



Information for Social Change

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**Special Issue on
Radical Bookshops**

**Special Issue Editor:
Martyn Lowe**

Information for Social Change is an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers. It is committed to promoting alternatives to the dominant paradigms of library and information work and publishes its own journal, *Information for Social Change* (freely available online at <http://www.libr.org/isc>). Information for Social Change is an Organisation in Liaison with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).

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Special Issue on Radical Bookshops

Editorial

Introduction to the Radical Bookshops issue of ISC and a selection of Radical Bookshops

There is an important distinction which must be drawn between Radical and Independent Bookshops.

Radical bookshops are in the business of stocking and selling books about radical history and radical ideas.

Radical bookshops are Important outlets for the many small radical publishers whose works would be very hard to find within almost any public libraries.

They are important outlets for all those small print run radical pamphlets and periodicals that would be 'uneconomic' to stock within mainstream bookshops, and which are rarely to be found upon most news stands.

Radical bookshops are places in which radical individuals get to meet each other.

They are places in which one finds information upon new campaigns and new ideas.

This issue of ISC started out with the announcement that it would focus upon the subject of radical bookshops.

What has changed with this issue is that it has become a reflection of the state of Radical bookshops over the last couple of decades.

My own political education was formed in part by reading such periodicals as Freedom, Anarchy (the 1st series), Peace News, and so forth.

It was also formed by being able to use such radical bookshops as Housmans, Freedom, and the long gone Collets Bookshop in the Charing Cross Road.

Many radical bookshops have disappeared within the last decade or so.

These include Compendium books at Camden town, Books for a change on the Charing Cross Road, 121 Books in Brixton, and Mushroom books in Nottingham.

During July Porcupine Bookcellar held its closing down sale.

With the threatened demise of the Radical bookshop there has also been a growth in the size and importance of such events as the Socialist and Anarchist book fairs.

Radical Librarians spend a lot of time in promoting alternative or radical publishers.

It is important for Radical librarians to use and promote these few radical bookshops which are left in existence.

Martyn Lowe

A note upon Contributors to this issue

Bookstore het Fort van Sjako

In this issue there is an article upon International Bookstore het Fort van Sjako, Amsterdam. This has been especially written for the issue by one of the bookshop collective.

Bill Hetherington is a Veteran Peace Activist and member of the Housmans board.

Lacey Prpic Hedtke is finishing her MLIS at the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota. She is passionate about art and zine libraries, making zines, collective action, and antiquated photo processes.

Donald Rooum is a cartoonist and author of the 'Wildcat' strip in Freedom since 1980.

John Pateman is a co-founder of ISC.

Radical Book shops A brief Resource listing

Bookmarks

Marxist bookshop.

1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE

020-7637 1848.

<http://www.bookmarks.uk.com/cgi/store/bookmark.cgi>

Freedom

Anarchist Bookshop, and Publisher.

<http://www.freedompress.org.uk/>

Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

020 7247 9249.

News from Nowhere

Liverpool's Radical & Community Bookshop
not-for-profit · a worker's co-operative · committed to social change

96 Bold Street
Liverpool L1 4HY

<http://www.newsfromnowhere.org.uk/index.php>

France

Librairie Du Monde Libertaire.

French Anarchist bookshop, which is allied with
la Fédération Anarchiste.

45 rue Amelot,
Paris11,
France

<http://www.librairie-publico.com>

Schnews

The Schnews list of UK radical bookshops & Independent distributors of anarchist zines, pamphlets and other publications.

<http://www.schnews.org.uk/pap/bookshops.htm/>

Anarchist Bookfair

This annual event has been held over a quarter of a century.

The location of the Anarchist Bookfair changes from year to year.

<Http://www.anarchistbookfair.org/>

Further reading

O'Callaghan, Eide (compiler)

The Radical Bookseller Directory 1992.

Radical Bookseller Ltd – London - 1992.

Sendy, John.

Melbourne's Radical Bookshops.

International Bookshop Pty Ltd. - Australia – 1983.

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Special Issue on Radical Bookshops

Zine Libraries

and a Directory of Zine Libraries and Infoshops

Lacey Prpic Hedtke

"...It's hard to find library materials that challenge the for-profit, corporate culture. Our well-stocked county, community college, and university libraries, though publicly funded, primarily serve private middle-class constituencies—businesses, professions, students, job-seekers, and consumers. There's not much there for those who don't share the American Dream."¹

In some circles a radical statement, in others, a motivation for action. Zine libraries, infoshops, bookmobiles, street libraries, zine vending machines- all very different spaces and ideas, but all with the same purpose-to provide access to information outside the corporate mainstream. I'm especially interested in how people who don't fit neatly into categories create venues for their own access to information, specifically through the establishment of zine libraries and infoshops.

Here's the breakdown:

- A zine is a small-run self-published chapbook, pamphlet or broadside that is usually photocopied, but can fall under the label of artist book. Zines are made by anyone who wants to disseminate information without going through the mainstream channels of publishers. Zines are a DIY (Do It Yourself) venture that have been around for decades.
- A zine library is a collection of zines organized by zine-lovers and makers (often referred to as zinesters) in the hopes of preserving and making accessible obscure materials. Since most zines typically have runs of 1-500, each and every one is rare.
- An infoshop is what its name implies- a place to go for information. Infoshops are usually, but not always, run by anarchists, but not necessarily for anarchists. They are volunteer-run non-hierarchical spaces where people can go to for lectures, meetings, events,

¹

Atton, C., *Alternative Literature*

concerts, and activist resources. Some infoshops house libraries and reading rooms. Many have cafes or at least a cup of tea available. Infoshops sprung up in Europe and have caught on in the US in the past fifteen years. Infoshops are ideal for activist travelers, functioning as a place to stop in to find out where the coop is, where to crash, and to find people with similar interests. They usually have free internet access too.

There are millions of inventive and creative ways of getting resources and materials to the interested. Zine bookmobiles and vending machines are some venues I've stumbled across. Tool lending libraries and zine recycling programs are another. It's surprising how many new ways there are of exposing people to self-published media.

