodox leftists were enormous in building a mass movement, the contribution of the fun revolutionists and other young militant activists was also vital. They gave the movement energy, humour and imagination. Most importantly, their efforts were essential in broadening the activities of the movement. Without their activity, the anti-war movement would have been largely confined to mass street marches, the preferred activity of the liberal wing of the movement – which was headed by the
THE GREAT ERA OF RADICALISATION

MANIFESTO FOR A ROT REVOLUTION

Parliament house to be blown up and replaced with a suitably sited Maori pa, Holyoake and henchmen to be placed in stocks in public at a suitable distance from which will be provided two thousand rotten tomatoes for a general free-for-all, after which they will be taken to the nearest zoo and confined to the monkey cages for the rest of their unnatural lives.

All Maori land shall be returned to its rightful owners and all American and Australian owned land confiscated. No compensation.

The flag-pole at Waitangi will be chopped down once and for all and the treaty house be blown up as a symbolic act against lies and bad faith. American style commercialisation computerisation and synthesis in this country will cease and tourism, American style, will halt.

No more plastic tiki.

This country’s name shall be altered to Aotearoa and internationally recognised as such.

Maori language to be taught at all levels of education. Maori and island studies to be included in all university syllabuses. Students will control all university affairs.

The economy will be based on subsistence agriculture operative through non-profiting cooperation and barter. All surplus commodities to be given as gifts, where requested, overseas. No charity.

Minimum industrialisation, leading as swiftly as possible to the abolishment of all factories except those essential to revolutionery existence (e.g. agricultural equipment factories). These remaining 'factories', worker run, will take on a form most unsimilar to those now extant. The abolition of the present court system and all the legal mumbo-jumbo that goes with it. Judges will no longer appear in drag. Courts will be replaced by peoples courts where a man will be tried by his own kind, not cabbage-head bourgeois baboons or masturbating magistrates and the language of the courts will be the same as that of the streets.

Railways to be maintained at present excellent standard but re-introduction of steam locomotion. Installation of single-wire telegraph for inter-city communication, pony express for rural deliveries, pigeon post for inter-island intercourse and Sunderland flying boats for overseas mail.

The closing down of all television stations and the re-conditioning of TV sets for puppet theatres and Punch and Judy stands.

The immediate destruction of all post-war cars (excepting Citroens, MG TC, TD and TFs, Rileys, Morgans and maybe some others). Strong emphasis and great encouragement given for the use of Model As and Ts, 1923-25 two bearing crankshaft Austin 7s, pre-war V8s and Ford 10s. Fordson and Bradford vans to be favoured and Morris series E sedans converted to light trucks, preferably with hammer and cold chisel or drunkenly attacked with a chainsaw.

The re-introduction of trams and horse drawn milk carts with general encouragement toward much use of horses. Encouragement too, for motorbikes, side-cars, push bikes and tricycles. No private cars allowed into city centres; only motorbikes, push bikes, V8 buses and trams.

Queen Street, Auckland, to be declared as sanctuary every Friday night for use as a drag-strip.

"Manifesto For a Rot Revolution," an excellent example of the fun revolution tendency.

SAL. In contrast, the radicals, New Leftists and fun revolutionists took a more direct approach, and organised actions against specific targets, such as US military bases.

This imaginative type of politics was the catalyst for the liberation of Albert Park. An anonymous article in the *PD Barb*, a paper edited by Tim Shadbolt, outlined the role of the “Jellybean Gang” – presumably the Friends of Brutus, a carnivalesque group in which Shadbolt was prominent – in the liberation of Albert Park:

The Jellybean Gang first hit tombstoneland City in the late 60’s leaving behind them a trail of dancing, laughing, singing and other forms of lawlessness. What was once a dormant, barren little Sunday wasteland of concrete and glass was viciously attacked as the gang rode into town on wild music, anyone crossing their path was gunned full of action...The gang was fired by love...The City Marshmallows used threats, by laws, fear and criticism to try and crush the gang but people discovered that living wasn’t a bad way to live and gave up acting dead (“Confessions of the Jellybean Kid,” *PD Barb*, 2 (n.d.): 7).

Part of this action was to liberate Albert Park. People had loads of fun “dancing, laughing and singing” with “cakes, balloons, jellybeans, streamers, free expression, free speech etc.” Shadbolt wrote:

Strange things have started happening in Auckland’s parks. People have begun using them...Not to buy or sell or work but to be together. It has been more than just a protest against pettiness of by-laws...[We were] creating something new and exciting. It was as though life had just begun and nothing would stop us (Introduction to Buis, 1969: 2).

It was illegal for people to use the park to hold political rallies and speeches, but no arrests were made because there were simply too many people in the park enjoying themselves.

Mike Donaldson of the Anarchist Commune observes, “The Yippee thing was big. I think Tim Shadbolt’s book *Bullshit and Jellybeans*...captured the spirit of that time pretty well.” According to Farrell Cleary, “Shadbolt seemed to incarnate the anarchic Auckland variety of radicalism.” Shadbolt, with his programme of “love, laughter and revolution now,” was often considered the closest thing in Aotearoa to Abbie Hoffman, although most noted his politics were milder than Hoffman’s. Shadbolt was also highly sceptical of class struggle. In *Bullshit and Jellybeans*, he ignored class exploitation, and merely argued for a less repressive capitalist culture and society. He even regarded democratic student councils, handicrafts, communes, underground newspapers, street theatre groups, “happenings” and food co-ops as “positive alternatives” to capitalism (Shadbolt, 1971: 202), not recognising that most of these examples are small-scale versions of capitalism.

Organisations like the Love Shops, Auckland’s Home Street Gnomes and the “Street Theatre Group” (that later became the Living Theatre Troupe once it had stopped performing political street theatre), the Friends of Brutus, the Anarchist Congress, the Anarchist Commune and the Dunedin Anarchist Army were examples
Sue Wilson during the “Jumping Sundays” or the liberation of Albert Park in Auckland, 1969.


Music was an essential part of the liberation of Albert Park. Here the Frank E. Evans Lunchtime Entertainment Band plays to a large audience. The band was named after a US warship that collided accidentally with an Australian aircraft carrier in 1969. The Frank E. Evans was cut in two and withdrawn from service.

Photo: Simon Buis, 1969, p. 16.
of the fun revolution tendency in Aotearoa. Several of these groups were not anarchist, yet can be described as anarchistic. Some were named after anarchist organisations overseas, such as the Home Street Gnomes – whose name was inspired by the Kabouters, which is Dutch for gnomes. The Love Shop was started in Auckland by some ex-Auckland PYMers, including Marcus Ardern and Steve Robertshaw. It was based on the San Francisco Diggers free store, where goods were given away without charge. The Diggers were counter-cultural communists – of the libertarian variety, that is – who attacked the hip capitalism prevalent in the hippy milieu. Love Shops soon sprouted in Hamilton and Wellington, but little is known about them and they left little trace.

This brief section focuses on the explicitly anarchist groups and actions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As explained above, most of these groups were exponents of carnival anarchism. Most were also short-lived. For example, the Anarchist Forum, which held weekly discussions at the University of Auckland in 1970, was only in existence for that year. Bert Roth, the well-known historian, spoke at one of the Anarchist Forum’s meetings about the New Zealand IWW.

**Anarchist Groups in Wellington**

Roger Cruickshank formed an anarchist group at Victoria University with fellow Wellington PYMer Royal Abbott in about 1970. This group went by various names, including the Anarchist Brigade and Anarchist Congress. Very little is known about the group, except that it held periodic meetings and events – which Cruickshank called “feasts” – on campus, produced a few leaflets and involved about a dozen people. By 1972, the group seems to have disappeared.

Another short-lived Wellington anarchist group was the “Anarchist Movement,” which was set up by Victoria University student G. H. Adlam in 1972. Again, little is known about this group except they attempted to disrupt the 1972 elections through an elaborate hoax. The hoax involved a mythical “anarchist league” employing specially trained professional demonstrations to disrupt the election and authority in general. To show the kind of semi-hysteria about protest that existed in some quarters of society at the time, the *Evening Post* took this claim seriously. In response to the newspaper report, Assistant Police Commissioner R. J. Walton claimed “professional agitators, hooligans and anarchists are threatening peaceful demonstrations.”
Christchurch: The Anarchist Commune

In 1971, a group in Christchurch began meeting with the idea of forming an urban commune. Paul Bailey notes:

Because of the different philosophies that this group adhered to, the group separated into 3 distinct sub-groups and each formed their own commune. Walter Logeman, Marion and a group went on to establish Chippenham commune. Dave Riley and a group...set up what I think was called Riverslea Rd. commune. And Mike [Donaldson] and I and others...formed Winchester St. commune. Our group was clearly the most extreme, we were anarchic, influenced by the anarcho-syndicalists among others.

The Winchester Street Commune was known as simply the “Anarchist Commune.” It was formed by twelve people (six of them students, six of them workers; six females, six males) who had come together through performing street theatre. They decided to share property – everybody’s income was placed in a tin on the mantelpiece, so that any Commune dweller could take according to need. Mike Donaldson of the Commune remembers that this actually worked – workers did not mind putting in more than the students, and the fund accumulated a large enough surplus to finance overseas trips by several Commune members. Following the events in France in May 1968 where everyone called each other “Jacques,” everybody in the commune was known as “Phred” – including the dog. This meant that if someone asked for food, or whatever, it would be Phred’s and thus would belong to everyone.

Their main political activity was street theatre. They performed skits in the suburbs to raise awareness of the anti-war mobilisations. They also put on some anti-racist ones for anti-apartheid protests. Other activities included distributing free firewood to pensioners and running a non-profit shop in a church near the university. They bought food at wholesale prices from the fruit and vegetable market and sold this on to people without profit. Donaldson comments:

The supermarkets...were actually undercutting the non-profit shop...They, of course, were able to buy at such huge volumes that they could even beat something that had no mark up at all. That...was a bit of a lesson for us...it’s very hard to create an alternative economy inside a capitalist economy because of the power of the oligopolies and monopolies and the huge corporations.

Anarchist Commune members had friendly relations with the Christchurch PYM, HART and Nga Tamatoa (Young Warriors). The latter was a seminal Maori protest group. At that stage, the majority of people in the Christchurch PYM were also anarchists but there were differences in style. According to Donaldson, Commune members regarded themselves as Yippees – which was their biggest influence, although they did read about anarchism – whilst the PYM was less hippyish. These differences were evident at a protest against an army display in
a shopping mall in 1971. Anarchist Commune members showed up in face paint with balloons, streamers and flowers to try to show children that there were ways of having fun other than handling weapons. It did not work: the children just took the balloons and still cavorted through the armoured personnel carriers. The PYM took a more confrontational approach. PYMers surrounded a police car and planted a flag, emblazoned with a swastika, on a carrier. As a result, a couple of PYMers were arrested.

Donaldson and Bailey of the Anarchist Commune – who were both trained as priests, but never practised – attended the pioneering meetings of the Christchurch branch of Nga Tamatoa. They were friends of Ted (now Eruera) Nia and Tame Iti. Iti once said he wished to set up Maori anarchist communes in the North Island, open to all, but based around the Tuhoe iwi – although Iti was not an anarchist; he was a member of the CPNZ. Both Donaldson and Bailey, with Nga Tamatoa, attended the Waitangi Day protest of 1971, one of the first modern day protests at Waitangi. For Donaldson, this involvement “taught me that you can’t fight other people’s battles for them. If there was gonna be an activist Maori movement then it wasn’t gonna be...directed in any way by whites, that’s for sure.”

The Commune lasted a year. They faced continual hassles from landlords, and eventually the Commune broke up after many left to travel abroad. A few Commune members went on to form another small commune in 1972 at Tai Tapu with Murray
Shaw of the Christchurch PYM. Donaldson became involved in Christchurch Resistance before leaving for overseas. Later he became a prominent member of the Communist Party of Australia.

The Dunedin Anarchist Army

The Dunedin Anarchist Army was a classical carnival anarchist group set up in the early 1970s by students at the University of Otago. From 1972 to 73, the Army was considered the main radical activist group in Dunedin. Some viewed it as the unofficial Dunedin PYM. Allan Cumming, who was a member of the Army, has said:

There was quite a strong anarchist movement in Dunedin in 72 and 73...There were virtually no Marxist groups, or really strong Marxist groups, and it was really noticeable in the anti-apartheid movement because in late 72 I was sort of quite involved in HART and in the end of 72 they actually sent down good, solid Marxist type people from Christchurch because they didn't like the way things were happening, they didn't like the political slant...There were...probably about a dozen of us who were involved in student politics from pretty much an anarchist perspective.

The Army had a core of four to five people, including Cumming, Brian O'Brien (who has been described as a “veteran student radical” and “anti-war activist” (Elworthy,
1990: 111 & 131)), Tony Mansfield and Jane Bradshaw. Cumming remembers, “There was also quite a strong drug culture associated with the whole movement.” Mansfield was arrested for selling LSD to an undercover cop – but he put vegetable dye, not acid, in the blotting paper as he suspected he was an agent of “the fuzz.” In the end, he got off.

Much like the PYM, the Anarchist Army was an action-based group. Army members were involved in student politics, HART and the anti-Vietnam War movement. They performed street theatre and many stunts, and organised a vigil in the Octagon on Sharpeville Day. Tony Mansfield wrote, “We are really defensive rather than offensive, but if it reached that stage we would be prepared to undertake guerrilla warfare.” The Anarchist Army apparently produced a magazine called the Glee Sheets and a few Yippee-style leaflets but unfortunately no record survives of their publications.

Dave Welch remembers the Anarchist Army as a “bunch of Yippees.” This is likely to be a very apt description because they imitated the Yippees’ attempted levitation of the Pentagon in 1967. About ten people from the Anarchist Army endeavoured to levitate the Dunedin Town Hall in 1972 after a dispute with the Dunedin City Council. The conservative mayor, Jim Barnes, did not issue permits for street demos, hence the attempted levitation.
Firebombing the US Consulate

Marg Matheson and Neil Riethmuller, both anarchists, had taken part in the Christchurch protests against US military bases, but became frustrated with their ineffectiveness. So Matheson and Riethmuller firebombed the US Consulate in Christchurch on 15 August 1973, by coincidence the same day that the US stopped bombing Cambodia, thereby ending the direct involvement of the US in the war in Indochina. No one was injured but the interior of the building was completely gutted, putting the Consulate out of action for a month. Horton (1976) has called it “one of the most spectacular acts of political violence in New Zealand’s history.” This was the most explosive act of the late sixties and early seventies, although a number of others were imprisoned for bombing property, especially that of the army.

At the time, Matheson and Riethmuller were not part of any anarchist organisation, although Riethmuller was involved in Christchurch Resistance. Riethmuller lived in a flat near to the US Consulate with a few other anarchists such as Richard Bolstad and Murray Shaw. The flat was an attempt by a few anarchists from the NZSSSA to set up a sort of anarchist commune. Riethmuller and Matheson decided to spontaneously burn down the US Consulate as a protest against both capitalism and imperialism. “It was propaganda by the deed for an anarchist idea – sooner or later it’s got to come to armed struggle” (Riethmuller quoted in Horton, 1976). Bolstad, who was completely unaware of the planned firebombing, remembers being woken up at 5 o’clock in the morning:

There was these huge sirens, I look out the window and the whole street is filled with police cars, people are running up the drive and suddenly people [are] leaping out the windows, and someone yells out ‘catch that man Wilkes, he is a madman.’ They thought Neil was Owen Wilkes you see because they figure, like, who with a beard would have
blown up an American Consulate and so they rushed in and got us out of bed...and questioned us.

Matheson and Riethmuller were captured after their getaway car – an Austin A35, not the quickest vehicle on the road – was chased down by police after what Horton has called a “wild” and “heroic but futile car chase in the finest traditions of Bonnie and Clyde” (Horton, 1976). Matheson and Riethmuller were sentenced for three and four years respectively. An article in *Ferret*, an underground paper published at Christchurch Resistance, noted that the burning of the Consulate “articulated the feelings of many people in this country,” even if it “was a political act bred of desperation and frustration” (“What Now?,” *Ferret*, 4 (Dec. 1973)). Their act caused quite a stir, and many condemned it. In prison, however, they were supported by much of Christchurch’s radical community. In 1975, Matheson was released, and Riethmuller was deported by the Labour Government back to Australia.

**Malcolm Gramaphone and *Counter-Culture Free Press***

Malcolm Gramaphone, an eccentric character, resided in Waitati near Dunedin. He was never involved in any anarchist groups. “He was more of a soloist,” claims Bruce Grenville, who later worked with Gramaphone in the mid-1970s.

Gramaphone changed his name from Malcolm James to annoy his father, and he named his son Gabriel Galaxy God Gramaphone. He drove a garish yellow ambulance, called the Intrepid Traveller. His escapades often got him into trouble with the law, and on one occasion, he was tried for attempting to burn down a fertiliser works in Dunedin. He was also fined for smoking cannabis while visiting a friend in prison.

Gramaphone produced the underground magazine *Counter-Culture Free Press* (1972–4). Despite the name, *Counter-Culture* did not have as much focus upon the “freak scene” as one might assume, although Gramaphone praised “liberated people” and “back to the land groovers.” *Counter-Culture* contained a smattering of anarchist articles reprinted from overseas, and it applauded the Kabouters and their idea of a “decentralised socialist counter-culture...based upon mutual aid and respect for nature.” He called his press the Kropotkin Press and used the subtitle “Anarchist Handbook Number One” for his *Get Lushed on Your Own Grog...An Underground*
Brewer’s Bible (1972) – which was for many years the standard work on home brewing in Aotearoa.

Grenville states Gramaphone “was perhaps more a republican than an anarchist.” Gramaphone formed a right-libertarian Republican Party in the late sixties, aimed for a republican-style state and passionately opposed the monarchy. Indeed, in the mid- to late 1970s, he oddly enough became a pen-friend of the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin because Amin shared his republican stance and his hatred of the British monarchy. Although Gramaphone claimed Bakunin and Kropotkin as his antecedents, he not only favoured republicanism, but also idealised small-business capitalism. He was fervently opposed to big-business monopolies – especially the “beer barons.” Bruce Jesson writes:

Malcolm struck me as a libertarian in the American sense...He believed in small property as a defence against the state...[he was] hostile to all restrictions...he would moan about having to sit at traffic lights waiting for them to turn green when there was no other traffic. It must have been even more irritating seeing he was colour blind.

Gramaphone’s partner in the 1970s, Fran O’Sullivan, became the editor of the neo-liberal National Business Review in the 1980s.

The New Left tended to lose prominence after the Labour Government was elected in 1972. Labour satisfied the protest movement’s main causes by withdrawing troops from Vietnam, ending compulsory military training and ceasing sporting contact with apartheid South Africa. As a result, the protest movement began to dwindle. New Leftists organised several big protests – such as the demonstration against the US military base at Harewood-Weedons in 1973 and the Resistance Ride of 1975 – but these protests did not build into a substantial, popular and on-going movement. As the protest movement faded away, a number of new grassroots movements – the subject of the next chapter – took the centre stage.
CHAPTER THREE

New Social Movements and Anarchism

From the Early 1970s to the Early 1980s

The Rise of New Social Movements and Muldoonism

The first women’s liberation groups were formed in 1970. Maori political groups such as Nga Tamatoa and the pan-polynesian Polynesian Panther Party were established in the early 1970s. After the Save Manapouri Campaign of 1969–70, the first ecological groups such as Ecology Action and the Native Forest Action Council took root. By the mid-1970s, the peace and anti-nukes movement revived with protests against visiting US nuclear warships. In addition, the gay and lesbian liberation movements appeared and the commune movement flourished in the 1970s. Some academics have lumped all these diverse movements together under the name “new social movements” – an unwieldy and inaccurate term as many of them were not new, especially the Tino Rangatiratanga and women’s liberation movements. I shall reluctantly use the term, however, for the sake of convenience.

Many view the 1970s as a depressing time for radicals. The 1960s is often assumed
to be *the* radical decade, and the 1970s a downer and a bummer, especially after the right-wing reaction set in. Certainly, the feeling that revolution was in the air had dissipated by the early seventies. The “great era of radicalisation” was over (I have taken the phrase from a 1973 Auckland Resistance leaflet).

Yet in many respects, discontent peaked in the 1970s, and not in the 1960s. During the seventies protest spread from students and youth to workers, women, Maori, Pacific people, gays, lesbians and so on. For example, the highest amount of strike activity in the history of Aotearoa was in the mid- to late seventies and not during the late sixties. However, unlike the late 1960s and early 1970s, these diverse movements lacked one big issue, like opposing the Vietnam War, to unite people. Hence the seventies was often a time of fragmentation and sectarian feuds when compared to the giddy non-sectarianism of the New Left.

In 1973, the “oil shock” caused a major worldwide recession. This downturn signified the “end of the golden weather” in Aotearoa. By the mid- to late 1970s, most working class people experienced declining living standards. Full employment was over. The welfare state began to be cut back. The overriding social context of the 1970s was one of decline after almost two decades of sustained growth. Workers who expected the “affluence” of the fifties and sixties to continue broke out in open revolt. They often struggled against shrinking pay packets, and many revolted against the monotony of work, especially those on the assembly line.

In 1975, Rob Muldoon of the National Party became Prime Minister. “Muldoonism” (1975–84) was a period of extraordinary authoritarian populism. The rise of Muldoon was a conservative right-wing reaction to the ferment of the late sixties and early seventies. In response to increasing strike action over declining real wages, the Muldoon Government tried to limit wage increases well below the rate of inflation and also attempted to impose wage freezes upon the working class. Muldoon also reacted to the economic slump of the 1970s by scapegoating minority groups and leftists. At various times, Muldoon blamed unions, “communists,” the unemployed, Pacific people and solo mothers for the recession. He polarised the country on not only class and ethnic lines, but also ideologically. A split developed between socially conservative supporters of Muldoon – often from the working class – and the more liberal elements in society. Conservatives attempted to re-assert traditional right-wing values, such as racism, the work ethic and the patriarchal family by “keeping women in the home.”

There was a growing fear of a police state under Muldoon. Muldoon wielded the police to deport Pacific people in dawn raids, to evict Maori from Bastion Point and to disperse anti-Springbok tour protesters in 1981 (see next chapter). Yet his heavy-handedness produced a counter-reaction exemplified in the huge protests in 1977 against the SIS amendment bill, which aimed to extend the powers of the SIS. On the radical left, it was common to talk of a “creeping fascism” under Muldoon, yet I believe he was simply a more belligerent version of the social conservatives that ruled Aotearoa in the 1950s and 1960s.

In this chapter, I focus upon the “new social movements” that anarchists took part
in, or the movements that had an avowedly anarchistic wing to them: the Women’s Liberation Movement; anarcho-pacifists in the peace movement; the socialist faction within the Values Party, the first nationwide green party in the world; and anarchists in the commune movement. I mention anti-racist activity and the highly significant movement for Maori self-determination and the Polynesian Panthers in the following chapter, which explores the anarchist groupings from about 1973 to the early eighties.

The Women’s Liberation Movement, Anarchism and Anarcha-Feminism

In 1970, the first feminist groups of the second wave of women’s liberation appeared in Aotearoa. By about 1973, the movement expanded dramatically, with dozens of new feminist groups mushrooming across the country. By the early 1980s, the feminist philosophy had become very influential, and its praxis was extended from women’s issues to peace, Maori and anti-racist issues (Jesson, 1989: 32).

The wider feminist movement was a diverse movement. Fern Mercier of Women for Equality and the Dunedin Collective for Women stated that initially radical forms of feminism dominated, yet by the mid-1970s, they were overtaken by liberal feminism. Liberal feminism was conservative, reformist and concerned with “women’s rights.” Liberal feminists formed hierarchical organisations replete with leaders and media stars. Anarchist praxis can be found in the more radical “Women’s Liberation Movement” (WLM) which was concerned with a more fundamental cultural, social and economic liberation of women rather than just women’s rights. Most commentators recognise three major currents of the WLM: socialist feminism, radical feminism and lesbian feminism.

The Women’s Liberation Movement often adopted anarchistic organisational forms and practices spontaneously. Sonja Antonsen of the Dunedin Collective for Women claimed that anarchism seemed to underlie the WLM without that movement ever adopting the label, especially in the period before the Leninist feminists attempted to take over the movement. “Women’s lib” groups aimed to be non-hierarchical, leaderless and decentralised. They also had anti-authoritarian aims – for instance, radical feminists spoke of being against all forms of authority, hierarchy and domination.

Many WLM groups were anarchistic, such as Women for Equality in Auckland and the Dunedin Collective for Women. Women for Equality practised consensus decision-making, and its aims were anti-authoritarian such as the abolition of sex role stereotyping and the nuclear family (as with most other women’s liberation groups). They rejected feminist media stars and leaders. They had a strong working class focus, and so often went into factories and Plunket Rooms to distribute their material. The group also set up an open feminist house.
The Dunedin Collective for Women was generally dominated by liberal, middle class feminists yet it still was organised in an anarchistic, decentralised fashion. The Collective was highly productive and formed autonomous specialist groups to put out a newsletter, to analyse women’s health and to record women’s herstory. Within these groups, jobs were rotated amongst the women involved. The Collective established Daybreak Books in 1977, the first feminist bookshop in Aotearoa. Daybreak Books stocked some anarchist literature, largely through the involvement of Antonsen, and was listed in the London magazine *Freedom* as a contact for anarchism in Aotearoa. Antonsen, who was also involved in the Dunedin Women’s Refuge, later became a central figure in the peace movement (see below). When interviewed, she said her main influence was Emma Goldman.

The WLM placed much importance on setting up community-based grassroots women’s groups such as consciousness raising groups, women’s health and self-help centres, women’s refuges and Rape Crisis centres. Anne White wrote, “When I was involved in the Dunedin Women’s Refuge we were trying basically to operate on anarchistic principles. We tried to have consensus decision making, we tried to share our knowledge and skills.” Although on a critical note, she added that the function of the refuge became:

no more than taking some of the workload off social welfare...A far cry from initial aims of being a radical alternative to our state social institutions, and a place where abused and
alienated women and children could be offered gut support and new perspectives on life and the ways it can be lived.

Margaret Flaws, a member of the Christchurch Anarchy Group who lived at the Chippenham Commune (see next chapter), argued in a piece written for the Piha Women’s Liberation Congress in 1978 that the WLM was anarchistic. Flaws saw anarchism and feminism as complementing each other perfectly. She claimed that anarchist concepts such as people taking control of their everyday lives, the rejection of all forms of hierarchy, the belief that the means need to reflect the ends and spontaneous direct action were all prevalent in the WLM. Flaws argued, “At the basis of our movement we formed small non-hierarchical groups…We began to see the connections between male power over all facets of our lives, and the other forms of domination and exploitation which exist in our society.” For example, she claimed that the nuclear family was not only the basic unit of production and consumption for capitalism, but it was also the main patriarchal tool for authoritarian conditioning and repression.

Christine Dann argued that radical feminism was more compatible with anarchism than “orthodox” socialism. Dann, who penned a history of the WLM in *Up from Under* (1985), wrote in *The Republican*:

> Anarchists have moved faster towards a radical position on male supremacy than socialists – for this reason and several others (eg. a preference for non-hierarchical, collective forms of organisation) anarchism has proved more appealing to many feminists than orthodox socialism…From Spain, the hot-bed of anarchism, comes the slogan ‘No women’s liberation without revolution – no revolution without the liberation of women’ (Dann, 1979: 6).

She asserted radical feminists recognised the “three most basic forms of oppression”: gender, class and race or ethnicity, and worked to eliminate all three – however, radical feminists claimed “male supremacy is the oldest and most pervasive” form of oppression. She argued that abolishing male oppression would not, by itself, produce women’s liberation, as class and racial power structures would remain – one would be just swapping white, male bosses for white, female bosses (Dann, 1979: 4). She maintained that radical feminism needed to steer towards a more anarchist approach of co-ordinated collectives, consciousness raising groups and a rejection of leaders. She wrote “who needs leaders?” and “leadership positions can be shared and democratically controlled” (Dann, 1979: 11).

An important debate within the WLM occurred over the issue of whether the WLM’s anarchistic forms of organisation caused informal elites to become prevalent in the movement. This argument was popularised by US feminist Jo Freeman in her essay “The Tyranny of Structurelessness” (1984 [1970]). Freeman argued that these groups could often be dominated by “informal, unplanned, unselected, irresponsible” elites. Flaws comments about the feminist scene in Aotearoa during
the mid-1970s, “There were people who were spokespeople and who were leaders and who had a hell of a lot of influence and power.” But she argued, “I...think these things have happened...because we have failed to fully understand and develop the anarchism in it [the WLM]” rather than being caused by the anarchistic tendencies of the WLM. White wrote, “It seems to me there is no blanket safeguard against this danger. Fighting off elitism is part of the continual struggle...the REVOLUTION.”

Anarcha-Feminism 1975–80

Despite the parallels between the WLM and anarchism, this did not translate into an anarcha-feminist tendency being set up within the WLM. The anarchist movement itself was small and male-dominated, hence it was unsurprising that it was unattractive to most feminists. A few feminists saw the connections between anarchism and feminism, but little came of it apart from some correspondence with two or three anarchists.

The anarcha-feminists within the anarchist movement of the 1970s never formed a separate, organised tendency as with the current anarcha-feminists or the anarcha-feminists of the 1990s who produced Sekhmet in Wellington and Christchurch. The first anarcha-feminist group in Aotearoa, Women of the Anarchist Revolution, was formed in 1970 at Victoria University. Virtually nothing is known about the group, except that it involved Therese O’Connell and Lesley Jacobs, both of whom were in the Wellington PYM. O’Connell was prominent in the first Wellington WLM group and became an important unionist.

In 1976, it was suggested at the first anarchist “unconvention” that an “anarcha-feminist rag” be produced. Also in that year, Margaret Flaws proposed to put together an anarcha-feminist magazine. She received some interest but the project did not go ahead. In 1978 Kay Shannon, Anne White and Chris Duggan formed an Anarcho-Feminist Huddle in Auckland that reprinted Cathy Levine’s reply to Freeman’s “The Tyranny of Structurelessness” called The Tyranny of Tyranny (see Levine 1984). As well, the Huddle aimed to produce a book of women’s poetry, and to publish a leaflet about women’s self-health. In 1979, Maggie Kolff and Nikki Ellis produced a small four-page magazine in Gisborne that was anarcha-feminist in viewpoint (but no copy survives – and unfortunately the name of the magazine has been forgotten). These attempts represented just the bare beginnings of an anarcha-feminist current.

In 1978, a few anarcha-feminists participated in the Women’s Liberation Congress at Piha, which was attended by around 110 women. Flaws gave a talk and presented a paper on anarchism. Shannon, White and Duggan from the aforementioned Huddle wrote a paper entitled “Anarcho-Feminism” for the same conference (both papers are reprinted in Anarchism and Feminism, 1995). However, their contribution was overshadowed by an acrimonious split between the lesbian separatist feminists and the heterosexual feminists at Piha. By the late 1970s, women’s liberation was
becoming more diverse and fragmented: at Piha there were Leninist, socialist, anarchist, Maori, radical, cultural, lesbian, liberal and spiritual feminists. The WLM was in decline, and so turned in on itself.

The WLM and the Maori renaissance of the 1970s had a monumental impact on the male- and Pakeha-dominated radical left. The WLM at times viewed the radical left as outrageously sexist and workerist (“workerism” here means the worship of blue-collar male workers). Feminists challenged the radical left’s one-dimensional analysis of oppression: class. An often bitter but crucial debate resulted over which form of domination was the most pervasive: gender, class or ethnicity. Hence the importance of the connection between feminism and anarchism in the seventies was not the anarchist influence on feminism but vice versa. Instead of anarchism influencing the Women’s Liberation Movement, the WLM influenced and challenged the male-dominated anarchist movement.

**Sexism in the Anarchist Milieu**

The anarchist movement was predominantly male, and reflected male concerns. In the 1960s anarchist scene, very few women were involved – Jon Markham remembers it as a completely male-dominated “boys’ own movement” that could be at times openly sexist, although to their credit a few AA members were involved in a couple of unsuccessful attempts at “pub liberations” (that is, demanding that females be served in bars that were reserved for males only) in the early 1960s in Wellington.

The anarchic element in the New Left of the late sixties and early seventies was also sexist, although far more women took part. The Anarchist Commune had a sexist division of labour where the women did most of the housework. Christine Bird of the Christchurch PYM has commented on the video *Rebels in Retrospect* that she lacked the confidence to speak at meetings. When interviewed by Megan Cook, she said that although the Christchurch PYM had an explicit commitment to women’s liberation, “the women made the tea, of course.” She noticed that the men in the group were the charismatic stars, while “there were no female stars, never” (Bird quoted in Rabel and Cook, 1998: 3). However, Therese O’Connell has said she noticed “a sense of gender equality” within the Wellington PYM, “with its more ‘anarchic’ operating principles” (O’Connell quoted in Rabel and Cook, 1998: 3).
contrasts this with the formal anti-Vietnam War bodies, such as the Committee on Vietnam, which she found quite openly sexist. It is important to note that while the New Left was undoubtedly sexist, the sexism of the Old Left was more ingrained and overt. The New Left was more open to new movements and challenges.

Overall, the mid- to late seventies anarchist current was sexist as well. Only a quarter of those involved were female. The dominant organisers and personalities in each group were male. Men produced and wrote the bulk of the publications. Likewise, men organised most of the events, stunts and protests. Sue Lee of the Wellington anarchists of the mid- to late 1970s has commented:

Most of it [the anarchist scene] was a boysie thing...I think in some ways I was a bit separate and felt a bit separate. Katherine [Mulcahey] was saying the same thing. And my sister [Karen Lee] would certainly say that...I feel that the anarcha-feminists are right to have that separate thing.

Margaret Flaws has said:

If you look at some of the writing of the traditional anarchists...it is very sexist...anti-women in some cases. A lot of anarchist men didn’t see their own power, the same as a lot
of men. Or the ones who said they did – guys like this who were running men’s groups – like they were trying to do something about it but they didn’t.

There was not a coherent anarchist movement, but there was a coherent and large feminist movement. For Fern Mercier it was easier, more effective and practical to immerse herself in the feminist movement rather than the anarchist one. In general, this problem often crops up for radicals in countries where radical movements are marginalised: it is much easier and effective to join a larger and more influential movement or campaign than to start from scratch and form distinct radical groups.

The Values Party and Libertarian Socialism?

The Values Party was founded in 1972, making it the first nationwide green party in the world. It soon gained some popular support, especially from people who were disillusioned with both Labour and National. At its peak, it polled 5.2% of the electorate in 1975. By 1981 it had faded away, although it was later renamed the Green Party and experienced a revival in the 1990s. Values was a large radical party in the New Zealand context, reaching a membership of 2,000 at its height. It may seem a little odd to include Values in a book largely about anarchism, as it is impossible for a political party to be anarchist, yet I include a short section on it because many have claimed that an influential anarchistic, libertarian socialist wing existed within Values. Bruce Jesson has even claimed that Values was overall a “libertarian left” party (see Jesson 1978).