All of these resource centers have something in common: The aim of fulfilling the need for access to materials and information otherwise difficult to obtain. You won't find *People* magazine proudly showcased in these venues. I'm mainly focusing on infoshops and zine libraries, as they are the most enduring and organized forms of information centers, and have more evolved methods of collection maintenance. It's interesting to see what happens when people who aren't librarians by profession, or even by education, get together to form a library or resource center.

Why do these people need their own library? Can't they just go to the public or academic library?

No. There's a reason why so many alternative libraries exist. There is a clear gap in the information world. As stated above, most libraries keep to the middle of the road. It is very hard to find any materials published outside the mainstream, and especially hard to find materials that have been self-published, or non-mainstream periodicals, newspapers and tabloids. Also, infoshops and zine libraries tend to have later hours, be connected with galleries, music show spaces, and other resource venues such as darkrooms or screenprinting shops, as is the case at ABC No Rio in New York City. It also seems these types of libraries draw the paranoid, and rightfully so. Since the PATRIOT Act was enacted in the US, library records are no longer private information. Activists and anarchists, and even sometimes artists are watched by the FBI. Rather than give the government fodder to harass them through questionable library research, the use of a zine library for information results in trackless searching. "In many groups...there is an emphasis on self-education...Groups often establish their own small "libraries" of relevant books, periodicals and papers, sometimes in collaboration with a local alternative bookshop or information centre. The rise of the "infoshop" in recent years throughout Europe and the US is one manifestation of such local activity. Usually based around a local anarchist group, although it is of benefit to more than anarchists, it acts as a communication and distribution point for any number of local, national and international groups, movements and projects...The infoshop emphasizes empowerment, providing information freely (or very cheaply) to enable people to work together, directly on issues that affect their lives."²

² Atton, *Alternative Literature*, 1999

What kind of spaces are they housed in? How could you possibly have a library in a house or old gas station?

The people organizing these types of places aren't going for glamorous. In most cases, they're going for whatever they can get. Which is why you'll find these libraries in people's living rooms, trucks, basements, in tenements, galleries and student centers. Unless a non-profit organization is backing the infoshop or library, be prepared for creative solutions to space problems. Cheap rent in a bad neighborhood usually equals a great place for an infoshop or zine library. "Besides financial problems, neighborhood communication difficulties are common. ...many infoshops are organized by white youth in communities populated by minorities. The subculture that patronizes the shop...sticks out in contrast to the surrounding neighborhood. Residents may perceive the infoshop as a beach-head in the gentrification happening in that town."³

The Mobilivre out of Canada travels across the continent in a stylish Airstream trailer, bringing zines and workshops with them. The Anchor Archive Regional Zine Project in Nova Scotia offers an artist-in-residence program where artists can stay in a storage shed in the backyard for a few weeks to make a zine. A few libraries accompany Food Not Bombs, an organization in several cities handing out free food at different parks or public areas weekly.

What are in these libraries? How are they run?

Some infoshops sell things-patches, t-shirts, books, videos, art, etc. Most places operate collectively, which often involves paying out of collective member's pockets, and most frequently relying on donations of materials from people with a lot of zines lying around, other zine libraries with duplicates, or donations of cash. Zine-makers tend to understand a zine library's motives, and since they aren't making zines to make money anyway, feel great donating their creation to the library. It provides another venue for a reader to stumble across their hand-bound lovingly screenprinted handmade book.

A way most libraries pay rent is through benefit concerts or sometimes art auctions, or anything else that might be fun and also raise money. In the case of the Papercut Zine Library, the group of librarians was able to trade building labor for a free room.⁴ Rarely are materials bought outright. Sometimes library dumpsters are raided for discarded books, and also for organizational materials (bookshelves, magazine racks, etc.) Dumpstering is a fantastic way to get a lot of what you need for free. But that's another topic. However these libraries obtain their materials, almost all ask the subject matter not be racist, sexist, or homophobic. Collective action entails each member committing to the project, coming to meetings and voting on each major decision, and each being equally responsible to maintain the space, and everyone is also able to plan events or enact ideas within the space. No one person is in charge of a collective. A collective is a cooperative effort, which if done with a certain amount of enthusiasm and respect for each other, can work out fantastically. If those basic values aren't in place, there will be burn out, and the space could fail. Luckily, people working on fun projects like zine libraries just want to see the library succeed and grow, and they do!

³ Dodge, *Taking Libraries to the street*, 1998

⁴ Stockton, Ah, a new literary oasis, and she the zine queen, 2005

How can you possibly organize information that hasn't already been cataloged by another person?

Easy. You make it up. This is where Sanford Berman would argue the access part comes in. How easy is it to find this information? In some instances, there is no organization. Your findings are left up to fate, chance, and synchronicity. Which is great if your psychic skills are honed. Several zine libraries stick to the alphabetical system, but most zine libraries catalog by topic. If you go in to the library searching for a good book on bicycle maintenance, you'll also find a zine on good routes to ride without getting hit, how to weld your own tall bike, and riding safely, if you're searching the bicycling section. Since zine and infoshop library collections tend to be radical in nature, their subject headings are unique. DIY (do-it-yourself) is a HUGE category, with several subsets to the category. A few others you won't find in the public library are- radical menstruation, squatting, dumpstering, protesting, XXX, sustainable living, fat, and grrrls. The people cataloging this material respond to their material through topics and organizational methods appropriate for their subject matter. It's important to point out that although there are librarians by profession involved in infoshops and zine libraries, most zine librarians are either still in library school, or have never had any experience working in a library at all. They just want to give people access to information they might not even know was out there.

Take for instance the Papercut Zine Library, in Cambridge, Massachusetts⁵. Even though this library is housed in the Harvard Social Hall, in the same neighborhood as some of the world's biggest and best libraries, this library is thriving. There is obviously a need within the community for zines and all the information they contain and offer. With over 2,000 zines organized by topic on small shelves, and an online searchable catalog, the volunteer zine librarians running the place have figured out how to catalog and organize their material without burying it underneath unsearchable databases or vague subject headings. None of these libraries use cataloging terminology or systems. None of them have scannable barcodes, use the Library of Congress or Dewey Decimal systems. I'm sure they have never once consulted the Library of Congress subject headings to make sure they're using the appropriate heading for the zine on home dentistry. Most record which zine or book belongs in what section, maintain a list of what they have and what gets checked out, if theirs in a circulating collection, and forget the rest. The extent to which the digital cataloging systems go are Filemaker or LibraryThing, making the catalog available online. It's important to realize that even though these zine librarians aren't trained in cataloging, they've merged systems that have already been invented with their own original systems.

Although each system is different-some might throw zines into a box and let you sort through, some cut the tops off cereal boxes for organizational systems, and some have book racks, displaying items more like a store, all have invented innovative ways of cataloging and finding the material.

Who uses zine libraries? How do they find out about them?

Anyone who wants to access information not available at their public library uses zine libraries or infoshops. Anyone interested in underground publishing, little

⁵ Stockton, P., Ah, a new literary oasis, and she the zine queen, 2005

magazines, one-offs, tabloids, art, quirks, or free speech in general are excited by zine libraries. Researchers, students, zinesters, artists, old hippies and beatniks, those on the political left and outfield use them. Zine libraries and infoshops don't advertise in newspapers or magazines. Because they're poor. They're found through word of mouth, posters put up in co-ops, bike shops and on telephone poles. There are a few websites about zines that mention library locations. They are often moving and sadly closing. But new ones are always opening, in different forms. The Zine Machine, for instance, is a vending machine with zines inside. For a dollar or two you can have your own zine to take home. Some are in university libraries, and they are much more organized and professional-looking and operating, which is why I didn't choose to focus on them here. Some libraries are connected to other ventures, and if you look, or go to any zine-related event (store, reading, zine fair), you'll be sure to find a trail to the zine library or infoshop.

How do the libraries attract users? Who are these libraries geared toward? Do I have to pay to get in?

Other than word of mouth, libraries will often bring cross-sections of their collection for on-site checkout to zine fairs and events, anarchist book fairs, or to zine and book readings in the punk community. The libraries aren't necessarily geared toward anarchists or punks, but due to the radical materials and DIY ethics of zines, these groups are a large user base. These libraries are frequented by anyone interested in the subjects they cover, and most importantly, it is almost always free to check out a book or zine, if they don't think their collection is too valuable or rare to let off-site. It is because of this idea of libraries for all that such a wide variety of people are drawn to the zine library or infoshop.

Are zine libraries *really* libraries? I don't know about this...

Zine librarians take the stance that if anyone says it's a library, it is. If Duchamp can say found objects are art, zine librarians spending hours cataloging and organizing ephemera and oddities can call themselves librarians and their creations libraries. In this sense, anyplace that provides access to information in a somewhat organized or searchable form, can be considered a library. The word library seems so authoritative and smarty-pants. Zine librarians are taking the word and applying its meaning to a wide range of information resources, including a roomful or bagful of books or zines.

I do hope that zine libraries and infoshops grow in popularity and use. I hope that the collectives running them find reliable methods of funding so fewer are closing. And I do hope that public libraries will become hip to the idea of zines and alternative/non-mainstream periodicals and other materials. Some are starting to realize what a valuable resource they are in terms of documenting cities, contemporary culture and events otherwise not covered by the media. However, there will always be a need and space for infoshops and zine libraries. No matter how much information makes it into public and academic libraries, unless these libraries are suddenly taken over by zine librarians, the board of directors booted, and the institutions are run collectively, zine libraries and infoshops will be filling the information gap in storefronts, garages and shacks.

Lacey Prpic Hedtke

A Directory of Zine Libraries and Infoshops

Arizona

Catalyst Infoshop
109 N. McCormick
Prescott AZ 86301
www.catalystinfoshop.org

The Dry River Radical Resource Center
C/o Skrappys
201 E Broadway
Tucson AZ 85701-2013
www.dryriver.org

The Hive
319 S. San Francisco St
Flagstaff AZ 86001

California

Anno Domini Zine Library
366 S. 1st St.
San Jose CA 95113
www.galleryAD.com

Free Mind Media
546 Pacific Ave
Santa Rosa, CA
www.freemindmedia.org

Long Haul Infoshop
3124 Shattuck Ave.
Berkeley CA 94705
www.thelonghaul.org

pond Zine Archive
214 Valencia
San Francisco CA 94103
www.mucketymuck.org

Santa Cruz Anarchist Infoshop
509- Broadway
Santa Cruz CA 95060-4621

Santa Barbara Infoshop
421 Alisos St.
Santa Barbara CA 93103
sbinfoshop.org

Zine Library at Mission Records
2263 Mission Street
San Francisco CA 94110
www.smurph.org/zines

Colorado

908 Collective
908 Laprte Ave
Fort Collins CO 80521

Clandestinos Collective
719 W 8th Ave
Denver CO 80204
Confluence Collective
1450 Elm Ave
Grand Junction CO 81501
www.myspace.com/confluencecollective

Denver Zine Library
1644 Platte St
Denver CO 80202
www.denverzinelibrary.org

Left Hand Books
1200 Pearl St #10
Boulder CO 80302
www.lefthandbooks.org

Connecticut

Alternative Media Library
C/o Michelle Chen
PO Box 200077
New Haven CT 06520
www.yale.edu/altmedia

Florida

Civic Media Center
1021 W. University Ave
Gainesville FL 32601
www.civicmediacenter.org

CORE Infoshop
PO Box 14531
St. Petersburg FL 14531

Stonewall Library and Archives
1717 N. Andrews Ave
Ft, Lauderdale FL 33311
www.stonewall-library.org

Subterranean
9 E Gregory
Pensacola FL 32502

Georgia

Common Ground
157 N Newton St
Athens GA 30601
www.commongroundathens.org

Illinois

Chicago Underground Library
C/o Butchershop
1319 W. Lake St.
Chicago IL 60607
www.underground-library.org

Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center
202 S. Broadway
Urbana IL 61801
www.ucimc.org

Indiana

Boxcar Books
310A S. Washington
Bloomington IN 47401
www.boxcarbooks.org

Kansas

Solidarity! Revolutionary Center and Radical Library
1109 Massachusetts St
Lawrence KS 66044
www.lawrencesolidarity.org

Kentucky

Brick House
1103 S 2nd St.
Louisville KY 40203
www.brickhouse.cc

Louisiana

Iron Rail Books and Aboveground Zine Library
511 Marginy St @ Decatur St
New Orleans LA 70117
www.ironrail.org

Maine

People's Free Space
144 Cumberland Ave
Portland ME 04101
www.peoplesfreespace.org

Maryland

Charm City Art Space
4820 Roland Ave Apt B
Baltimore MD 21210
www.ccspace.org

Massachusetts

Flywheel Arts
43 Main St
Easthampton, MA 01027
www.flywheelarts.org

Papercut Zine Library
45 Mt Auburn St
Cambridge MA 02138
www.papercutzinelibrary.org

Michigan

Bloom Collective
1134 Wealthy St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
www.mediamouse.org/library

Minnesota

Bat Annex Free School Library
C/o Belfry Center for Social and Cultural Activities
3753 Bloomington Ave S
Minneapolis MN 55407
www.belfrycenter.wetpaint.com
www.myspace.com/belfrycenter

Stevens Square Center for the Arts Zine Library
1905 3rd Ave S,
Minneapolis MN 55404
www.stevensarts.org

Missouri

Bread and Roses Library/Infoshop
Community Arts and Media Project
3022A Cherokee St.
St. Louis MO 63118
www.stlcamp.org/library

Crossroads Infoshop
C/o Creative Mind Art Center
3109 Troost
Kansas City MO 64109
www.infoshop.org/crossroads.html

New York

ABC No Rio
156 Rivington St.
New York NY 10002
www.abcnorio.org

Access Community Infoshop
Buffalo NY 14214
www.accesscommunity.net

Booklyn

37 Greenpoint Ave, 4th fl
Brooklyn NY 11222
www.booklyn.org

Lesbian Herstory Archive
PO Box 1258
New York NY 10116
www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org

Rochester Infoshop
222 Driving Park Ave
Rochester NY 14613

Social Justice Center Infoshop
33 Central Ave
Albany NY 12210

Oklahoma

Third Space
813 College Ave A
Norman OK 73069

Oregon

Black Rose Collective Bookstore & Community Resource
1038 N. Mississippi Ave
Portland OR 97227
www.blackrose.revolt.org

Cascadia Rising Infoshop
1540 SE Clinton
Portland, OR 97202
www.geocities.com/crinfoshop
Portland OR 97202
Independent Publishing Resource Center
917 SW Oak St. #218
Portland OR 97205
www.iprc.org

Pennsylvania

Big Idea Infoshop
504 Millvale Ave
Pittsburgh PA 15224
www.thebigideapgh.org

Lancaster Ave Autonomous Space
Lancaster
Philadelphia PA 19143
www.lavazone.org

Tennessee

Firebrand Community Center
918 Ward St.
East Nashville, TN 37207
www.thefirebrand.org

Texas

Monkey Wrench Books
110 E North Loop
Austin TX 78751
www.monkeywrenchbooks.org

Sedition Collective
4816 Old Spanish Trail
Houston TX 77021
www.myspace.com/seditionbooks

Utah

Boing! Anarchist Collective
608 S 500 E
Salt Lake City UT 84102
www.myspace.com/boingcollective

Virginia

The Flying Brick Library and Reading Room
506 South Pine St
Richmond VA 23220

Rocktown Infoshop
85 E. Elizabeth St.
Harrisonburn, VA 22802
www.rocktowninfoshop.org

Washington

Olympia Zine Library
211 E 4th Ave E
Olympia WA 98584
www.olymedia.mahost.org/olyzinelib/index.htm

Pitchpipe Infoshop
617 S 17th St.
Tacoma, WA 98405
www.myspace.com/pitchpipeinfo

Zine Archive Project
Richard Hugo House
1634 11th Ave
Seattle WA 98122
www.hugohouse.org

Washington DC

Brian MacKenzie Infoshop
1426 9th St NW
Washington DC 20001
www.dcinfoshop.org

Wisconsin

Cream City Collectives
732 E Clark St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
www.myspace.com/creamcitycollective

Madison Infoshop
1019 Williamson
Madison WI 53703
www.madisoninfoshop.org

Argentina

Biblioteca Anarchista Alberto Ghirardo
Paraguay 2212
2000 Rosario

Argentina

Biblioteca Popular Jose Ingenieros
J. Ramirez de Velasco 958
1414 Buenos Aries
www.nodo50.org/bpji

Biblioteca Popular Juventud Moderna
Diagonal Pueyrredon 3318
Mar de Plata
Argentina

Australia

Barricade Infoshop
5 Pitt Street
Brunswick
East Brunswick, Victoria 3057
www.barricade.org.au

Misfit Zine Library
PO Box 68939
Newton Auckland

Rising Mobile Infoshop
PO Box 126
Cygnet, 7112
Tasmania

Austria

Ernst Kirchweyer Haus
Wielandgasse 2-4/A-1100 Wien
Vienna
www.med-user.net/ekh

Infoladen Graz
Lendkai 45
Graz 8020
infoladengraz.at.tt
www.infoladen.iwoars.net

Infoladen Salzburg
Lasserstraße 26
Salzburg 5020

Infoladen Treibsand
Rudolfstrasse 17
Linz 4040
www.servus.at/treibsand

Canada

Anchor Archive Regional Zine Project
5684 Roberts Street
Halifax
Nova Scotia
www.anchor.revolt.org

Bibliograph Library
C/o #3-765 Champagneur Ave.
Montreal, QC
H2V 3P9
bibliograph.ca