At first, Values tended to avoid any questions of class and economics. Instead, it thought the basic conflict in society was between economic growth and human growth, or in other words, between materialism and anti-materialism. That being the case, some regarded it as a liberal middle class party of “trendy lefties” and “bourgeois radicals” with a middle class membership and a commitment to zero-growth capitalism.

However, by the mid-1970s, an influential “anarchistic” faction developed within Values that began to question some aspects of its middle class ideology. For example, Geoff Neill, an economist who was influential in writing Values economic policy, said in 1974 that Values should go “beyond worker participation to industrial democracy based on a decentralised socialisation of production.” Neill wanted to establish a co-

Beyond Tomorrow, the Values Party manifesto of 1975, produced when the socialist faction was prominent in Values.
operative community, but such anarchistic ideas were mixed with capitalist ones of state regulation and community trustee banks. The “anarchistic” wing of Values aimed to make the party less hierarchical. In 1973, Values dispensed with a leader.

By about 1975, a “socialist faction” developed in Values. It was based in Christchurch, and it became highly persuasive in the party. Tony Kunowski, the leader of Values from 1976 to 79, was associated with this faction. Kunowski explicitly identified Values with libertarian socialism. He also claimed that it was not a centralised, hierarchical party; instead, he believed it was based upon the principle of a “non-hierarchical web network.” Other important figures in the socialist faction were Terry McDavitt (general secretary of the party from 1976 to 79), John Stewart (fieldworker of the party in 1976), Ivan Finlayson and Neil Williams. Like Kunowski, McDavitt firmly placed Values in the libertarian socialist rather than the “authoritarian centralist socialist” camp. McDavitt drew explicitly from anarchism (see McDavitt, 1975).

The influence of the socialist faction could be seen when Values talked of goals like workers’ control, participatory democracy, decentralisation and a more caring, sharing and co-operative community. Yet overall Values sought some watered down anarchistic reforms within the framework of capitalism and the state, aiming for a more humane and greener capitalism. For example, by workers’ control, it meant capitalist “co-operative community enterprises” where workers were allowed a little more say in the day-to-day running of the workplace through elected representatives to a management board – much like as in West Germany and Yugoslavia during the 1970s. In my view, the socialist faction of Values differed from libertarian socialism because libertarian socialists have traditionally aimed at the destruction of state power and the abolition of private property, the market and capitalist social relations. What is more, they have rejected representative, parliamentary democracy in favour of direct, participatory democracy.

Perhaps this faction of Values was closer to a version of “utopian socialism” or mutualism than mainstream anarchism. Of all the political parties of the 1970s in Aotearoa, I believe a stronger case can be made that the Socialist Party of New Zealand, sister party of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, was closer to libertarian socialism than Values. The SPNZ viewed the working class as the revolutionary agent, aimed for the end of private property and money, rejected the Leninist vanguard party, and dismissed the “socialism” of the USSR and China as capitalist. However, I do not believe the SPNZ was libertarian socialist in orientation, as it believed, much like the radicals within Values, that parliament was a fruitful route for radical change. This statism, as well as its intellectualism, aloofness from activism and its tendency to be dogmatic, meant that few anarchists were attracted to the SPNZ.
Return to the Land: Communes and Anarchism in the 1970s

The commune movement was thriving in Aotearoa by the mid-1970s. Indeed, it was relatively larger than most of its overseas counterparts. This was not only because land was relatively cheaper and less scarce in Aotearoa when compared to overseas, but also because the commune movement was given great impetus after the Labour Government established the Ohu scheme in 1973. That short-lived scheme involved the government leasing state-owned land for co-operative communes. Some suggested that Ohu were similar to the kibbutz system in Israel. Others suggested that Ohu conveniently provided the state with an outlet for those alienated urban youth who might otherwise have engaged in dissident political action.

A few communes identified with anarchism, such as Beeville (see Chapter One), the Anarchist Commune in Christchurch (see Chapter Two), the Graham Downs Community or Renaissance Community near Motueka and the Puketa Community near Kaikoura. The Graham Downs Community, which is sometimes referred to as the “Anarchist Commune” – not to be confused with the Anarchist Commune in Christchurch – was established in 1978, when land was purchased by a trust (see Sargent and Sargisson 2004). The Community is still in existence today. A tiny commune was formed at Puketa in the mid-1970s. Puketa was owned by Archie Hislop, a beekeeper and gardener.

Werner Droescher (1911–78), a German New Zealander who fought on the side of the anarchists during the Spanish Civil War, lived near the Wilderland Commune in the Coromandel from 1975 to 78. Wilderland was founded by Dan and Edith Hansen in 1965. Dan Hansen had been involved in the Beeville Commune, which was more or less a Hansen family commune. The Hansens were pacifists. Droescher met them while supporting a hunger strike by conscientious objectors in Mount Eden prison in Auckland during World War II. Droescher’s anti-authoritarian friend Ian Hamilton and one of the Hansens participated in the strike (see Hamilton 1984 [1953]).

Droescher penned a few observations about the link between anarchism and communalism. He wrote that the commune movement in Aotearoa in the 1970s was:

in many ways similar to the anarchist communities in France back in the middle of the last century – one of them was still thriving in 1930! Then and now there is a retreat into simple living in the country, a non-coercive, non-authoritarian way of organising life within the communities; co-operation, collectivism, mutualism were the slogans found in the writings of Fourier and Proudhon, and later those of Kropotkin (Impulse, 3 (1978): 7).

His memoir, Odysee Eines Lehrers (Odyssey of a Teacher), was published in Germany in 1976. He was preparing this for publication in English under the title “Toward an Alternative Society” in 1978 when he unfortunately passed away. In this unpublished
manuscript, Droescher viewed communes sympathetically as an imperfect model for a healthier way of living and as a nucleus for a utopian society based upon voluntary co-operation. He thought that the commune movement was somewhat similar to the anarchist collectives in revolutionary Spain, but thought the major difference was the influence of Eastern religions, which he called the “Eastern bug.” Droescher uttered some further critical reservations:

Not all of the ills of the world can be cured by a commune-style living. Commune dwellers easily become elitist and retreat from the world, thus neutralising their effect on the world at large. Wilderland is no exception...Intoning mechanically ‘Hare Krishna,’ freeing one’s consciousness by hallucinogenic drugs...often leads only to a cozy navel-contemplation (Droescher, 1978: 171-2).

When Droescher re-established contact with the anarchist movement in the 1970s, he wrote a manuscript called “The Little Black and Red Book of Anarchism.” The Auckland Anarchist Activists did not print it because a member of the printing collective objected to its allegedly pacifist content. “The Little Black and Red Book” reflected Droescher’s involvement in the commune and counter-cultural movements because in it he stressed that the personal is the political, and advocated a non-authoritarian lifestyle devoid of materialism, consumerism and other “hang-ups.”
The Peace Movement and Anarcho-Pacifism

After New Zealand ended its involvement in Vietnam in 1972, the peace movement almost evaporated overnight. Yet anti-nuclear protest helped to rejuvenate it from the mid-1970s onwards. The National Government agreed to accept visits from US nuclear-powered and/or armed vessels in 1976. Subsequently, sizeable protests were organised against these warships when they visited. The Peace Squadron organised flotillas of boats that endeavoured to blockade the warships (see Newnham 1986).

Peace groups mushroomed across the country in the mid- to late 1970s, with nationwide groups like the CND, Greenpeace, the Nuclear Free Zone Organisation and many smaller community-based groups prominent. In 1978, the peace movement contained “pacifists, socialists, environmentalists, church people, libertarians, left wing Labourites, anarchists. Common grounds were opposition to militarism, the nuclear threat, conscription, US bases in NZ” (Foote, 1998: 26).

One group in the peace movement was strongly linked to anarchism, namely the Dunedin Nonviolent Action Group (DNAG). DNAG was founded in the late 1970s. It began as an anarchist study group and then branched out into teaching methods of nonviolent direct action to activists. The group was highly influential in teaching these methods, as from 1978 to 81 they toured the country performing nonviolence workshops mainly to anti-apartheid groups such as HART, as well as to environmental and peace groups. During these workshops, they not only explained the practice of nonviolent direct action, but also openly promoted anarchism – they stressed that organisations needed to be non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian and open rather than secretive. Sonja Antonsen of DNAG remembers the training workshops “as a set of techniques...a training package to work co-operatively together to achieve social change...They could be applied to anything.” These techniques became particularly useful during the 1981 Springbok tour.

The core membership of the group comprised four or five anarcho-pacifists, including Sonja Antonsen – who had been involved in the Dunedin Collective for Women and the Daybreak bookshop – and Allan Cumming, formerly a member of the Dunedin Anarchist Army. Mike Sims, also an anarchist, was involved. Sims published *The Oddity*, an “alternative community newspaper” to the conservative local newspaper the *ODT* (*Otago Daily Times*) in 1979. Many others who were not anarchists, such as Tim Jones and a few Quakers, also took part in the group. Cumming, who had been trained by American Quaker George Laker in methods of nonviolence, believes:

> From about 78 onwards, a lot of people who I would describe as anarchist were involved in nonviolence, because fundamentally anarchism and nonviolence go well together. If you look at a lot of nonviolence literature, it’s anarchist based, not Marxist based. There may be a token Marxist approach, but if you look at the whole organisational structure, the whole system of tactics, the whole approach is very much an anarchist approach...I believe that you can’t be anarchist and violent because violence is coercive.
Cumming authored two well-written pamphlets elucidating his anarcho-pacifist views, *Understanding Nonviolence* (1983) and *How Nonviolence Works* (1985). *How Nonviolence Works* was the larger and more important of the two pamphlets, and was essentially a practical nonviolent direct action handbook for activists. It explained the theory and practice of nonviolent direct action, based upon Cumming’s experiences in the Save Aramoana Campaign, Peace Action Dunedin and the protests against the Springbok tour in 1981.

### The Save Aramoana Campaign and Peace Movement Aotearoa

The Dunedin Nonviolent Action Group helped found the second Save Aramoana Campaign (SAC) in 1979. This campaign was a seminal ecological struggle that successfully stopped the construction of a proposed aluminium smelter at Aramoana, near Dunedin. SAC members occupied the proposed site for the smelter in 1980, and declared it the “independent state of Aramoana,” a state that issued passports and stamps, and established its own border post and a travelling embassy. The campaign gained widespread community support; Tim Jones, for instance, claimed it had 300 active members.

DNAG was often at the core of the SAC. It was influential in setting up the structure of the SAC, which to Cumming was anarchistic – SAC meetings were open to everybody, decisions were made by consensus and SAC attempted to be non-hierarchical. However, the SAC was not wholly anarchistic; its aims were nationalist and lacked anti-capitalist content, for in preference to a smelter run by a foreign multinational, the campaign promoted industry run by local capitalists and locally made products.

DNAG’s influence could also be traced in the SAC’s adoption of nonviolent methods to obstruct the planned construction of the smelter. The threat of 150 people indefinitely occupying and blockading the proposed smelter site was a significant factor in stopping its construction. Antonsen claims the “secret of the success” of SAC was its use of nonviolent action.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, DNAG also played a pivotal role in the formative years of the nationwide umbrella peace group Peace Movement Aotearoa (PMA). PMA was established in 1982 to co-ordinate the various peace groups that had emerged throughout the country. PMA, under the influence of DNAG activists and to the dismay of many who wanted a more centralised body, adopted an anti-authoritarian internal structure. PMA operated on non-hierarchical and decentralised principles. PMA also had a broader focus compared with many peace groups – it opposed sexism and racism, and it supported the rights of indigenous peoples and national liberation struggles in the South Pacific, as well as focussing upon issues relating to peace.

PMA in the early 1980s co-ordinated up to 300 peace groups around the country, and helped to develop the large, vibrant and successful anti-nuclear movement.
of that era. To Cumming, this was proof that the non-hierarchical network model PMA adopted worked – and worked on a large-scale by successfully co-ordinating a significant grassroots movement. This is not to overstate the anarchist influence on the peace movement in this period, however. Feminist, Quaker and liberal influences were far more prominent than anarchist ones.

The first national office of PMA was located in Dunedin from 1982 to 84. It was staffed by people from DNAG including Cumming, Antonsen, Jones and Gabrielle Panckhurst. The first 29 issues of *Peace Movement New Zealand Newsletter*, later renamed *Peacelink*, were produced in Dunedin by DNAG members.

The Dunedin anarcho-pacifists helped form, and were key members of, Peace Action Dunedin in the early 1980s. Peace Action Dunedin was a very active and radical peace group. It had about 200 members in 1982. Its activities included demonstrations against an army recruiting centre, distributing “bread not bombs” leaflets, performing street theatre, holding stalls and producing its newsletter *Permanent Prehostility News* (named after the Pentagon’s description of peace).

Looking back on his involvement in politics, Cumming has stated:

My impression from right through...[is that many people have] openly identified with anarchism, [but] they are not really interested in pushing anarchist politics...they are more interested in the issues. So anarchists seem to be more issue oriented, running
campaigns around issues, whereas my impression of Marxism is that they want to see how they can use the issue to promote Marxism.

This issue-by-issue style had an enormous strength: anarchists found that through collective action with others they could transform some parts of society. Yet such an approach could mean that in an effort to work co-operatively with others, anarchists watered down their politics and accepted the wishy-washy politics of the lowest common denominator. One way to avoid this difficulty was to form separate anarchist groups, which is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

Anarchist and Situationist Groups

From 1973 to 1982

This chapter looks at little-known anarchist and situationist groupings from about 1973 to about 82. It examines explicitly anarchist and libertarian Marxist groupings rather than movements that had some anarchistic leanings and anarchist participation. As many anarchists were influenced by libertarian Marxists, especially Solidarity and the Situationist International, it also examines the fruitful crossover between non-Leninist Marxism and class struggle anarchism that often took place in the seventies.

From about 1973 onwards, there was a proliferation of anarchist groups and groupings in Aotearoa. There were formal anarchist organisations in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North and Christchurch, informal anarchist groupings in Wellington and Dunedin, as well as a number of individuals in other locations like Waitati, Seacliff and Nelson. These groupuscules differed significantly from city to city. For example, they ranged ideologically from carnival anarchists to lifestyle anarchists to libertarian communists to anarcho-pacifists to anarcho-situationists to anarcha-feminists to anarcho-councilists. By about 1982, these groupuscules had faded away. An anarchist current did not re-emerge until the mid- to late 1980s.

These anarchist groupings, for the most part, emanated from the New Left and the protest movement. Indeed, Auckland Solidarity and the Wellington anarchist
groupuscule emerged from the demise of the Resistance bookshops in their respective cities. Some anarchists were ex-members of the Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch PYMs, and some were involved in single-issue protest groups such as the anti-apartheid groups HART and CARE (Citizens’ Association for Racial Equality). A few were disenchanted ex-members of Leninist parties such as the SAL and the CPNZ. Frank Prebble, who was a key figure in the Auckland and Christchurch anarchist scenes, left the Trotskyist SAL in the early 1970s because:

the whole orientation [of the SAL] was towards the party. It wasn’t...a collective thing, it was basically an authoritarian thing that we were there as workers for the party...the members were there to do what the party said...[I was a] pawn, a cog in the machine.

It is difficult to make generalisations about what attracted people to anarchism. Howard Keene of the Christchurch Anarchy Group noted that people came to their meetings for various reasons. Some were just curious about anarchism. Others went along “because they have been involved in traditional left wing politics and have got pissed off,” or “because they are feminists, and see the connection between feminism and anarchism” (Christchurch Anarchists Newsletter, Sept./Oct. 1977). Several other factors were also important, including hatred of work, racism, authority and capitalism, a feeling that Aotearoa was too conformist and authoritarian if not almost fascist under Muldoon, and a suspicion that anarchism was the only radical alternative left. In this vein, Alan Harold wrote:

Mao’s ‘continual revolution’ in China was really the same old boring capitalist communism. Anarchy seemed the only real potential – the only thing left that hadn’t been sucked in, couldn’t be institutionalised. No leaders; no centralised power. It was Creeping Fascism versus the Psychedelic Free Spirit (Cracking Up, 1 (1979): 7).

A New Middle Class Anarchism?

Overseas, observers often assume that anarchism during the 1960s was a student “middle class” phenomenon. The 1960s anarchists in Aotearoa were a student-based movement, so the validity of this claim depends on whether you view students as middle class or as a privileged layer of the working class – or a combination of both. Yet importantly all but one of the anarchist groups of the period 1973–82 were based off-campus. The only campus-based group was one at the University of Waikato in the early 1980s. In fact, the anarchist groupings were predominantly working class in membership, although a small minority came from middle class backgrounds. Most 1970s anarchists were male, young (under twenty-five), Pakeha, unemployed and from working class backgrounds.

It is often understood that anarchism in the “first world” shifted away from a narrow focus upon anti-statism and class struggle to a more pluralistic, individualistic
and counter-cultural viewpoint in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, American anarchist communist Murray Bookchin in his *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971) and *Toward an Ecological Society* (1980) argued that anarchism needed to be re-invented as a praxis opposed to all forms of hierarchy and domination rather than being solely focussed on class exploitation.