DIRA (Documentations, informations, références et alternatives)
2035 St-Laurent
Montreal, Quebec
www.repertoire.crac-kebec.org/?q=dira

Edmonton Small Press Association
Room #9, 6th Floor
Stanley A. Milner Library
#7 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 2V4
www.edmontonsmallpress.org

EXILE Infoshop
256 Bank St
Suite 203 (2nd floor)
Ottawa, Ontario

Junto Local Ninety-One
2D 91 Albert St.
Winnipeg MB, R3B 1G5

Librarie Anarchiste L'Insoumise
2033 St-Laurent
Montreal, Quebec
www.linsoumise.entretroise.org

Old Market Autonomous Zone (Winnipeg A-Zone)
3B-91 Albert St
Winnipeg, Manitoba
a-zone.org

Queen Zine Library
95 The Country Way
Kirchener Ontario
N2E 2K3

This Ain't Rosedale Library
483 Chruch
Toronto Ontario
M4Y 2C6
www.torontothebetter.net/2thisaint.htm

Chile

Emma Goldman Community Space/Anarchist Bookstore
Avenida Cumming #453
Santiago
www.traidores.org/emma

Croatia

Infoshop Skatula
Kruzina 8,51000
Rijeka

Infoshop Tabula rasa
Schulteissa 19
Cakovec
www.actnow.hr

Czech Republic

Utopia Infoshop
Wenzigova 21
120 00 Praha 2

England

1 in 12 Club
21-23 Albion St.
Bradford, West Yorkshire
www.bd9sound.co.uk/1in12events.html

56A Infoshop
56 Crampton Street
London
SE17 3AE UK
www.56a.org.uk

Cornerstone Resource Centre
Back 16 Sholebroke Ave
Chapelton, Leeds
www.cornerstonehousing.org.uk/crc

Kebele Kulture Projekt
14 Robertson Rd
Easton, Bristol

London Action Resource Center LINKS
62 Fieldgate St
Whitechapel
www.londonarc.org

Rainbow Centre
245 Gladstone Street
Nottingham
NG7 6HX

The Women's Library
Old Castle Street
London E1 7NT UK

France

Le Clan de Infokiosk
9 rue Queven
31000 Toulouse

Les Tanneries Infoshop
17 Blvd. Chicago
Dijon

Germany

Eine Welt e.V. Leipzig
Stockartstr. 11
D-04277 Leipzig
www.einewelt-leipzig.dede
Infoladen Bremen
St.-Pauli-Str. 10-12
28203 Bremen
www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/infoladen_bremen

Holland

Het Fort van Sjakoo Bookstore
Jodenbreesstraat 24
Amsterdam

Autonomo Politiek Infocentrum
Burgtstraat 3
Wageningen 6701 DA
<http://www.infocentrumwageningen.nl>

Ireland

Cork Autonomous Zone
61 Barrack St.
Cork City
www.corkautonomouszone.blogspot.com

Israel

Salon Mazal Infoshop
3 Simta Almonit
Tel Aviv
www.salonmazal.org

Italy

Forte Prenestino
Via Federico Delpino Centocelle
Rome
www.isole.ecn.org/forte

Mexico

Biblioteca Social Praxedis G. Guerrero
C/Gobernador Curiel 2133. Conolia
Ferrocaril, Guadalajara, Laslisco

New Zealand

Misfit Theatre
PO Box 68939
Newton, Auckland

Norway

Ivar Matlaus Bokkafe
Strandveien 23
Trondheim

Romania

Popescu ADI Aleea Teatrului
BL.T2 Apt. 21
Craiova

Scotland

The Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh
17 West Montgomery Place
Edinburgh
www.autonomous.org.uk

Glasgow Womens Library
4th Flr
109 Trongate
G1 5HD 0141
www.womenslibrary.org.uk

InfoSeed
In basement of The Forest
3 Bristo Place
Edinburgh
www.theforest.org.uk

Slovenia

Elf's reading room
Metelkova ulica 4
Ljubljana 1000
www.ljudmila.org/anarhiv

Izbruh Alt culture club
Soraska 7,4000
Kranj

Spain

@ Infoshop Barcelona
c/Perill 52 Metro
L4 Verdaguer
PO Box 97104
08080 Barcelona

Gatazka Infoshop
Ronda Street
12 48005 Bilbao
www.ddtgatazka.com

Switzerland

Centre International de Recherches sur l'Anarchisme
Avenue de Beaumont 24
1012 Lausanne
www.anarca-bolo.ch/cira

Reithalle Infoshop
Neubr ckstr 8
Ch-3013 Bern

Online Projects

Bookmobile Project
www.mobilivre.org/en

Bottles on a Sill Lending Library
www.geocities.com/bike_terrorist/bottlesonthesill.html

Information for Social Change Number 27 Summer 2008

Special Issue on Radical Bookshops

International Bookstore het Fort van Sjakoo – Specialised in Radical and Libertarian Ideas from the First World to the Fifth and beyond.

Rutger van Ree

Sjakoo

Het Fort van Sjakoo (Sjakoo's Fortress) is a non-commercial and collectively run bookstore with a focus on critical and insurgent literature. It's namesake is the legendary hideout of Jacob Frederik Muller or "Sjakoo" (1690 – 1718) on the Elandsgracht. Sjakoo, an Amsterdam based thief who has over the centuries been made up to be quite a Robin Hood. Though reality may have been less high spirited, we like to keep the myth alive. Stealing from the rich to give to the poor is great, but stealing from the rich to keep it yourself...well, that's just fine too.

History

The bookstore was founded in 1977 at its current address in the Jodenbreestraat. It had been squatted two years earlier on the trajectory of a designated highway through the city centre. Though gentrifying has kept its ugly pace, the highway never got there, and not just the Fort but large parts of the area around it are still intact because of the campaign against it. The store was legalized in 1988.