In terms of practice, apart from Auckland Solidarity, most groups were not involved in workplace-based struggles. I think this was a major weakness of the period. The Christchurch Anarchy Group was highly influenced by the council communist ideas of Solidarity. Richard Bolstad of the Anarchy Group wrote a pamphlet, *The Industrial Front* (n.d., c. 1977), which included a section on tips for organising within the workplace, yet the Anarchy Group, as far as I am aware, did not actually partake in any workplace troublemaking. Unlike Solidarity, it did not attempt to form a network of militant workers. A few attempted to re-kindle the syndicalist union, the New Zealand Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), but it never got off the ground. In 1976, an Australian and New Zealand General Organising Committee for the IWW was formed, with Hugh McVeigh of Nelson as the Aotearoa IWW contact. A few IWW members in Aotearoa were signed up, and some correspondence between IWW members and the Christchurch Anarchy Group ensued, but the IWW in Australasia in the 1970s took root only in Sydney.

However, the activities of anarchists in the seventies cannot be dismissed as being completely removed from class struggle or devoid of socialist content. For example, the Auckland and Christchurch carnival anarchists, who made up a political wing of the inner-city bohemia of the mid- to late 1970s, frequently carried out satirical stunts. Yet they also formed unemployed groups, organised or supported many pickets against capitalists and took effigies of union bureaucrats to May Day rallies to satirise them. Much of the left tend to look down upon the unemployed as being outside the working class, but I believe the struggle of the unemployed and other beneficiaries is an important part of class struggle. The unemployed are a part of the unwaged wing of the working class.

In terms of theory, most anarchists were not opposed to class struggle. For example, in *The Industrial Front*, Bolstad argued that people should not overlook work and class struggle because:

> Industry remains second only to housework as a method of filling in our waking hours. In that situation precisely because working for a boss is so rotten perhaps it’s about time we thought about what to do...Let's not leave such a crucial area of life to the unions and the vanguard parties to play with...Workers are responsible for our lights going on at night, and for the toast we have in the morning. Unlike the armed forces, for example, they are essential for our survival...The building of a free society is impossible without their conscious and creative effort (Bolstad, c. 1977: 1).

As shall be noted, many, if not most, anarchists in Aotearoa during the 1970s were sympathetic to the council communism of Solidarity and the Situationists,
whose anti-capitalist theories were very much class-based. The majority of 1970s anarchists that I interviewed did not identify with hippies or punks, even though they could be considered to be loosely part of the counter-culture. In fact, many were critical of hippydom and attempted to distance themselves from that milieu.

I think the dominant view in 1970s anarchist circles in Aotearoa was a mix of vaguely artistic, counter-cultural ideas with a belief in class struggle. Andrew Dodsworth of the Wellington anarchists wrote:

[I believe in] the abolition of hierarchical power. The total decolonisation of everyday life...Life free from the boredom, alienation and emptiness of present existence. That’s a negative way of looking at it. Ecstasy. Why fight for anything less? Perhaps our basic premise is that life could and ought to be fun.

This statement would not be out of place in any radical art or underground magazine. Or a CrimethInc book (CrimethInc are fashionable carnival anarchists of the present day, see CrimethInc 2001). Yet then Dodsworth adds that, unlike most hippies, artists and CrimethInc, he believes in:

workers’ self-management of industry, people’s self-management of their communities, and so on. Self-management is the principle that those directly involved in anything should be in control of it. Each factory, freezing works or whatever, would be run by its workers’ council, composed of all those who work there (Dodsworth, 1978: 17).

Likewise, the Auckland Anarchist Activists in their pamphlet Anarchy and the State noted, “we actively work towards a free socialist society” and they stated:

Anarchism is a call to revolution...a revolution that will not only transform the means of production but will also radically change human relationships and build a society based on real equality and freedom. A real socialist society built from below. Built by working people who are directly involved, through workers councils, in making the decisions which affect their lives.

Hence it is clear that class-based anarchism was being redeveloped into a praxis that questioned not only the ownership of the means of production, but also capital’s colonisation of everyday life. Nevertheless, it should be noted, some people who were influenced by new social movements saw class struggle as out of date, if not sexist or racist. Yet this perspective, in my view, was more of a reaction against the vulgar workerism of many leftists, especially Leninists, who worshipped the male blue-collar factory worker and generally overlooked white-collar workers, female-dominated work—especially unpaid domestic labour—and the unemployed. Factory workers were a minority within the working class during the 1970s. White-collar workers outnumbered blue-collar workers, work in the services was more common than manual work, and more females were being drawn into the workforce.
ANARCHIST AND SITUATIONIST GROUPS 1973–82

Solidarity, Anti-Racism and Lumpen Activism: Anarchism in Auckland

Auckland Solidarity (1973–4)

Graeme Minchin, Steve Tanner and Harry Robinson formed Solidarity in 1973. About ten people were involved, including Peter Elliot. Robinson had been in the Auckland PYM, where he was known as “Harry the Red.” Minchin was involved in Auckland Resistance when he helped set up Auckland Solidarity. Auckland Resistance folded in 1973 because the tide of radicalism had turned, and few customers went into the shop. Auckland Solidarity inherited some resources, such as a small library, from the demise of Auckland Resistance. These resources were later passed on to the Auckland Anarchist Activists.

The group was not named after, nor was it organisationally linked to, Solidarity in the UK. They liked Solidarity material and were influenced by it, however it is probable that Solidarity never knew of their existence (I have referred to Solidarity in Auckland as “Auckland Solidarity” and Solidarity in the UK as “Solidarity” to avoid confusion).

Auckland Solidarity focussed upon working class struggle. Their main activity was leafleting. They bought the Earwig offset press from Heather McInnes and distributed their leaflets in working class South Auckland. For example, on Labour Day in 1974 Auckland Solidarity produced 1,800 copies of an anti-capitalist leaflet that ten people distributed in shopping centres, bus stations and pubs. Minchin and Tanner took jobs in a glass factory in South Auckland in an effort to encourage and get involved in rank-and-file militancy. Minchin said he was “involved in rank-and-file health and safety issues against the…union delegate as much as the management…The work [in the glassworks] was incredibly boring and horrible.” Minchin thought the Engineers’ Union bureaucracy was “corrupt.”

The Strike Wave of the 1970s

The 1970s are often remembered for the rise of new social movements and identity politics. As a result, the significant strike waves and union movement of the 1970s have often been neglected. Many unions took a muted radical turn in the 1970s, and many were involved in political struggles. For example, there was much union action against visiting US nuclear warships and the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) bill in 1977. Unions also supported the occupation of Bastion Point.

The long boom ended in about 1973–4, and economic recession set in. The mid-1970s experienced the highest amount of officially recorded strike activity in the history of Aotearoa, even more than 1951. In 1976, 201,085 workers, representing 19% of the workforce took part in strikes, the highest participation rate since figures...
have been kept. In contrast, 37,458 workers took part in strikes in 1968, 86,005 in 1971 and 115,865 in 1973. Increasing numbers of white-collar workers took action. On 20 September 1979, workers went out on a one-day general strike called for by the Federation of Labour (FOL), the first nationwide general strike in the history of Aotearoa (a general strike was called for in 1913, but it did not really eventuate). The strike was in response to Muldoon’s threat to nullify a wage increase of 11% for drivers, an increase which the Drivers’ Union and employers had already mutually accepted. Much union activity was largely successful, such as the stopping of the wage freeze of 1976, the general strike of 1979 and the Kinleith dispute of 1980.

Sometimes disputes arose between the bureaucratic FOL leadership and rank-and-file unionists. Some discontented workers decided to organise on the job themselves, forming autonomous site committees and sub-branches of unions, such as the Combined Council of Delegates, which was formed in opposition to the conservative Timberworkers’ Union (see Wildcat/Kinleith ’80).

The government attempted to clamp down on this activity. Muldoon introduced,
or tried to introduce, repressive measures including banning political strikes and imposing penalties for strikes deemed “illegal.” Militant unions were singled out for special treatment. For example, the Wellington Boilermakers’ Union was deregistered in 1976. This strategy backfired somewhat as it enhanced union militancy. Yet greater union militancy often meant greater occupational consciousness rather than greater class consciousness.

One of the more important, and remarkable, industrial disputes of the 1970s was the Auckland ferry case of 1974. Bill Andersen, the Secretary of the Northern Drivers’ Union, was jailed by the Labour Government over a secondary strike in solidarity with a crew that had been sacked from their small ship. This caused a spontaneous wave of protest throughout the country, with widespread wildcat strikes and demonstrations. A union official noted that the rank-and-file was taking over and the situation was getting “out of control.” As a spontaneous general strike loomed, the Labour Government led by Norman Kirk threatened to declare a state of emergency. The day after Andersen was imprisoned, a huge march of at least 10,000 set forth from Queen Street to the Auckland Supreme Court to get Andersen released. Minchin wrote to Richard Suggate of Wellington Resistance:

10,000 marched down Queen Str. here, 40,000 (my est.) out, wed. morn. sell out by Anderson, skinner & co. merely logic of their social (class) situation. showed weaknesses & strengths of T.U. movement, trotskyists raving about crisis of leadership – most militant sections here walked off spontaneously – looked pretty gd. for a while – hasty meet of Ak. Anarchists [ie. Auckland Solidarity] & got out 1 leaflet (Letter, 12 July 1974).

Yet the movement was quashed quickly when Andersen was released after a compromise arrangement was made between the unions and the ferry owner.

By about late 1974 Auckland Solidarity split up, with Minchin leaving for the greener radical pastures of Sydney in 1975. By the late 1970s, it was quite common for a number of anarchists from Aotearoa to move to Australia, where there was a much larger anarchist movement.

The Auckland Anarchist Activists 1975–8

In 1975, out of the remnants of Auckland Solidarity, an informal anarchist grouping was formed in Auckland. This groupuscule sometimes called themselves Auckland Anarchist Activists (AAA). It was based around one or two flats. The first of these flats was at 4 Crummer Road in Ponsonby, which by about 1975 had become a focal point for anarchist activity. Numerous anarchists lived there, including Alan Harold, Bing, Joy Findlay, Honey (whose real name was Tahuia) and Frank Prebble. Bing was a poet and an East Cape Maori who described himself as an individualist anarchist. A few other anarchists who did not reside at Crummer Road were scattered around Auckland at the time, such as Steve Tanner (who was formerly involved in Auckland
Solidarity, and was by that stage a professional printer) and Oliver Robb.

The Crummer Road group purchased the old Socialist Unity Party (SUP) press together with the Ponsonby People’s Union for Survival and Freedom (PU), and set up a printshop in one of the rooms at Crummer Road. They printed much material, including work for the PU. It was unsurprising that some co-operation developed between the anarchists and the PU. As explained in Chapter Two, Maoists in the 1970s could be paradoxically pro-Stalinist and yet somewhat anarchistic at the same time. The People’s Unions of Ponsonby, Wellington and Christchurch were good examples of this. They were Maoist, but most involved did not have formal ties with the CPNZ or other Maoist parties. Rather than party building, the PU took more of a grassroots approach with their belief in “serving the people” – although serving the people was more of a top-down than a bottom-up method. While they supported third world nationalism and New Zealand nationalism against “foreign monopoly,” they also organised many working class community-based activities. For example, the Ponsonby PU organised tenants, supported prisoners and offered advice and information from their shop on Ponsonby Road, from which they also ran a large food co-op that fed 300 families a week.

However, the relationship between Leninists and anarchists was antagonistic overall. Anarchists generally had less impact than Leninists. This was primarily because anarchism was fragmented, lacked nationwide organisation(s), had fewer resources and did not produce regular and long-lasting publications with a wide circulation when compared to Leninist parties such as the Stalinist SUP, the Maoist CPNZ – which became pro-Albanian in 1978 – and the Trotskyist SAL. Yet like the anarchists, Leninists faced the problem of isolation and marginalisation during a time when the majority of the population were not supportive of radical ideas and practices, and thus social democracy and mild, “pragmatic” bread-and-butter trade unionism dominated the left. In 1980, the combined membership of all the Leninist parties was estimated by Bert Roth to be only 500. Nevertheless, these parties often had much more influence than these numbers suggested.

As Leninism was a more established tradition in the 1970s, the anarchists of the period 1973–82 felt as if they were the new kids on the block. Prebble has commented that the anarchist groups he was involved in sought to establish their position on the left by constantly “slagging off” the Leninist parties. Relations with Leninists in other cities fared little better. Sue Lee of the Wellington anarchist grouping notes, “Comms and Trots…thought of us, as far as I can recall, as being completely off the wall, as being totally unrealistic…like little kids or selfish eccentrics.”

**The Auckland City Unemployed Group**

The main project of the Crummer Road grouping was the Auckland City Unemployed Group (ACUG). It was formed in 1976, making it possibly the first unemployed group in Auckland since 1967. Unemployed political organisations were established
in the mid-1970s as a response to the economic downturn of the time. The official unemployment rate was only 0.44% in 1976, rising to 2.27% in 1980 (Boston, 1984: 18). These figures were misleading, however, as many unemployed beneficiaries were on “special work” schemes created by the government. For example, in 1978 the government claimed there were 36,000 unemployed, including those on “special work,” whilst the FOL claimed there were 100,000.

ACUG was a highly energetic group. It leafleted the unemployment office (then the Labour Department) every day of the week for about six months, distributed its pamphlet called Dole Bludger? in Otahuhu, organised public meetings, picketed racist employers, went on the PIG patrols (see below), formed its own part-time work co-operative to finance the group’s activities and published a one-off magazine in 1976 called Dole Drums, named after the claimants’ paper in England. It also picketed the Maori Affairs Department on Waitangi Day, the Auckland Regional Authority for sacking all of their relief workers and the Social Welfare Department. Frank Prebble remembers the co-op doing a concrete job for Tim Shadbolt, who was on the periphery of the group: “Great fun was had by all. Tim wasn’t amused when one night we passed him on the way home from a job we were supposed to complete. We never made good concrete contractors.”

Prebble claims ACUG was one of the most active radical groups in Auckland during the mid-seventies: “The unemployed group and People’s Union were the only really active groups in Auckland at that time. The Communist Party were organising bits and pieces…The Commies if anything were involved in the People’s Union.” As a result of this activity, ACUG attracted a relatively high membership, with about thirty people attending meetings. It was a multi-cultural group and printed its leaflets in a number of Pacific languages, such as Tongan and Samoan. Yet the group was short-lived, as it only lasted about a year.

ACUG was formed by anarchists, and anarchists, such as Oliver Robb, Prebble and Heather, were the main driving force in the group. ACUG claimed it was an “organisation created in response to the harsh economic policies unleashed by Muldoon and his stooges. The A.C.U.G. is not affiliated with any existing political parties or other social groups because we believe the unemployed should organise themselves” (Dole Drums, 1 (1976): 1). Prebble has said:

We campaigned around full employment, ‘cos none of us really wanted to bloody work, it was just a case of having to…you would pick up work and save money up, and then live for a while, and then get another job. You could stay on the dole, but you’d get bumped off onto a relief job.

Robb wrote an article called “Anarchy in Albert Park: An Attack on the ‘Work Ethic’” for The Listener. In it, he noted, “Why should a person work? Why should a person be forced to work at a dull, humiliating job?” and claimed that questioning the work ethic “presents a real threat to the foundations of our industrial society.” I think Robb’s view represented a displacement of the working class refusal of work
from the workplace to the dole. The refusal of work occurred when many workers in the late 1960s and 1970s, particularly those bored by the assembly line, attempted to avoid and subvert work through absenteeism, theft, sabotage and so on (or when forced to work, they demanded to work as little as possible for as much money as possible). Yet the displacement of the refusal of work onto the dole meant a certain degree of marginalisation. While the earlier refusal of work threatened to spread across workplaces and thus form links between different workers and to those outside the workplace, those refusing to work on the dole all too often looked inward rather than outward, and adopted individualistic forms of resistance. ACUG was an exception, however. It was an outward-looking collective that drew unemployed people in through its activism. It also attempted to link up with wage-workers. For example, the group attended a mass stopwork rally in 1976.

Weekly meetings of the ACUG were held at Crummer Road. ACUG was organised along anarchist lines – anyone was allowed to speak at meetings, and tasks were rotated among the group to increase members’ participation. Relations with the local Leninists were strained. Bill Andersen of the SUP was President of the Auckland Trades Council. He tried and failed to force the group to disband and become part of the unemployed group the Trades Council was intending to organise. A public meeting was organised for this end but the union officials failed to turn up!

### ACUG, the PIG Patrols and Other Anti-Racist Activity

ACUG had a marked anti-racist focus. They caused a scandal when Robb exposed alleged racist practices in the Labour Department. Robb was given a relief job in the employment service and found they were complying, in contravention of the Race Relations Act, with racist capitalists. The Labour Department, because of the economic downturn of the mid-1970s, was desperate for jobs and so, it seems, used to comply with employers who did not want Maori or Pacific people applying for jobs, and thus would only send Pakeha to job interviews.

Robb claimed that they pencilled on the vacancy forms whether the job was for (in their words) “whites” or “non-whites” and would even scrawl “no Maoris” or “no Samoan” or “no Polynesian.” Robb exposed this to the media, and the allegations were published on the front page of the *Auckland Star*. The Labour Department denied the claim. Hence a complaint was lodged with the Race Relations Conciliator. Yet the Conciliator found no evidence of the practice. Anarchists alleged that the Labour Department just rubbed out the incriminating evidence.

Before the dawn raids, the Unemployed Group also took part in the PIG (Police Investigation Group) patrols organised by the Polynesian Panthers. These patrols followed, and aimed to tone down, the Auckland Taskforce, who were a special squad of the police notorious for being racist (see Anae et al, 2006). Activists from Nga Tamatoa, the PU and CARE also went on the patrols. The Taskforce was harassing Maori and Pacific people on the street and in pubs at night. Prebble remembers:
We also went on the PIG patrols, which was basically following the Auckland Taskforce... Cos they were a really heavy, nasty bloody bunch...That was before the dawn raids. Basically we kept an eye on the taskforce and they'd know we were there and [so] they used to jump [traffic] lights and we'd follow them and we sort of toned them down quite a bit.

The Dawn Raids and the Polynesian Panthers

Many Pacific people were welcomed into Aotearoa as a cheap labour pool during the boom of the 1960s. Because of racism, the recession and rising unemployment, Muldoon’s National Government decided to scapegoat them. The government accused migrants from the Pacific of staying illegally in Aotearoa, and they tried to deport these “overstayers” to the Pacific Islands in 1976 and 77 using dawn police raids (see Anae et al, 2006). This was clearly racist, as the majority of “overstayers” in Aotearoa were white immigrants from Britain and North America. Police routinely harassed any Polynesian on the street, whether they were Maori or Pacific, and asked them for proof of their citizenship. Some compared this situation with the pass laws in apartheid South Africa. Anarchists stood back from the campaign against this – they felt it was more appropriate to leave the issue to Polynesian groups such as the Polynesian Panthers. However, they did produce a leaflet urging communities to set up neighbourhood defence committees, arguing that
people needed to act for themselves – rather than have leftists act for them – and to physically stop police harassment.

The Polynesian Panther Movement, formed in 1971 with a largely Auckland-based Pacific membership, was modelled on the Black Panthers, a militant, revolutionary group in the US (see Anae et al, 2006 for more information including interviews with Polynesian Panthers). It was later renamed the Polynesian Panther Party. They called for a revolution against racism, oppression and capitalism. Like much of the New Left, they combined Leninist and anarchistic political styles. They blended the Leninist emphasis upon disciplined leadership and “revolutionary nationalism” – as opposed to the cultural nationalism of some Maori groups such as Nga Tamatoa – with a more anarchistic approach, as exemplified by its “community programme” that involved establishing local counter-institutions in the Polynesian community. These included legal aid and prisoner support programmes, homework centres and food distribution (the latter “community
service” was undertaken in association with the PU). Anarchists were in contact with the Panthers throughout the mid-seventies, especially as the Panthers were also based in Ponsonby.

**Cultural Revolutionaries: Napier Street 1976–7**

In late 1976, the anarchists from Crummer Road relocated to a roomy house in Napier Street in Freemans Bay, near Ponsonby. The Napier Street anarchist *groupuscule* involved about ten people – Frank Prebble, Graeme Minchin (who had returned from Australia for a while), Maggie Kolff, Alan Harold, John Markie (later Segovia), Martin, Gary Pithie, Chris(tine) Duggan and Nikki Ellis. Many other people resided there for a brief period, like David Homes (who was manager of Wellington Resistance a few years before), Karen Lee and David Eggleton. Eggleton later became a well-known poet-ranter. Around this was a larger social circle, in which people like Bryan and Dennis Harold were involved.

The Napier Street *groupuscule* was part of the artistic/alternative Ponsonby milieu – this was well before Ponsonby was gentrified. Ponsonby in the 1970s was populated by a mixture of working class Polynesians (especially Pacific people), students and bohemians. As such, the Napier Street grouping fused art and politics. They printed two issues of a colourful local underground art magazine called *The Ponsonby Rag*, edited by Bryan Harold (Bryan, Alan and Dennis Harold were brothers). *The Ponsonby Rag* included poetry by Eggleton alongside cartoons about starving anarchists eating the police for dinner. The *groupuscule* also printed *The Ponsonby Morning Shower* (1977) – a specifically anarchist “spasmodical” that lasted one issue.

Minchin has said:

> Being an anarchist is part of that attempt to become complete or whole human beings. Understanding that that creative part of you is part of yourself. That’s the part that conventional politics, Marxist politics, will always deny...I think an integral part of anarchism is that whole thing – what did the Spanish call it? – the integral personality...The argument is that those people are capable of making revolution...It’s very hard to change the world [so] one of the areas that we can look at is how we ourselves are fucked up.

Minchin contrasts the approach of Auckland Solidarity with Napier Street:

> In Solidarity, we tried to get out there and influence the wider public and failed and now in this period [Napier Street] what we are trying to do is build up our own resources and fight this political battle within ourselves, attempt to become more capable people, while at the same time attempt to get a message across...Our real project...– and we were a total failure, of course – was to forge...an artistic anarchist political community.
Graeme Minchin wrote this colourful introduction to the Auckland Anarchist Activists in the *Ponsonby Rag*, 1 (1976). The drawing is by Alan Harold. The piece gives some impression of the mixture of art and politics that occurred in the Napier Street anarchist grouping.
The Napier Street groupuscule disrupted the Queen’s visit to Auckland in 1976. They decided to mimic the Queen. Alan Harold made some grotesque latex masks of the Queen that were painted a sickly white pallor. About six people dipped their hands in white paint up to their elbows – to imitate white gloves – donned dresses and gumboots and then walked up Queen Street before the Queen arrived. They waved to the crowd, receiving a warm response. Then they jumped into a Morris Minor convertible about five minutes before the “royal” cavalcade was due, drove past, and waved to the crowd, receiving enthusiastic applause particularly from school children. As well, they hung a huge “FUCK THE MONARCHY” banner across the back of their house. The banner could be clearly seen from the route that the royal cavalcade took.

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The Napier Street grouping had many qualities in common with carnival anarchism. They sought to combine individuality with collectivity, and to mix the cultural revolution with a socio-economic one. They were highly influenced by the cultural-artistic radicalism that was superficially represented by the Yippees and more deeply by the Situationists.

Yet the term carnival anarchism gives the misleading impression that the Napier Street grouping were only concerned with artistic subversion and guerrilla theatre. Clearly, this was not the case. They were political activists as well. They took part in the protest marches of the time – anti-apartheid marches, pro-abortion rallies, anti-SIS protests and anti-“dawn raids” demonstrations. They also supported the occupation
of Bastion Point. Napier Street was a varied group of many different tendencies, and perhaps is better categorised as an anarchist synthesis group – that is, a group that combines all the different strands of anarchism under one umbrella.

By the mid-1970s, the protest movement had not disappeared, but it was tailing off. Weekly protest marches of about 500 to 1,000 people took place every Friday night up and down Queen Street, with Bill Lee of the Auckland PYM and CPNZ prominent on the megaphone. When sit-downs occurred on one side of the street during these rallies, anarchists would try to escalate the situation. They would sit down on the unoccupied side of the street, much to the annoyance of the organisers of the march. Such more militant tactics were not uncommon during the mid-seventies. At one anti-apartheid protest in Karangahape Road, a couple of traffic police parked their cars in the middle of the street and ordered the protesters to stop marching. Yet the demonstrators ignored their request and literally walked right over their cars!

Prebble claimed that by late 1977 the Napier Street groupuscule became inward-looking and self-destructive, and so began to break up. As many drifted away, the circle of friends who made up the groupuscule kept getting smaller. Looking back on Auckland anarchism in this period, Prebble has said, “We were a fairly active sort of group. We never ran things like anarchist discussion groups or anything like that. We never really seriously looked at organisation. It was always activism, doing things, getting things done.” However, this did not mean they were anti-theory, as they read widely. Yet when asked what their strategy was, Prebble replied, “We
didn’t have one really, we didn’t think much about what we were doing…You know, there was no thought put into it at all. That was the crazy thing about it.” Perhaps it was unsurprising then that some Christchurch anarchists considered the Auckland anarchists to be a bunch of Yippees.

The Maori Land Rights Movement and Bastion Point

By the mid-1970s, a remarkable renaissance in Maori culture, society and protest had occurred. Maori protest was centred on the issue of land rights (the on-going dispossession and enclosure of Maori land), and peaked with the land march of 1975 and the occupations at Raglan and Bastion Point during 1977 and 78. In 1977, the local Maori iwi (tribe), Ngati Whatua, occupied Takaparawha/Bastion Point in Auckland. This was in protest over government plans to sell the historic Ngati Whatua land for an expensive urban housing sub-division. The occupation was widely supported. Besides staunch support from Ngati Whatua, many Maori from other iwi joined in and much of the Pakeha left did too. The Auckland Trades Council declared a green ban on the site, which meant no unions worked on it. Bastion Point became one of the largest acts of civil disobedience in the history of Aotearoa. Anarchists supported the occupation in a very minor way. They used to occasionally stay overnight at Bastion Point, especially Bing and Harry Tam (who was an anarchist fellow traveller). After 506 days of occupation, 600 police evicted the occupiers in 1978, resulting in 222 arrests.
Squatting and *Lumpen*

By 1978, anarchist activities in Auckland had quietened down. A few individuals in Auckland were keen about anarchism, such as Wayne Innes, but no anarchist group was formed. Innes wrote a couple of books called *Don’t Pay Taxes* (1978) and *How to Survive in Suburbia* (1981). In 1979, Alan Harold and friends produced *Cracking Up*, an artistic anti-authoritarian magazine.

Overseas, it was common in the 1970s for anarchists to play pivotal roles in inner-city squatting campaigns. In cities like Sydney, anarchists became involved in political squatting for a variety of reasons, such as achieving a little bit of freedom, avoiding being hassled by landlords, overcoming housing shortages and refusing to pay rent – a slogan they used was “the only fair rent is no rent.” In Sydney, anarchists squatted houses in Darlinghurst, Glebe, Woolloomooloo, Pyrmont and Bondi. Many anarchists from Aotearoa like Minchin, Prebble and Alan Harold lived in these squats. These three took part in a squat in Auckland in 1980, when, together with three or four others including Linda MacDougall, they squatted the old People’s Union building on Ponsonby Road. People from the squat also operated a printshop in Symonds Street where they produced some leaflets and one issue of an anarchist magazine in 1980 called *Lumpen* – the reference being to the “lumpenproletariat,” the unemployed underclass that Marx believed had little revolutionary potential as he thought it was too unruly and undisciplined. *Lumpen* called itself “a collective rave from the lunatic fringe” and was semi-punk in its collage-like layout style.
Minchin produced a playful anarchist “situ dada cutup” news-sheet called the No-Mad Chronic-Ill. The squat lasted about three months – they were forced out after the water was cut off.

**Anarchism in Christchurch Until the Late 1970s**

**The Anarchy Collective and *Anarchy* Magazine**

In 1975, Jock Spence and Steve Hey founded the Christchurch Anarchy Collective. Hey was a delegate in the Timberworkers’ Union and a sympathiser of the CPNZ, but he became disillusioned with Marxism and the Communist Party after reading *The Floodgates of Anarchy* (1971) by Albert Meltzer and Stuart Christie. Jock Spence, from Scotland, was living at the Chippenham urban commune. He was in his late twenties – thus he was older than most other anarchists – and was experienced in anarchist circles as he had been part of the London anarchist scene. Grant McDonagh recollects Spence “called himself a libertarian communist.” Spence and Hey decided to produce a Solidarity-style magazine. They advertised around town. McDonagh, at that stage an anarchist with a situationist bent, became involved.

*Anarchy* was published in 1975, with Hey and McDonagh editors. The first issue had a print run of 350 copies. It was possibly the first major and lengthy anarchist magazine produced in Aotearoa. It described itself as anarchist “with a leaning
towards situationism,” and so was a mixture of Situationist slogans like “DISPUTE EVERYTHING THAT CAN BE DISPUTED” and anarchist critiques of parliamentary democracy, the media and the Labour Party.

Anarchy was the type of magazine produced as a first time effort and so it tended to be a bit crude. For instance, it optimistically stated “we could have utopia tomorrow before morning teabreak if every person in New Zealand decided to reject the authority of every creeping fascist that rules their life” (Anarchy, 1 (1975): 3). Only two issues of Anarchy were published.

The British anarchist magazine Black Flag liked Anarchy as it was supportive of working class struggle, and unappreciative of reformist and pacifist anarchism. But the anarchist synthesist magazine Freedom (London) lambasted Anarchy as a “torrent of bellyaching about the misdoings of New Zealand social democratic politicians laced with gobbets of ill-digested situationism and weird comments on the British anarchist papers” (“D. L. M.” in Freedom, 6 Sep. 1975: 16).

In 1975 the Anarchy Collective was holding weekly meetings. It grew into a small group of half a dozen including Spence, Hey, McDonagh, Margaret Flaws, Katherine Mulcahey and Anthony Hubbard (later a journalist with the Listener). The group split up after Hey moved to Australia and McDonagh relocated to the North Island.

Anarchist Publications and Do-It-Yourself Printing

Anarchy heralded the arrival of a spate of anarchist publications from 1975 to 82, so it is useful to provide a brief overview of the anarchist press during this period. Besides the Ponsonby Morning Shower and Lumpen, which, as noted above, were produced by two different Auckland anarchist groupings, a number of anarchist publications appeared. These included the Christchurch Anarchists Newsletter (1976–8, fifteen issues), KAT (an anarchist/situationist magazine from Wellington, 1978, eight issues), Impulse (Palmerston North, 1977–8, three issues), the No-Mad Chronic-Ill (Auckland, 1980, one issue), Black Mail (Christchurch, 1982, two issues), South-East News (Christchurch, 1982, two issues) and Fascism and Boredom (Wellington, 1982, one issue). In addition, a number of publications were not explicitly anarchist but were written, published and printed by anarchists: Dole Drums (Auckland, 1976, one issue), The Ponsonby Rag (Auckland, 1976–7, two issues), The Boot (Christchurch, 1978, two issues) and Cracking Up (Auckland, 1979, one issue). Many of the publications, such as The Ponsonby Rag, Lumpen and Black Mail, looked more like the visually explosive and psychedelic underground press of the early 1970s rather than conventional political publications.

Printing took up much of the activity of anarchist groups. Most of these publications lasted only one or two issues. This was partly because of the short-lived nature of these groups, and partly because there were no computers or photocopiers in the 1970s. To print material meant buying an expensive and antiquated offset printing press, and then spending many hours trying to get it to work. For example,
the Auckland Anarchist Activists acquired a press used by the US military in Aotearoa during World War II that they found almost impossible to operate. Learning offset printing was like learning an entire trade. Hence it was very difficult to print material consistently and regularly. With today’s technology, they probably could have printed half a dozen or more issues of a magazine with the same effort that went into putting out one or two issues in the 1970s.

**Self-Management, the Christchurch Anarchy Group and the Chippenham Commune**

The Anarchy Collective became the Christchurch Anarchy Group in about 1976. It revolved around the Chippenham-Mansfield urban commune. Chippenham, formed in 1970, was not an anarchist community – indeed, some regarded it as a hippy middle class commune. It still exists today. Back then, Chippenham was a successful commune that even had its own bakery, called Vital Foods. It was not an escapist commune; instead, it was a hive of political activity. For example, the original meeting that established Greenpeace New Zealand was held there, and the
first Christchurch women’s refuge and the Four Avenues alternative high school – a libertarian high school – were set up by commune members. By the mid-1970s, Chippenham had a strong feminist focus. The commune attempted to collectively raise children, and a Chippenham-based men’s consciousness raising group brought out the magazine *Men Against Sexism*.

About ten people were involved in the Anarchy Group, most of whom lived at Chippenham. The group involved Jock Spence, Margaret Flaws, Howard Keene, Mike Reid, Richard Bolstad, Dick Arlidge and a few others. The key figure was Spence because of his energy and his experience in the British anarchist movement. It is interesting to note the comments of Richard Bolstad, who was formerly involved in the NZSSSA and the Christchurch PYM, when comparing the giddiness and excitement of the early 1970s to the approach of the Anarchy Group in the mid-1970s:

> In 1970, if you asked me the point of being an anarchist is that revolution is around the corner...By 1975, I would have said the point of being an anarchist is to offer support... and linking, and what they call the generalisation of learning within people struggling for social change, rather than providing an overall model of where we are going.

So, for Bolstad, with the Anarchy Group “things were more thought out, more planned, and focussed upon how to build up support and links.” Along the lines of Solidarity in the UK, they believed revolutionary organisations should link people together by sharing their everyday experiences of exploitation (and resistance to that exploitation), so that they could learn from each other and build a new society from the grassroots.

Spence and Bolstad of the Anarchy Group were strongly influenced by Solidarity and their advocacy of self-management. A leaflet of the group defined anarchism as a non-statist “society based upon local and industrial peoples [sic] assemblies, federating with elected and revocable delegates in workers councils.” The Solidarity influence could also be traced in a number of pamphlets written by the group, especially those by Bolstad (*An Anarchist Analysis of the Chinese Revolution* (1976) and *The Industrial Front* (n.d., c. 1977)). Indeed, a substantial section of *The Industrial Front* was a summary of Cornelius Castoriadis’ pamphlet *Workers’ Councils and the Economics of a Self-Managed Society* (reprinted 1984 [1957]). Castoriadis was the chief influence on Solidarity. I believe *The Industrial Front* was an important pamphlet as it questioned the often repeated assumption of many radicals that proletarians have been integrated into the system. It also grasped that it is crucial to learn from how working class people historically have resisted capitalism to give us some idea of how capitalism can be overthrown in the present and future. *The Industrial Front* contained a useful broad historical overview of revolutionary upsurges.

The Christchurch Anarchy Group was also influenced by women’s liberation. Hence it focussed upon opposing things like the authoritarian nuclear family. Margaret Flaws commented in an interview about the group in the *Christchurch Press* that in the nuclear family “we learn our roles in society, we learn obedience,
submissiveness, and become cogs in the big wheel” (12 April 1978).