In 2002 our rent was increased by an incredible 900%. It took ten months for enough funds to be raised, but with massive community support from numerous groups and individuals, and without having to involve a bank: the place was bought by the collective in 2003. The purchase of the space has left us with some debt, but also with the uplifting realization that when the Fort was in need, but many people were willing to step in to help out. Part of the proceeds goes into repaying them. We work only with volunteers, and any further profits will go back into the store or to other groups involved in extra parliamentary activities.

Books to ignite the Fire

Besides non-fiction literature in several languages, we host a wide variety of magazines; some fiction; music ranging from punk to hip hop and from experimental electro to Ethiopian folk music; clothing, pins and patches; coffee from Chiapas, and even some arty tiles to place upon your wall. Many volunteers here will tend towards anarchism as a political belief, but we do not confine ourselves to that category. You'll find shelves with themes such as 'Situationism', 'Gender', 'Armed Struggle' and 'Animal Rights'. You will not find texts that propagate parliamentary 'solutions', capitalism, sexism or racism to name but a few. Though disagreement is vital and no 'Truth' deserves a capital, we want to keep an eye not just on what we *do* like, but also on what we don't. From pirates to Punk Rock, and from RARA to Dada, we try to bring you information on and inspiration for resistance against repression in its many forms. Because the current economic and political situation is unacceptable; because apathy is useless and resistance is not; because we could have more fun, and because rocks alone will not get us there.

If there's anything special you're looking for, then please let us know and we may try to get it. We are interested in new and second hand books, and any other material that fits in to our collection. So if you have anything you see fits, you can come by and try to push it on us.

So come hither, all ye punks and journalists, angry kids and elderly, riotgrrlz and neighbourhood folks, and anybody just stumbling in by chance. From love letters to revolutionary rhetoric, we want to infuriate and to arouse, and help you think of the best and prepare for the worst.

Rutger van Ree

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Information for Social Change Number 27 Summer 2008

Special Issue on Radical Bookshops

Housmans Bookshop

Bill Hetherington

Housmans Bookshop originally opened on 26 October 1945. Its roots, however, go back to the great upsurge of the British pacifist movement in the 1930s, marked particularly by the founding of the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) by Dick Sheppard in 1934.

The PPU had a temporary bookshop as early as the summer of 1936, at 36 Ludgate Hill, London, where people sat on the floor to listen to lunch-time talks by Dick Sheppard and others. This was followed in 1943 by designating as the PPU Bookshop a room in the PPU's then headquarters (Dick Sheppard House, 6 Endsleigh Street, Bloomsbury) - although most of the custom was by mail order, because the building lacked a shop window and passing trade.

In the aftermath of the Second World War the writer and playwright Laurence Housman, a Sponsor of the PPU, suggested that it should establish a permanent bookshop to promote ideas of peace, and also the ideas of human rights and a more equitable economy by which future wars, and all their inherent suffering, might be avoided. A bomb-damaged, but repaired, shop was leased cheaply for three years from Westminster City Council at 124 Shaftesbury Avenue, close by the well-established bookshop area of Charing Cross Road. The shop was named in honour of the originator of its concept, Laurence Housman, who celebrated his 80th birthday shortly before he performed the opening ceremony on 26 October 1945. The anarchist author Herbert Read and Kingsley Martin, redoubtable editor of the *New Statesman*, were present to support the new venture.

Housmans remained viable for the three years, but Westminster's terms for renewal of the lease at the end of 1948 were so much more expensive, as were the costs of alternative premises, that the PPU decided to close the physical shop. Its goodwill, however, was passed to Peace News, a peace newspaper founded in 1936 and also associated with the PPU. Over the next ten years Peace News continued to build up the mail-order bookselling business from its own premises at 3 Blackstock Road, Finsbury Park, and ran bookstalls at major peace events. The Housmans "brand" was also made more prominent in 1954

with the publication for that year of the first edition of the Housmans Peace Diary.

In 1958, thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of Tom Willis and other Peace News supporters, it became possible to acquire a freehold building at 5 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross. After renovation of the then almost 100-year-old premises, Peace News moved into the upper floors during the summer of 1959, and Housmans resumed as a fully fledged bookshop. Dora Dawtry publicly declared the shop open, in the presence of Vera Brittain (sometime Chair of both the PPU and Housmans), at a ceremony on 20 November, to coincide with the Peace News Christmas Bazaar held nearby.

A definite fillip to the Housmans business was the emergence of the vibrant nuclear disarmament movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s, with CND and Committee of 100 material, and a proliferation of other pamphlets and literature, in stock. The shop also served the local community as a general bookshop, greeting cards stockist and stationery retailer. Endsleigh Cards (named after the street in which the PPU offices stood), another trading brand of Peace News, were regularly stocked, especially useful for sending to imprisoned conscientious objectors all over the world on Prisoners for Peace Day, 1 December each year.

In 1961 there was a mutual agreement to separate Peace News from the PPU, and Housmans remained associated with Peace News. Nevertheless, there has always been an overlap between the supporters of Peace News / Housmans and those of the PPU. The Peace News company was restructured in 1972 as Peace News Trustees Ltd, with two subsidiary companies, Peace News Ltd for the paper, and Housmans Bookshop Ltd for the shop. At various times in its history, the shop has published much other material, besides the annual Peace Diary. Most of these items have been pamphlets on peace and related issues, sometimes published jointly with, or on behalf of, other bodies such as Peace News.

Whilst the shop has welcomed visitors from all over the world as an established resource for the international peace movement, it has also faced direct physical and legal attack. In 1974 an IRA bomb blew up the pillar box directly outside the shop (which was there because the building once housed the local Kings Cross Post Office, from the late 19th Century until some time in the 1930s). The explosion in the pillar box destroyed the first issue of the Campaign Against Arms Trade's newsletter which had just been posted in it, and damaged some of the building's windows, but caused no personal injury. Four years later, a letter bomb - one of a series sent to radical and left-wing addresses - caused burns to a staff member's hands. In the 1990s a group of people brought long-drawn-out libel actions against the shop over anti-fascist literature that was stocked.