The Christchurch Anarchy Group was the longest lasting formal anarchist organisation of the seventies, and the influence of Chippenham as a stable political centre was crucial to its longevity. From 1976 to 78, they published the Christchurch Anarchy/Anarchists Newsletter, an information bulletin that contained anarchist news from both here and abroad as well as acting as a forum for letters.

The Anarchy Group was a discussion group rather than an activist group, although many individuals in the group were involved in various activist organisations – for example, Mike Reid and Margaret Flaws worked at CORSO (Council of Relief Services and Organisations) and Flaws was also involved in SOS (Sisters Overseas Service) – an organisation that helped women get abortions in Australia. Eve and Jock Spence produced the monthly Non-Sexist Children’s Books at Chippenham, one of the first publications of its type in Aotearoa. The only time the Anarchy Group appeared publicly as a collective at a demonstration, Geoff Fischer criticised them for supporting a liberal reformist group called the Coalition of People’s Rights.

The group disbanded by about 1978. Jock Spence returned to Britain in 1977 and became involved with the Swansea anarchists who produced a successful and popular community paper, Alarm, that exposed local government corruption. Spence wrote:

> We felt it was very important not to end up with the usual boring left-wing paper format. We tried to achieve the following: 1. Produce a paper that was interesting – the corruption investigations have been the backbone of the paper. 2. To avoid an intellectual approach. 3. To use a lot of humour. 4. To keep the paper short – people can’t be bothered reading page after page. 5. To keep the paper cheap… 6. To produce the paper weekly… 7. To make the paper blatantly anti-authoritarian. 8. To keep the organisation of the paper fluid and simple, so that anyone can contribute (Jock Spence, undated letter to Christchurch Anarchy Group).

The Swansea group included many of the founders of the infamous anarchist group Class War in the 1980s, such as Ian Bone. Dick Arlidge and Flaws provided the swan-
song for the Anarchy Group when they fooled Russian authorities into believing they were a Stalinist splinter group from the SUP. Subsequently, they were given a free trip to an anti-nuclear conference in Vladivostok in 1979. Flaws remembers “talking a whole lot of bullshit on Russian TV” like saying their paper was “in honour of the people of Russia.” Local Stalinists were not amused upon their return.

**Affinity Groups**

The dominant organisational form of anarchists and New Leftists in Aotearoa throughout the sixties and seventies was the informal *groupuscule* of political friends or affinity group. Geoff Fischer was highly critical of this approach:

> I note with regret the recent tendencies of the Christchurch anarchy group to adopt the theory of the ‘affinity group’…The ‘affinity group’ concept is in reality nothing more than a euphemism for political cliques. Anarchist affinity groups display all the classical characteristics of political cliques – acute paranoia, isolation from the mainstream of society, and deviation into elitist or terrorist activities (Letter to the editor, *Christchurch Anarchists Newsletter*, April 1978: 1).

Yet the Christchurch anarchists were not paranoid nor did they support terrorism. Further, they did not suggest the affinity group was the perfect model for radical organisation. However, as most anarchist groups were informal groups of friends, it seems pertinent to consider Fischer’s criticisms in relation to the broader anarchist movement. Fischer’s main point was that affinity groups presented an impersonal front to outsiders. People within affinity groups often distrusted people outside their social circle. Because affinity groups were based upon friendships, often the only way someone could become involved was by befriending someone in the group.

As Fischer argued, affinity groups tended to develop into isolated cliques. Andrew Dodsworth in this regard has highlighted the isolation of the Wellington anarchists and situationists:

> We were living in a world of our own. Hardly any of us had jobs, and those that did certainly didn’t see them as anything but peripheral to our lives. Our contact with, and understanding of, the workers who we were urging to seize power (Grant [McDonagh] was particularly fond of spraypainting the slogan ‘All power to the workers’ councils,’ overlooking the trivial objection that there were no workers’ councils to seize power, even if any other of the preconditions for this had been met) was practically non-existent. Like the thirties poets, we wrote as if we were addressing an audience of thousands, when in fact we were speaking to each other.

Affinity groups also tended to be dominated by informal elites. In the absence of clear, transparent and democratic decision-making procedures, one or two
personalities in the group – invariably vocal Pakeha males – were likely to dominate. This seems to be the case even in groups that attempted to avoid having leaders. For example, considering an anarchist group from an earlier period, some members of the Anarchist Commune viewed Mike Donaldson and Paul Bailey as their leaders, which came as a shock to Donaldson because he thought the Commune had a fair commitment to living collectively and the IWW concept “we have no leaders, we are all leaders.”

The informal groups of the 1960s and 1970s tended to have informal rules that were unquestioned. For example, Donaldson recollects:

None of the rules [of the Anarchist Commune] were actually discussed openly or worked out democratically...[so] that the rules that did exist were almost by definition sexist...
I remember suggesting we had a roster for domestic labour but I lost that particular argument because this was ‘telling me what to do, and you couldn’t tell me what to do.’

Unfortunately, people were unlikely to question informal hierarchies in an affinity group because it was seen as subverting personal friendships and undermining group cohesion.

Yet affinity groups had many advantages. As they were built upon mutual trust, they were highly dynamic and able to act quickly without being impeded by formal, bureaucratic procedures. They could move quickly from issue to issue, and were able to support a wide-range of causes. Affinity groups gave people the support of a sort of extended family of like-minded souls, and thus could at times temporarily overcome the atomisation of everyday life under capitalism – and the difficulties radicals faced in swimming against the current.

For more organisationally minded anarchists, the fleeting nature of affinity groups highlights the need for such informal organisations to be supplemented – but not replaced – by formal, continuous organisations. These outward-looking organisations would take part in on-going struggles and campaigns, and would be open for anyone to join if they agreed with the group’s basic outlook. Hence they could exist independently of groups of friends. Therefore, if a circle of friends disintegrated or left such an organisation, it would still continue and be able to pass knowledge on to new members.

People who are opposed to formal organisations argue that such organisations inevitably become conservative, bureaucratic and act as a brake upon radical activity. Certainly, this has happened to many anarchist organisations in the past, but to suggest this is inevitable is to assert any formal organisation cannot be run on anarchist lines, which to me infers that an anarchist society is pretty much impossible – as every society requires some degree of formal organisation. Overall, I believe there are disadvantages and advantages for both formal and informal organisations, and to wholeheartedly denounce one or the other is suspect. I think a mixture of the two is required, and a wearisome eye ought to be cast on both informal and formal hierarchies.
Shoplifting and the General Erection: Perth Street and the Union of the Unemployed

Independent of the Christchurch Anarchy Group, a small anarchist groupuscule formed around a house in Perth Street, Christchurch, 1978. Perth Street involved Frank Prebble (formerly of the Auckland Anarchist Activists), Kerry Morrison, Sharon Sanders, Sharleen Baird and Joy Prebble – but only Frank Prebble and Morrison identified with anarchism. The Perth Street group formed an organised shoplifting collective, in the tradition of anarchist illegalism, which used to specialise in pilfering from the Keystores chain of stores. McDonagh, who moved to Christchurch in 1978, claims the Perth Street group was “in a very isolated headspace from society. It was all sort of ‘Fight the Bastards!’ you know, a real violent militant thing, everything that you did had to be really criminal.”

As a protest against the 1978 election, the Perth Street grouping constructed a ten-foot tall paper maché penis. They called it the “general erection.” The penis was dropped off in the middle of an intersection in downtown Christchurch on election eve. Then they handed out anti-election leaflets and quickly vanished. Greg Waite of the Union of the Unemployed stayed behind, and witnessed the police – much to the amusement of passers-by – attempt to stuff the penis into a police van. It did not fit! They stood on it, jumped on it, hit it and eventually stuffed it into the van.

Frank Prebble has commented that the crazy pranks they used to pull off did not seek to involve new people:

> Although they were quite positive things, they were inward-looking. They still involved small groups of people, maybe ten, maybe less, people in them. And like that affinity group [in Perth Street] it got smaller and smaller and in the end sort of disintegrated…They [the stunts] were good for us, good at the time, but they weren’t on-going organising.

The primary purpose of the stunts was inward-looking: they boosted the morale of the group, and gave participants a sense of collective creativity and fun.

All in Perth Street were members of the local unemployed group, the Union of the Unemployed, which was originally formed in 1977 by CPNZ-aligned Maoists as an alternative to CHUG (Christchurch Unemployed Group, of which Kerry Morrison was a founding member). Yet the people from CHUG became involved in the Union, and the Maoists and Trotskyists eventually left. About fifteen people took part in the Union, including independents, Young Christian Workers and anarchists. It was a largely non-sectarian organisation, but there was some tension between the Christians and the anarchists.

The Union of the Unemployed picketed, and then briefly occupied, the “Social Warfare” office after they had dismissed an unemployed man from his relief job for requesting an inquiry into poor relief job conditions. The occupation was effective as he was promptly re-instated to his job, but police started to patrol the building...
ANARCHIST AND SITUATIONIST GROUPS 1973–82

Left to right: Sharleen Baird, Frank Prebble and Mike.

The Community Garden of the Union of the Unemployed, Perth Street, Christchurch, 1978.
Left to right: Sharon Sanders, Mike, Kerry Morrison and Frank Prebble.
to ward off further direct action. So the union decided to organise their own patrol squad. They dressed up as police, complete with mock uniforms and plastic helmets, and proceeded to patrol the Social Welfare office. Although they were ejected, this protest was also quite effective as relations with Social Welfare were far more cordial afterwards. The Union’s other activities included leafleting, performing street theatre, organising small demonstrations and supporting pickets of wage-workers. It established a community garden at Perth Street, and then served the garden produce at unemployed meal nights. They established a printshop where they produced *The Boot*, the Union’s paper. As with the ACUG, they came into conflict with the local Leninists and the local Trades Council. The latter wanted to remove the militants from the union.

**Anarchism in Other Centres and the Unconventions**

**Impulse (Palmerston North)**

In 1976, an anarchist group emerged in Palmerston North that involved about a dozen people (Red Parsons, John Henderson, Steve Luke, Dave Smith, Karen Sutton, Liz Price and others). The group published the smartly produced publication *Impulse* for three issues over 1977–8. Some from Impulse attended Massey University, but the majority were not students. Impulse was a city-based group rather than a university one, an unusual occurrence in a university town. On the periphery of Impulse was Allan Cumming, who was at Massey University, editing the student paper *CHAFF* in 1976. Cumming remembers Impulse as worker-oriented – they had friends in the trade union movement like Roger Middlemass. Cumming said, “There wasn’t much happening politically in Palmerston North…Impulse was the only radical group around, so everybody who was into radical politics” was drawn to it, including a few lecturers who went to some of their meetings.

The Impulse group came into existence mainly through the efforts of Red Parsons. Parsons was a charismatic anarchist communist, and according to Bruce Grenville, looked “Rasputin-ish.” Impulse carried out graffiti campaigns, held study groups, produced an introductory fold-out on anarchism in *CHAFF* in 1977 and organised an anti-election campaign against local government elections under the slogan “No man [sic] is good enough to be another man’s master.” This campaign had some effect, as it made the local paper, and Parsons was interviewed on local radio. By late 1978, Impulse had disappeared.

**Wellington: Graham Rua, Iris Mills and Persons Unknown**

Graham Rua met Iris Mills in a courtroom after he was arrested at an anti-Vietnam War demo in Wellington. Mills was his probation officer. Rua was on the Wellington
Resistance Bookshop Committee in 1973. In 1973–4, Rua and Mills produced a few posters and anarchist leaflets in Wellington under the name of the People’s Revolutionary Movement. In a list of radical organisations produced by the Wellington Resistance Bookshop, the People’s Revolutionary Movement was also described as “Wellington Solidarity.” Rua and Mills then departed for England, where they helped to produce *Black Flag*. They both became embroiled in the infamous “Persons Unknown” trial in the late seventies, the biggest political trial involving anarchists in the UK since the 1972 Angry Brigade trial. According to press reports, Rua fled after the first arrests. Six anarchists, including Mills and the author Ronan Bennett, were charged in 1978 with “conspiracy with persons known and unknown to cause explosions.” *Freedom* described the trial as a “clumsy frame-up” because the police did not have any evidence. So they dropped the charges and slapped on a new charge of a “conspiracy to overthrow society.” The six were found not guilty.

*KAT*, an Anti-Authoritarian Spasmodical of the Libertarian Ultra-Left

Cathy Quinn and Gerry Eady arrived in Aotearoa in 1965 from London. Quinn came from a family of Glasgow Stalinists – her father was a founding member of the Scottish Communist Party – and as an act of rebellion, she became an anarchist. Eady was associated with the British Stalinists, but he left after the Hungarian invasion of 1956, and became involved with some council communist groups. In Wellington, neither Quinn nor Eady participated in any anarchist group. Rather, their importance lay in passing their knowledge and experience on to younger anarchists, many of whom stayed at their house during the mid- to late 1970s. Quinn was heavily involved in local community politics, later becoming a councillor for Hutt City. Eady – who never identified with anarchism, but was keen on Solidarity – was involved in the Public Services Association (PSA) union. He was the Executive Officer of the PSA in the early 1980s.

By 1976–7, a loose and informal anarchist grouping connected with the Resistance/Liberation bookshop formed in Wellington. It involved people such as Karen Lee (who lived at Resistance), Sue Lee (Karen Lee’s sister) and Andrew Dodsworth (who was running Resistance). When Grant McDonagh showed up in Wellington in 1978, he got in touch with this grouping. McDonagh states, “It was like all of these middle
class kids in this state of post-hippy gloom, pre-punk gloom...We sort of started doing this magazine [KAT]...The idea was that it was a street or an area magazine, but with the political content.” KAT stood for Kensington and Aro Street Times, the inner-city area the grouping was based around. Some new people, such as Graham Markie, became involved.

KAT called itself an anti-authoritarian spasmodical of the “libertarian ultra-left (situationists, anarchists and libertarian socialists).” Eight rough and ready issues were published, with a print run of about 200 copies for each issue. KAT was irreverent and confrontational, full of attacks on bureaucrats and calls for an ecstatic and passionate political praxis of everyday life that would ultimately aim for “total unemployment” and a classless society “where everyone would live in their own cathedral.” “We want pleasure, joy, celebration not sacrifice. General contestation makes the limited opposition of purely economic struggle a farce...Each of us owes him/her a little life” (KAT, 7 (1978): 3, original emphasis). According to McDonagh, the aims of the magazine were:

first to supersede, in the sense of politicizing, the rough eclectic format of publications then current in Auckland, particularly the Ponsonby Rag, and second to undertake an exhaustive anti-authoritarian critique of the New Zealand left, Marxist and anarchist alike.
Most of the writing was by McDonagh, but Sue Lee, Graham Markie, Andrew Dodsworth, Tom McNeight, Ross Davison and Gary Foster (among others) contributed articles, cartoons, poetry and short stories. In all, about ten to fifteen people contributed material to KAT, of whom about six were anarchists. The KAT grouping also carried out a large graffiti campaign in the Aro Street area.

KAT was more intellectual and analytical than the other anarchist publications of the time. Some passages could be difficult to comprehend for those uninitiated with Situationist jargon. For example:

Kat demands TOTAL attention from REAL radicals – those already committed to attacking the totality of alienated social praxis, those who are ready for a final solution to the problem of recuperation – Generalised Contestation preceding and leading to Generalised Self Management (KAT, 1 (1978): 3).

The Situationist influence is evident in a leaflet written by Dodsworth:

The transformation of the city into a living work of art/playground must begin now. Crayoned slogans or drawings, spraypainting, posters, murals, vandalism, anything that thwarts the planners and the managers. We must begin to steal back our own lives and spaces. WE ARE NOTHING – WE MUST BECOME EVERYTHING.

**Hamilton, Waitati and Seacliff**

Apart from the Dunedin anarcho-pacifists, whom I have already outlined in the previous chapter, a few other anarchists were scattered around Aotearoa. In the late 1970s, there were a few anarchists in Hamilton, such as Nigel Pauli and Mike Goodman. During the early 1980s, there was an anarchist group at the University of Waikato but virtually nothing is known about it.

In Waitati, near Dunedin, Bruce Grenville – brother of John Henderson of Impulse – set up an anarchist printing press in 1977–8. He bought the press from proceeds from his imaginary satirical state, Occussi-Ambeno, which printed rare stamps that were popular with some philatelists. Grenville noted in *The State Adversary* that Occussi-Ambeno was an attempt to set up an “effigy of the sacred cow [the state] to satirise it” (*TSA*, 2 (1987): 6). Occussi-Ambeno issued stamps, wrote letters and sent out official media releases that were often printed in the media around the globe. This threw some confusion into the world of international affairs. In 1987, Grenville founded *The State Adversary*, which became a major centrepiece for

A stamp issued in 1976 by Occussi-Ambeno, Bruce Grenville’s imaginary satirical state.
anarchism from the late 1980s until the late 1990s. Grenville helped out with the alternative lifestyle/communalist magazine *Mushroom*, which was put together in Waitati. Grenville, Malcolm Gramaphone and Fran O’Sullivan intended to resurrect Gramaphone’s magazine *Counter-Culture* in 1977, but this plan fell through when the press burnt down. In Seacliff, near Waitati, there was also a small, informal anarchist community that included people like Alan Harold. Harold and others used to commute between Seacliff and Auckland. As can be seen, membership of the anarchist groupings in the seventies was very mobile and transient.