For over sixty years, through successive waves of the peace movement, Housmans has continued to promote peace, human rights, and environmental and other radical causes, providing literature and other material over the counter, as well as at stalls and by mail-order. A recent development has been the holding of book events and discussion meetings in the evenings and weekends - a dozen or so occasions a month drawing in people associated with a variety of ideas and causes. Despite some years of planning blight in its

immediate environs, Housmans remains one of the few "alternative" bookshops in Britain, and recently, with the refurbishment of the local area, Housmans itself has had a "facelift" and looks forward to many more years of radical campaigning.

A welcome to all. Come, look, buy.

Bill Hetherington

HOUSMANS BOOKSHOP

5 Caledonian Road,
Kings Cross, London, N1 9DX

020 7837 4473

www.housmans.com

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Special Issue on Radical Bookshops

Freedom, Freedom Press and Freedom Bookshop A short history of Freedom Press

Donald Room

Freedom and Freedom Press publications have concentrated on anarchist propaganda, and refrained from publishing anything about quarrels and splits in the anarchist movement. This essay, not being a work of propaganda, is largely about the quarrels and splits. I will not give the personal names of people who are, or may be, still alive.

This is *not* a piece of original research, but an amalgam of memories dating from the 1940s, and scissors-and-paste work using the following secondary sources: Heiner Becker, Nicolas Walter, Philip Sansom, and Vernon Richards (anonymously), in *Freedom a hundred years* (Freedom Press 1986); Heiner Becker Notes on Freedom and the Freedom Press 1886-1928" *The Raven* (1) vol 1, pp 4-24, Freedom Press 1986; Nicolas Walter (2007) *The anarchist past and other essays* edited by David Goodway, Five Leaves Publications 2007; Richard Boston 'Anarchy among the Anarchists' *The Guardian* 16 November 1996, reprinted as 'Mere Anarchy' in *Starkness at Noon* Five Leaves Publications 1997; Albert Meltzer (1986) 'Liars and Liberals' *Black Flag Supplement* no. 3; Vernon Richards (anonymously) (1986) *Friends of Freedom Press Ltd.*

Anarchism is an ethical doctrine 'a concept of what ought to be' which holds that nobody should be threatened into obedience, and seeks a society without intimidation. In Britain, the term anarchism has been claimed by three different schools of thought. *Anarchist socialism* or *anarchist communism* demands economic equality as well as (or as a requirement of) liberty for all. This is referred to simply as anarchism, without qualifications. *Individualist anarchism* (sometimes known as '*native American anarchism*', as it developed from the ideas of Thomas Paine and the drafters of the American constitution) opposes central government but allows trade, and differences in wealth that result from trade. *Anarcho-syndicalism* advocates democratic societies organised through trade unions.

The first anarchist newspaper in Britain, *Freiheit*, published and edited by Johann

Most from 1879, was in the German language. The first British anarchist paper in English was *The English Freiheit*, of which the first issue was a translation of *Freiheit*, sold outside the Old Bailey where Johann Most was on trial in 1881. Also in English, and available on subscription in Britain, was *Liberty*, an individualist anarchist paper published in America.

In March 1885 Henry Seymour, who had been prosecuted for blasphemy in 1881, started a paper in London called *The Anarchist*. Seymour was himself an individualist anarchist, but he recruited fellow editors who were anarchist socialists. One of these was Charlotte Wilson, a prominent member of the Fabian Society, who had written articles on anarchism for the magazine *Justice*, and was shortly to write a Fabian Society pamphlet on anarchism. Wilson persuaded George Bernard Shaw to write an anarchist article for the first issue of *The Anarchist*. Shaw told Seymour it 'was written more to show Mrs Wilson my idea of the line an anarchist paper should take ... than as an expression of my own opinions'.

In March 1886, the anarchist Peter Kropotkin was released from prison in France, and Charlotte Wilson invited him to London to join the editors of *The Anarchist*. This was too much for Seymour, who wrote to a friend that his anarchist individualism had been sidelined by anarchist communists who only wanted to write, leaving him to do the production work and bear most of the cost. They had a tiff. Seymour ceased publication of *The Anarchist* and told the anarchist communists to start a paper of their own, which they did. The first issue of *Freedom* appeared in September 1886 (bearing the date October 1889). Charlotte Wilson was editor and publisher, and Kropotkin the main theoretical columnist. *Freedom* never acknowledged its origin as a breakaway from *The Anarchist*, but its first issue denounced Individualist Anarchism as a round square, a contradiction in set terms.

Wilson arranged with Annie Besant for a publishing office at Charles Bradlaugh's Freethought Press, and with William Morris for printing services at the Socialist League. In January 1888, Bradlaugh decided he would not have anarchists in the Freethought Press building, so the *Freedom* group moved. In the next ten years there were seven more moves, during which, in 1895, Charlotte Wilson resigned and was replaced as publisher by Alfred Marsh, a violinist.

In 1898, *Freedom* acquired its own printing facilities. The nieces and nephew of the artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti had been printing their own paper, *The Torch, a journal of anarchist communism* at 127 Ossulston Street, near Kings Cross, since 1885. In 1898 they decided to cease publication and arranged for the *Freedom* group to take over the premises. The Rossettis printing equipment was bought and donated to *Freedom* by two sympathisers. *Freedom* Press stayed in Ossulston Street for the next thirty years. The hand-operated press dated from about 1820, and needed three operators; two to load the paper and pull the handle, and one to take the paper off. A comrade who was a trained compositor, Tom Cantwell, set the type in the room upstairs.

In 1902 Cantwell had a stroke which prevented him from working, and his place as compositor was taken by Tom Keell, a compositor at *The Spectator*. In 1907 the *Freedom* group started a second paper, *Voice of Labour*. Tom Keell then left *The Spectator* for a wage paid by the *Freedom* group, for which he acted as compositor of both papers, editor of *Freedom*, and manager.