**National Networking and the Unconventions**

There was a lack of national contact between anarchists until the mid-1970s. For example, Red Parsons of Impulse in Palmerston North first heard of *Anarchy* (Christchurch) while visiting the Freedom bookshop in London. As a result, by the mid-1970s there were several efforts to encourage nationwide “networking,” especially through three anarchist “unconventions.” The first national anarchist conference since 1966 called the “53rd Anarchist Unconvention” was held in Douglas, Taranaki, in 1976. It was organised by the Auckland Anarchist Activists. About twenty to thirty people attended. It was not a formal political conference – for example, no discussions or workshops were held – but more of a social get together in an effort to build links and networks. Two other anarchist unconventions were held in 1978, one in Spring Creek near Blenheim during Easter (at which about twenty people attended) and one in Wellington later in the year.

The Christchurch Anarchy Group aimed to build a nationwide network. They produced the aforementioned *Christchurch Anarchy/Anarchists Newsletter* to this end. Through the newsletter, they established a nationwide contact list of about 100 people, most of whom were just curious about anarchism. Yet Richard Bolstad comments that attempts at national networking and organising were hindered by “a big problem”:

> People in different places would have whole different ideas about what anarchism was and what organisation was appropriate for anarchists to have, if any. So some of them just didn’t believe in making links nationally anyway, they would like to be on the mailing list but they would actively oppose people trying to get some organisation.

Hence no formal nationwide organisation or federation was established. In Sydney, an acrimonious split occurred in 1975 between the anarcho-syndicalists and the carnival anarchists (see Englart 1982). In Aotearoa, no such rift developed, possibly because the movement was not large or well-organised enough. There were many differences, such as between the Auckland carnival anarchists and the anarcho-councilists of Christchurch, and also within groups, but these divisions did not develop into schisms.
It is important to note that nearly all the anarchist groups in this book can be termed “synthesis groups,” in that they represented a loose amalgam of varying anarchist tendencies. In the sixties and seventies in Aotearoa, anarchists simply called themselves “anarchists” rather than defining their politics more carefully as anarcha-feminists, anarchist communists, individualist anarchists and so on. As a reaction to this wishy-washy anarchism of the sixties and seventies, it was common for anarchists overseas to form specifically syndicalist or communist or councilist anarchist groups. Yet none were established in Aotearoa, apart from the Auckland-based Anarcho-Feminist Huddle.

**Situationist Activity in Aotearoa**

This section is a rough outline of Situationist-influenced activity in Aotearoa from 1975 to the early 1980s. The Paris-based Situationist International (SI) had split up in 1972, so their ideas were fresh and exciting in the mid- and late 1970s. They were also very relevant as the Situationists represented one of the earliest radical groups that criticised the mass alienation created by the spectacle of modern capitalism in a comprehensive manner. Like Solidarity, the Situationists emphasised self-management and class struggle independent of parties and unions – except, unlike Solidarity, the Situationists stressed the aesthetic transformation of everyday life (see Gray 1974, Knabb 1981, Debord 1983 and Vaneigem 1994). The Situationists were
innovative because they criticised every aspect of capitalist society. They believed revolution involved people collectively and individually transforming every aspect of their lives, rather than merely changing the means of production. In the 1970s, a cult developed around the world as “pro-situ” groups sprang up everywhere. Grant McDonagh, the major situationist in Aotearoa, said he has “always been interested in art and politics...And I guess this is what the situationist thing...was for me because it put the two together, it was the thing that combined the two.”

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was some passing interest in Situationist ideas. For example, Owen Gager, then a Trotskyist but in his own words “extremely interested in situationism in the late sixties,” reproduced and distributed a French “pro-situ” leaflet in Wellington in about 1969. Possibly this was the first time Situationist-influenced propaganda was distributed in Aotearoa. Yet it was not until the mid-1970s that people, primarily McDonagh, started to explore situationist ideas more deeply.

McDonagh has asserted that the situationist current in Aotearoa was “only a minority current in the broader Anarchist milieu between 1975 and 1979, but potent in that context and beyond.” The situationist influence was important, as there was often a loose crossover between anarchism and the ideas of the Situationists, as exemplified by Anarchy and KAT. Some other anarchist publications were influenced by Situationist ideas: for example, a cartoon in Black Mail states “Work Serve Die” and “everyday life has been reduced to a commodity. Culture and art are for consumption for those who can afford the product.”

However, in my view, the situationist influence was not potent, especially as many anarchists found situationist writing difficult to comprehend. Indeed, Cathy Quinn, Margaret Flaws and Frank Prebble all commented that, to them, situationist writing was full of mystifying jargon. Andrew Dodsworth has noted, “On the whole Solidarity stuff seemed more connected with the ‘real world,’ insofar as I knew anything about it...The Situationist stuff was more exciting, though often incomprehensible.” In reply to these claims of incomprehensibility, McDonagh has written, “Language is itself a weapon, maybe even the main (Often the only) weapon Situationists have to deploy against Bourgeois thought & power.”

McDonagh became a situationist after producing Anarchy, but still considered situationists to be, broadly speaking, part of the anti-authoritarian left. McDonagh was on the periphery of the anarchist milieu from the mid-1970s. He was a prolific writer – he produced, or was involved in producing, many leaflets and numerous small magazines such as Black Widow (1975, one issue, Christchurch), 52045 (1977, one issue, Auckland), KAT, The Hassler (1979, four issues) and In the City (1979–81, five issues). 52045 was produced by a four-member quasi-situationist group in Auckland that included McDonagh.

In 1978, McDonagh published a pamphlet, 151. The title referred to the 1951 waterfront lockout, when the wharfies were locked out for 151 days, and the dadaist magazines from earlier this century, 391 and 291. 151 put forward one of the basic premises of the Situationists, namely, that the spectacle of modern consumer
"Win a Cop Competition." An anonymous situationist-influenced leaflet distributed by the Auckland Anarchist Activists during an anti-dawn raids protest in Auckland, c. 1976.
capitalism mediates all social relationships. For example, McDonagh is walking in Grey Lynn, and notices:

Down Crummer Road, or in Williamson Ave., you sense the exhaustion of the people inside, being conditioned by the electric tit of the television’s eye. Consumable banality floats through the ether into every street, every lounge, dulling, placating, controlling more efficiently than any regime of the past (McDonagh, 1978: §1).

To break this intrusive conditioning, McDonagh believed every individual needed to participate fully in the conscious, collective and deliberate transformation of every aspect of life. The aim of 151 was to set up a small, closely-knit, “critically armed” revolutionary avant-garde group which would undertake acts of subversion and playful deconditioning and “act in a series of increasingly radical interventions whereby the individuals involved will reverse back their own misery point-blank on the social organisation that is destroying us” (McDonagh, 1978: §12). These subversions, McDonagh believed, would spark wider and deeper class confrontations until ultimately “generalised self-management” was realised.

He attempted to form such a group in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, but had little success: “Nobody ever understood what the hell I was talking about, really.” McDonagh remembers his writing of the period to be quite “apocalyptic...
This has happened, therefore dah-de-dah-de-dah workers’ councils, viva the revolution kind of stuff.” In KAT, McDonagh importantly called for the construction of a coherent, complex, open and fluid working class (or proletarian) theory and practice. However, his ultimate solution seemed to be the immediate establishment of workers’ councils, hardly a practical suggestion during a non-revolutionary period, and indeed, in a country without a revolutionary tradition:

The future belongs to the proletariat [sic] or to no one…The proletarian construction of collective self-theory is the fluid, continuing dissolution of Bourgeois conceptions of reality, unified with a practice that directly constructs the first moments of classless social organisation…What we must now begin is the subversion of past moments of proletarian contestation by reinvesting their lessons in the present…We must begin by correcting the past. The working class debts of 1890, 1913, 1932 and 1951 must be repaid, which means… the total supercession of beaurocratic [sic] bourgeois democratic civilisation with the total democracy of worker’s [sic] councils here in New Zealand and globally (KAT, 3 (1978)).

McDonagh was sometimes scathing of the anarchist movement, which he considered ineffectual and not very radical. McDonagh’s criticisms resulted in clashes with anarchists in both Auckland and Wellington. Andrew Dodsworth writes: “Grant’s idea of dialectical writing, that you take something written by ‘the enemy’ and invert it…was mechanistic….And that spraypainting Situationist slogans on walls was not, in fact, going to lead to changes in society.”
The Avon Loop and a Free Store

In Christchurch during the late 1970s the inner-city Avon Loop community became a base for a few situationist and anarchistic projects after McDonagh and Maggie Kolff, of the Wellington KAT magazine, moved there in 1979. The Avon Loop was a loose, semi-bohemian community of twenty houses, involving about 120 people, near the Avon River. The communities focus was “sustainable living” and it established a health food store called Piko. Rod Donald, who was in the Values Party, was a prime mover behind Piko and an important figure in the Avon Loop. Donald claimed he was influenced by anarchism at that time, particularly by thinkers like Bookchin and Kropotkin. He became a co-leader of the Green Party in 1995 and entered parliament in 1996, so perhaps he was the first MP with an anarchist past in Aotearoa politics.

McDonagh and Kolff worked at Piko. “Rod Donald talked about something he called radical capitalism,” remembers McDonagh, “which was just bullshit…[Piko] was a bloody hippy capitalist organisation with an overlay of co-operative ideology.”

In 1979, McDonagh opened a small free store called IN THE CITY at the back of Piko. IN THE CITY was named after the Jam’s first album and a phrase from “Anarchy in the UK” by the Sex Pistols. This shop was “carrying forward the hippy ideal, the Digger idea of the love shop, the free shop,” according to McDonagh, but it was also an expression of the Situationist concept of the “potlatch” or a communist gift economy. By communism, I do not mean a totalitarian dictatorship or state capitalism, but instead a voluntary state of affairs where people freely take according to their needs, and freely give according to their ability without the mediation of the market. McDonagh has claimed that IN THE CITY was serious in communist intent, but it was also a satire of the local community around the shop, which in his opinion tended to consist of wealthy and materialist “yuppies.” Kolff, John Markie and Nikki Ellis also helped out in the shop. The shop folded fairly quickly. During his time in the Avon Loop, McDonagh also produced the polemical situationist magazines The Hassler – an “ultra-leftist poetry comic for kids” – and In the City, magazines to which Markie and Bill Direen also contributed.

The Springbok Tour, Neil Roberts and the Early 1980s

The anti-apartheid protests against the tour by the South African rugby team (the Springboks) in 1981 represented the largest social convulsion in Aotearoa since the 1951 waterfront lockout. Anti-tour protesters attempted to stop the rugby games taking place. Huge clashes with the police, including squads of baton-wielding riot cops, occurred. By many accounts, the tour resembled a low intensity civil war (see Newnham 1981 and Chapple 1984 for accounts of the protests). As the police became more militant, protests became bigger and better organised. Protesters donned improvised armour, shields and crash helmets. Many used the protests not only to oppose apartheid, but also to oppose the police, authoritarianism and racism in
Aotearoa. More than 150,000 people demonstrated against the tour over a period of eight weeks, of which nearly 2,000 were arrested (Harris, 2004: 108). Protesters famously occupied the rugby pitch at Hamilton, stopping a game going ahead. The anti-tour movement did not emerge out of the blue; the anti-apartheid movement had built up much community support since the 1960s. In a sense, the anti-tour demonstrations represented the culmination of the protest activity of the New Left and new social movements.

Richard Suggate claimed, “The Marxist left attempted to control the demonstrations but the independent activity of many women and blacks reflected the anarchist spirit of organisation” and “white patriarchal communist control of Wellington anti-tour demonstrations contrasted with the militant autonomous black- and women-led actions in Auckland” (Suggate, 1982: 4). Likewise, Allan Cumming, who was heavily involved in nonviolent resistance to the tour, has commented that in 1981 “there was a huge clash between what I would see as an anarchist point of view and a more Marxist one right throughout the country.” As thousands of people experienced police violence – and fought back – during the tour, Suggate commented that this created a surge of interest in anarchism. Ironically, the anarchist movement had largely evaporated by this time, although many anarchists participated as individuals in the protests. As no new people were becoming involved, the groupings became inward-looking, and many anarchists left for Australia or London.

In Christchurch during the early eighties, a few anarchist schemes came into fruition. In the finely balanced 1981 election, an anarchist stole a ballot box in Christchurch, but was nabbed and the plan to take the box hostage to demand a
100% wage increase for all workers during a wage freeze was foiled. In 1982, Richard Bolstad produced an anarchist community newspaper in south-east Christchurch called *South-East News*. It focussed on local issues, such as opposition to the installation of Liquid Petroleum Gas terminals, to build a sense of local self-government. Frank Prebble, Richard Suggate – who had returned from Australia, and ran an anarchist book distribution service for a few years from the late 1970s, called *Tu Kuna Kia Me Rere* – and Kate Taylor put out two issues of the well-produced *Black Mail* in 1982. Matthew Turner also contributed to the second issue of the magazine. He became involved, along with a few others, in the small group that formed around the publication. The Black Mail group also produced a number of striking posters and savage cut-ups, including one depicting property mogul Bob Jones as Hitler.

About this time, the anarchist movement entered a new era with the arrival of punk. Punk represented a break in the counter-culture, away from the hippy ideology of “peace and love” towards a more pessimistic but perhaps realistic approach. Punk
could be seen as an angry working class countercultural response to the mid-1970s recession, the nationwide mood of decline and the conservative authoritarian backlash against the liberalism of the 1960s. Soon the political wing of punk became closely intertwined with anarchism.

By the late 1970s, a very loose community of anarchist punks emerged. It was a transient scene made up of scores of unemployed youth. In the late 1970s, some anti-authoritarians were involved in some of the earliest punk bands, like John Segovia – formerly Markie – and Grant McDonagh. Segovia was a member of Christchurch bands Vacuum and Volkswagen, and was known as Segovia because “he played a mean guitar” (Churton, 1999: 215). The first anarchist punk magazine was *Fascism and Boredom* (1982), and many others followed in the 1980s. Suggate, who was in the Wellington PYM and Resistance, remarked that punk was more pessimistic and had a nihilist tinge to it. To him, punk was a:

black, darker more negative approach to things in some ways... Whereas the anarchists of the early 1970s were definitely based upon some sort of counter-cultural theme that the world was actually quite a wonderful place, and all you had to do was just get rid of a few hang-ups...like war and class and poverty and all the rest... If people just woke up a little more, they’d go away... It was definitely a more optimistic period.

**Neil Roberts**

On 18 November 1982 at 12.35am Neil Roberts, a 22 year-old anarchist punk rocker, walked up to the entrance of the building which housed the Wanganui Police Computer. Two security guards in the building saw Roberts approach with a carry-bag on his shoulder. As the guard reached to activate a remote speaker in the foyer and ask him what he wanted, Roberts bent over. There was a flash and a huge explosion. The guards were thrown off their seats. The explosion could be felt for miles. Buildings were rocked up to 400 metres away.

Roberts was killed instantly when the gelignite bomb he was carrying exploded. Nobody else was hurt and damage was allegedly confined to mangling the armoured-glass main doors and the foyer of the building. This was one of the few political deaths in Aotearoa’s history, but it has been almost completely overlooked. It will never be known for sure whether Roberts’ death was an accident or suicide.
Neil Roberts spraypainted the above slogan, followed by the Anarchy is Order sign – the letter “A” painted in a circle – and the words “anarchy peace thinking” in a nearby public toilet shortly before he expired. The slogan “we have maintained a silence closely resembling stupidity” was first uttered in a revolutionary proclamation of Junta Tuitiva in 1809 in Bolivia.

Some, including the Minister of Police Ben Crouch, suggested that inexperience with explosives caused Roberts’ death. Others claimed Roberts was pre-occupied with committing suicide. The official inquest into his death returned a suicide verdict. They maintained he “wanted to die for his anarchist beliefs” and often talked of taking either the Computer Centre or the Beehive with him.

The bombing produced nationwide shock and disbelief. It became a subject of much public interest. Muldoon even claimed on television that there was an anarchist conspiracy in Aotearoa to blow up government buildings. The *Christchurch Press* (23 Nov. 1982) claimed that Roberts was “the misfit son of a rich Auckland family” and that anarchism was a “sad, flippant kind of nihilism.” Many letters defended Roberts and anarchism:

> Anarchism is...based on the belief that humans can live with one another without coercion...The young man was sad and undoubtedly despairing, but hardly flippant. Surely we should consider why he and so many other young people are in such angry despair, rather than trivialise and discount his action as that of a ‘misfit.’

A friend of Roberts wrote an anonymous letter to Richard Suggate. She or he stated that Roberts was “a very principled punk ANARCHIST...He wasn’t fucked in the head or drugged as they try to point out.” To dismiss his act as that of a misfit conveniently overlooks why Roberts targeted the Wanganui Police Computer. Roberts had participated in the protests against the Springbok tour, and often talked of the “raw deals” he got from the police. As noted previously, there was a growing fear of a totalitarian police state under Muldoon, especially after the massive police operation during the Springbok tour. The Computer had become a symbol of the authoritarianism of Muldoon and Aotearoa at that time. Roberts’ bombing was a political act (for more details of the bombing, see *Thrall*, 5 (1998)).
Things Went Anarchistic But…

Before focussing on the anarchist movement itself, a few concluding remarks about what can be learnt from the social movements of the time are necessary. In the end, I believe it is crucial to look at how working class people are resisting capitalism and hierarchy, rather than exclusively focussing upon small radical groups. As McDonagh comments:

What any of us do in…our little anarchist groups, between two-three-four-five-half a dozen or 200 hundred of us is piffling in comparison with what really counts, and what really counts is the authentic movement which is out there…[that movement comes into existence] when the working class at large takes it up…to fight the powers that be.

During the sixties and seventies, thousands of people during the course of their struggles adopted anarchistic methods of organisation, strategies and aims. Women,

Cartoon by Skip Williamson from his Class War Comix (1969).
CONCLUSIONS

workers, students, Maori, Pacific people and others often took direct action without waiting for orders or schemes from above. This was perhaps the greatest strength of the period.

The left took a vaguely anarchistic turn from about the late 1960s to the late 1970s or early 1980s. Even the “direct action Maoists” and the socialist faction of the Values Party embraced some elements of anarchism. However, hardly any of these latent anarchist tendencies blossomed into a more coherent praxis, and so these tendencies were easier to co-opt. Jesson has claimed that the protest movement of the late sixties and early seventies did not survive “long enough for its ideas to mature, and it never got much further than a confused and adolescent anarchism” (Jesson, 1989: 32).

The Yippee-influenced movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s gleefully reacted against the sterile dogma, organisational bureaucracy, lifeless rituals and rigid programmes of the Old Left. Yet their idolisation of “action” over theory, and spontaneity over organisation, went to the opposite extreme. As Solidarity member Maurice Brinton noted:

One doesn’t get beyond bureaucratic organisation by denying all organisation. One doesn’t challenge the sterile rigidity of finished programmes by refusing to define oneself in terms of aims and methods. One doesn’t refute dead dogma by the condemnation of all theoretical reflexion (Brinton, 1968: 5).

The prankster politics of many Yippees and anarchists had limited impact. As Seán Sheehan has commented, capitalism can easily accommodate anarchic “pranks,” no matter how comical they are. To Sheehan, they amount to little more than “chic subversions” (Sheehan, 2003: 141-2). Situationist Ken Knabb argues that the Yippees entered “the spectacle as clowns to make it ridiculous,” yet, “they created diversions which, far from promoting the subversion of the spectacle, merely made passivity more interesting by offering a spectacle of refusal” (Knabb, “Critique of the New Left movement”). Knabb’s argument is applicable to carnival anarchists, not just the Yippees.

This is not to suggest protesters should not have fun. One of the great strengths of the anarchist groupuscules and the anarchistic wing of the social movements of the period was their collective creativity and exuberant spontaneity. Their playful frivolity contrasted sharply with the dour and self-sacrificial “you can only have fun after the revolution” politics of the Leninist parties. Yet to turn politics into an endless carnival (as with some Situationists such as Vaneigem) or an endless chore (as with most Leninists) is equally absurd. In the end, if capitalism is going to be overturned, the capitalist division between play and work will need to be likewise overcome.

The antics of the PYM were more shocking and effective precisely because they were closely associated with the mass extra-parliamentary protests and class struggles of the late 1960s and 1970s. As Richard Suggate notes, “There were mass movements at the time which provided an opportunity for a direct action
group [like the PYM] to operate on the fringe.” Mass movements also provide an opportunity for mass direct action to take place, which I believe is far more effective than isolated small-scale disruptions, media stunts and property destruction. And this is not to overlook that direct action can and does occur within the workplace, and should not be limited to guerrilla theatre in the streets.

Although the protest movement was generally anti-authoritarian, it was not really anti-capitalist. Its main thrust was cultural rather than economic; it rejected the stultifying mono-cultural conformity of Aotearoa and the authoritarian rigidities of the older generation, and instead created a new, less repressed, culture. However, in general, protesters did not link up with working class people who, in the 1970s, were revolting in mass against work. They questioned the authority of the manager, the teacher, the parent, the cop and so on, but they did not really question class exploitation, capital’s commodification of everyday life and its wage system. As such, the social movements of the period did not aim to transform capitalist social relations, even if they made considerable gains within the existing framework.

However, a minority of radicals did eventually question capitalism. Workers’ control and student control was a reasonably common demand during the sixties and seventies. Many people saw genuine self-management as a healthy alternative to the bureaucratic and authoritarian nature of capitalism and “communism,” but in the process they often assumed the main problem with capitalism was management rather than exploitation. They merely wanted capitalism to be democratically managed by the workers themselves, a self-managed capitalism where worker-owned businesses would compete with each other on the market. Getting rid of capitalism, in my view, is a process whereby people abolish classes, the state, the division of labour, commodity exchange and money, and is not merely a change in management. At the time, this was recognised only by the Situationists and a few anti-state communists (see Dauvé and Martin 1997).

Some commentators like Tariq Ali, a Trotskyist prominent in the British anti-Vietnam War movement, have blamed the anarchistic tendencies of the sixties for the rise of neo-liberalism in the eighties. For Ali, it was an easy step from the individualism and anti-statism of the sixties to the cruel neo-liberalism of the eighties (see Ali’s introductory comments, especially p. 12, to Ali and Watkins, 1998). This critique rests upon a crude and misleading definition of anarchism – Ali conveniently overlooks the fact that most anarchists have always opposed not only the state, but also capitalism and bourgeois individualism (apart from the individualist anarchists).

I believe one of the major lessons of the period was that most of the left, including many anarchists, retreated from class struggle. Among many other reasons, this one factor unfortunately made it easier for the capitalist class to impose neo-liberalism in the 1980s. In retrospect, it was unsurprising that many peace activists and left-liberals viewed the Labour Government’s ban of US nuclear warships from Aotearoa during the 1980s and its New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Act of 1987 as an astonishing triumph – rather than a sweet tossed to workers to offset the bitter taste of their harsh neo-liberal policies.
The left retreated from class struggle during a period of an upsurge in class struggle. The protest movement and New Left of the 1960s and 1970s focussed on foreign policy issues, like Vietnam and apartheid, and generally overlooked domestic class struggle. Many New Leftists thought workers had been pacified by “affluence”, and so looked to nationalist struggles overseas for inspiration. New Leftists quickly became frustrated with their inability to overthrow “the system” instantaneously because they were isolated from the working class. Many believed that class struggle was out of date because of the rise of new social movements. Yet these movements often represented an extension of that struggle into new areas, rather than something that was distinct from class struggle. Until the late 1970s, the Trotskyist SAL focussed on the cross-class protest movement rather than the workplace. The Maoist CPNZ espoused a nationalist alliance between workers and “progressive” local capitalists against “foreign monopoly.” This meant that its support for working class militancy was largely limited to action against foreign capital. The union bureaucrats of the Stalinist SUP often subverted and sabotaged independent working class activity. The Labour Party differed little from the SUP. Labour – a time-honoured opponent of working class direct action and self-organisation – applauded the deregistration of the Seamen’s Union in 1971, denounced militant workers as “irresponsible” and attempted to repress strikes (such as the Auckland ferry case of 1974).

\textbf{Re-Inventing Anarchism}

Many critics in the early to mid-1960s declared the anarchist movement dead (see Woodcock 1962: 468, Horowitz 1964: 588 and Joll 1979 [1964]: ix). Yet following the wave of strikes, occupations, demonstrations and riots across the globe from the late 1960s onwards, anarchism experienced a major and astonishing renaissance. This revival was even felt in Aotearoa, where a small but quite vibrant anarchist undercurrent has existed since the latter half of the 1950s.

Very few studies of this anarchist revival have been published. Most of those that have are not based upon substantial primary research, which makes their arguments suspect. George Woodcock, for instance, has claimed a new liberal form of anarchism arose in the “first world” from the early 1960s, and supplanted classical anarchism (especially anarcho-syndicalism) as the dominant type of anarchism. He believes this new anarchism was composed of young middle class people, and was pacifist, pragmatic and evolutionary in character; while in contrast classical anarchism was composed of ageing dogmatists, and was violent, class-based and revolutionary in character (Woodcock, 1986: 403-22).

Looking at the evidence, a liberal version of anarchism – in the form of the Sydney Libertarians anarcho-cynicalism – was prominent in Aotearoa in the mid-1960s. But Sydney Libertarianism was never dominant, and it had little influence over the Anarchist Association, the major anarchist group, nor over Bill Dwyer, the major anarchist leader of the time. So while Woodcock is correct to assert a new
A reformist form of anarchism did arise during the lull in class struggle of the early sixties, he overlooks how revolutionary and traditional forms of anarchism, such as anarchist communism and anarcho-syndicalism revived after class struggle blossomed from the late 1960s onwards. Indeed, most new anarchist organisations formed overseas during this period were of this persuasion even if none were established in Aotearoa.

Woodcock dubiously assumes that the 1960s anarchist movement was middle class in composition. In Aotearoa, it was only during the early and mid-1960s that anarchism was student-dominated, and thus can be called middle class only if one makes the questionable assertion that all students in the sixties were middle class. Even during the height of student radicalism, the late 1960s and early 1970s, anarchism was a mixed student and worker movement. During that period, anarchists generally joined off-campus New Left groups rather than participating in exclusively student groups. From about 1973 to the early 1980s, the vast majority of anarchists were working class.

Woodcock also fails to notice that besides liberal anarchism, important new types of anarchism were established, including eco-anarchism, anarcha-feminism and carnival anarchism. A significant overlap between traditional class-based anarchism and council communism occurred from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. Council communists like Solidarity and the Situationists shifted to a more anti-bureaucratic, anti-authoritarian viewpoint, and many anarchists borrowed from the analysis of Solidarity and the Situationists. I believe this “anarcho-councilist” synthesis was an innovative and non-dogmatic way to update traditional anarchism (and council communism), even if the concept of self-management is ambiguous.

Perhaps it is unfair to criticise a very young movement – most participants in the anarchist scene of the sixties and seventies were aged under twenty-five – that did not develop much sophistication in terms of activism or theory, apart from a few exceptions. Nevertheless, depending upon your viewpoint, plenty of criticisms can be made. The anarchist movement was male-dominated and did not really address the concerns of women. It was also Pakeha-dominated, and generally neglected Maori concerns such as the nature of colonialism, racism, land theft and so on. Surprisingly, there was an almost complete absence of ecological concerns. The anarchist and council communist/situationist groupings were almost completely isolated from the working class and detached from struggles in the workplace in particular. The anarchist movement tended towards counter-cultural elitism, moralism and liberal reformism (for a more comprehensive critique of counter-cultural anarchism, see Boraman 2006). And so on. Yet most if not all of these criticisms can be made against the broader radical milieu of the period.

A couple of critiques of the anarchist movement are worth considering. McDonagh, in the provocative and dismissive style of the Situationists, declared the anarchist movement “dead”:

The piecemeal and scattered practise [sic] of anarchists in the period 1975–77 was
never historical, always reformist and often authoritarian. As such it was immediately recuperable, challenging and achieving nothing...The anarchist is a futile stupid little inverse authoritarian capable only of reacting. His/her ideology causes him/her to deal with power by choosing to believe that he/she is somehow immune to it. Perhaps by the magical talismanic qualities of the mere word anarchy. Neither individuality nor collectivity were either recognised or achieved anywhere. Similarly anarchists were neither spontaneous nor organised. The most they ever achieved was a kind of anaemic opportunism, the highest manifestation of which was sporadic involvement in protest movements such as abortion, Maori land and against the S.I.S. legislation...Anarchism has not contributed a grain to the victory of the proletariat [sic] in the class struggle & never will (KAT, 5 (1978): 5-6).

McDonagh comments that his article “was just shit-stirring I guess really...the intention was to shock/shake people up so that they might try doing some more radical, effective and authentic things themselves.”

Bruce Jesson, in his left-nationalist journal The Republican, also criticised the anarchist movement. Jesson argued the anarchist movement was anti-theoretical, judgmental, moralistic, dogmatic and idealistic. As a result, he believed anarchists were unable to cope with the complexities of New Zealand capitalism, ironically much like the Leninist sects they denounced as hierarchical:

Anarchism’s ability to fill the void on the Left won’t be established negatively, by a denunciation of the sins of the communist sects. It depends more on being able to remedy the sects’ most glaring deficiency: their failure to cope with the complexity of modern New Zealand politics. And in this area anarchism is as incompetent as sectarian communism, being much stronger on denunciation than analysis. Anarchist groups come and go in New Zealand, never making much impression...Anarchism hasn’t been able to establish itself in New Zealand because it fails at the level of concrete political reality. As a theory, it lacks analytical power; and the contrast with the traditional Left shows the same fault there. Comparing anarchism with dogmatic Marxism reveals, as well as fundamental differences, strong similarities (Jesson, 1980: 12).

However, Jesson pessimistically believed that any form of leftist radicalism was doomed to fail in Aotearoa. This was because Jesson – influenced by the Frankfurt school of Marxism – believed the working class in Aotearoa was deeply conservative and hostile to radical causes. Jesson’s view is a-historical, as it overlooks periods when a substantial section of the working class has taken direct action, such as in 1912–3, 1951, 1968–72, the strike waves of the 1970s, and in 1981.

In a capitalist society, it is easy to focus on the shortcomings of marginalised radical tendencies. In a way, it is a success that an energetic libertarian socialist current existed at all in Aotearoa in the sixties and seventies – considering there was no such tradition beforehand, the stranglehold mild liberal reformism had on the left as a whole, the dominance of Leninism on the far left and the lack of
a popular radical tradition in Aotearoa – even if radical struggles gained some popularity now and then.

Contrary to Jesson’s opinion, anarchists during the period of this study did make some impression, even if it was sporadic and fleeting. Anarchists occasionally played influential roles in many movements and groups. For instance, they were influential in some branches of the PYM and Resistance Bookshops, the anti-Vietnam War and anti-US bases movement of the late sixties and early seventies, the commune movement of the seventies, the unemployed movement of the mid-to late seventies, and the peace movement and Peace Movement Aotearoa of the early eighties, not to forget the punk movement.

Yet overall the anarchist milieu was almost completely ineffectual in transforming society. Perhaps this failure led to a few frustrated anarchists resorting to spectacular acts of property destruction or “bombings” to move things along more rapidly. Yet these acts were also completely ineffectual. I believe the real significance of anarchism during the sixties and seventies was not the activity of the anarchist milieu itself, but instead how many social movements adopted aspects of anarchism, especially direct action and non-hierarchical organisation.

If, as in the sixties and seventies, the majority of the population is conservative and the chance of revolution is almost negligible, what do revolutionaries do? Do they claim revolution is a myth, and withdraw into small groups of friends (affinity groups), communes or social scenes of like-minded people to live as freely as possible, or do they muck in and attempt to swing social movements in a more revolutionary direction, or should they attempt both? Do they go inward, and focus on changing themselves, or look outward, and focus on changing society? Do they take ultra-militant direct action, in the hope that they can make up for the lack of militancy in the general population, and thus become isolated; or do they take a more cautious approach so they do not alienate people, and thus become unthreatening to the status quo? Putting it another way, do they water down their views to seek popularity and influence, or do they stick to their principles and thus remain isolated and unpopular? Do they have a bit of a laugh and some fun, or “get serious” and plan a more methodical and long-term approach? Do they embark on a campaign of small-scale confrontational pranks and direct actions, or partake in mass-based protest, or both?

It would require a book in itself to analyse these dilemmas, so I will leave it to others to ponder them in more depth. Suffice to say, in my view, not all of the above approaches are mutually exclusive. It is possible to fruitfully combine many of them. For instance, rebellion can be both individual and collective, and well-thought out and fun at the same time. Minchin has commented:

> The thing about anarchism is that it supports diversity and argues that there is no monolithic response. The difficulty comes in when the other people start demanding they do what they are doing – you must become an industrial militant or you must stop eating dairy products and become a vegan.
During the late 1990s and early 2000s, with the decline of social democracy and Stalinism, and the rise of opposition to the global imposition of neo-liberal capitalism, anarchism experienced another resurgence. Frank Prebble compared the situation facing anarchists during that time with that of the 1970s:

Because [in the 1970s] we were a small minority of activists...[we] were fenced into a position of defining ourselves in terms of communist dialogue. The Communist Party, the Trotskyist SAL and the SUP were the dominant forces on the left. It was always difficult to establish a continuous presence considering the age of the people involved, and we were always coming up against the commies and spending a lot of time attacking them instead of establishing our own agenda...Today we’re in a different situation. The communists are trying to catch up to the anarchists. We have our own agenda and the commies are irrelevant, which is just how it should be (Prebble, 2000: 5).

For all the optimism surrounding the global justice or anti-capitalist movement, that movement was limited to a few spectacular protests outside the summits of world leaders in the “advanced” capitalist world. In the late 1960s and 1970s, rebellion spread from a minority of youth and students to the broader working class, even if it only affected a (sizeable) minority of that class. In contrast, the global justice movement in “advanced” capitalist countries has been isolated from the everyday concerns of workers.

When there is little popular support for dissent, it seems that very little, if anything, can be achieved. Foreshadowing the counter-culture, the Sydney Libertarians took this view to an extreme. They asserted that there would always be an authoritarian elite who pulls the strings and that there was no “salvation” from the working class. Therefore, they believed that all people could do is to live as freely as possible in the here and now and merely poke fun at those in power. During a lull in opposition to the status quo, it is easy to assume that this situation is permanent. Today, with the mind-boggling influence of the media, television, Hollywood, schools and capitalist ideology in general, it is understandable that some believe that we are incapable of transforming society and liberating ourselves.

Yet we are not passive consumers of the spectacle all of the time. Capitalism, and authoritarian society in general, produces antagonistic relationships – people are compelled to resist capitalism, authority and the state in some minor way just to get by day to day. This hidden resistance became more open and widespread from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. The inventive rebellion of this period proved that events can swing in a more anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist direction quite rapidly, and so there is no need to be permanently pessimistic about the chances for radical transformation. I believe this is a crucial lesson to be learnt from the period. During a period of mass working class unrest, people can quite quickly discover new practices and adopt new ideas in the process of their collective struggles.
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