Most members of the Freedom group were of the artisan class, but Wilson, a highly educated stockbroker's wife, and Kropotkin, a Russian prince in exile who wrote geographical articles for *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, were members of the liberal intelligentsia, and this led some to see the whole group as elitist. In 1897 a writer in an anarchist paper wrote that *Freedom* was 'a philosophical, middle-class organ, not intelligible to the working classes ... less revolutionary than *Comic Cuts* ... edited and managed by an inaccessible group of arrogant persons worse than the Pope and his seventy cardinals and written by fossilised old quilldrivers'. *Freedom* did not respond.

The first major split within the Freedom group itself occurred at the outbreak of the First World War, in a dispute about the lesser of two evils. Tom Keell, the editor, was for opposing both sides in the war of rival imperialisms. Kropotkin wanted *Freedom* to support the side of Britain and Russia. Tom Keell later wrote 'One doubted the judgement of those who supported the War, but one never doubted their sincerity'. Those who supported the War (with the honourable exception of Kropotkin himself) were less tolerant. At the national anarchist conference in April 1915, George Cores, a member of the Freedom group, denounced Keell as a dictator who had seized the group's assets. The national movement came out overwhelmingly in Keell's favour.

After the passing of the Military Service Act, which introduced conscription in 1916, *Voice of Labour* published an article which was also issued as a leaflet, *Defying the Act*, by one hiding out in the Scottish Hills. Keell and his companion Lilian Wolfe were charged under the Defence of the Realm Act, and found guilty. Keell was sentenced to a fine of £100 or three months imprisonment, declined to pay the fine and served the prison term. Wolfe was sentenced to £25 or two months and went to prison, but there discovered she was pregnant (at the age of 40), so paid the fine and was released.

After 1918, the British anarchist movement declined. Some joined the Communist Party, admiring the Russian revolution, and either forgiving or deceiving themselves about the Lenin dictatorship (the late Bonar Thompson told me there was money coming from somewhere to pay pro-Communist speakers). Others went to the pacifist movement and the women's suffrage movement.

Freedom kept going, with the aid of donations, including £50 (half a year's average wages) from Lilian Wolfe, until 1928, when the Ossulston Street building was demolished in a slum clearance scheme. Tom Keell retired to Whiteway Colony to live on his pension from the composers trade union, and for the next seven years, Freedom Press produced only an infrequent and irregular *Freedom Newsletter*. A newspaper headed *Freedom New Series* was produced by George Cores and others who had opposed Keell over his opposition to the war, but Freedom Press did not publicly acknowledge its existence.

When the Spanish civil War broke out in 1936, Vernon Richards, known as Vero, the twenty-two-year-old son of an Italian anarchist in Soho, started a newspaper called *Spain and the World* in support of the Spanish anarchists. After the first issue, *Spain and the World* became a Freedom Press publication, with Tom Keell as publisher and Lilian Wolfe, now aged 60, as administrator. Lilian often stayed in London with Vero and his companion Marie-Louise Berneri. She stayed on as administrator and manager of Freedom Bookshop until the age of 95.

When the Spanish civil war ended, the paper changed its name to *Revolt!*, and as World War Two started, to *War Commentary for anarchism*. Having been an established publisher before the war, Freedom Press had a licence to buy paper. In 1943 it published *The March to Death*, a book of cartoons by John Olday with anonymous commentary by Marie-Louise Berneri, which presents Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt as engaged in a common conspiracy against all their subjects. It sold 5,500 copies, to people delighted by relief from the relentless war propaganda.

In 1942 the Freedom Press was offered the chance to buy a printing firm, Express Printers in Whitechapel. A rival printer lent some money on condition that he could take over the Hebrew type (effectively acquiring a monopoly of Hebrew type in a Jewish area), and the rest of the purchase price was lent by various supporters. The supporters' group, calling itself the Anarchist Federation, became the nominal owner of Freedom Press and publisher of *War Commentary*.

Anti-war as it was, the Freedom group was quite friendly with a pro-war group, the publishers of *Solidaridad Obrera*, a Spanish-language anarcho-syndicalist newspaper which was produced on a stencil machine in the Freedom Press office. The editors of *Solidaridad Obrera* would telephone whenever their stencils were ready, saying can we come round and run off *Solidarid Churchilliana?*

Vero, Albert Meltzer, and later Philip Sansom were refused registration as conscientious objectors. Albert was called up into the Royal Pioneer Corps, while Vero and Philip served prison sentences. John Olday, a deserter from the Royal Pioneer Corps, was captured and sent to a military prison. Freedom Press as such, however, was not prosecuted until almost the end of the War.

I came across anarchism in September 1944, when I was on a Ministry of Food scheme using schoolboys to pick hops in Kent, and visited Hyde Park speakers' corner. My subscription copies of *War Commentary* stopped coming in December 1944, so I wrote to ask what had happened and learned, in a letter from Lilian Wolfe, that the police had seized the files.

In April 1945 Vernon Richards, Marie-Louise Berneri, John Hewetson, and Philip Sansom were charged with conspiracy to contravene Defence Regulation 39A (i.e. to cause disaffection among members of His Majesty's forces). The anarchist art pundit, Herbert Read, later to be knighted, assembled a Freedom Press Defence Committee from those of the 'Great and Good' who were interested in civil liberties (the National Council for Civil Liberties, which might have been expected to take up such a case, was temporarily possessed by the belligerently patriotic Communist Party). Richards, Hewetson and Sansom were each sentenced to nine months in prison. Berneri was found not guilty on a technical point; she was married to Richards (to get a British passport), and the old law still stood that a wife conspiring with her husband committed no offence.

As the prosecution was being prepared, Freedom Press was subjected to a takeover attempt. *Freedom* of course said nothing about it, and it was months before we learned of it in Bradford. In 1949 I visited London and spoke to comrades on both sides of the split. Lilian Wolfe lent me a copy of a document, privately circulated in 1945, on condition that I kept it confidential. That was sixty years ago, so I hope my promise of confidentiality has lapsed.

As is the custom in anarchist groups, decisions in the Anarchist Federation (publisher of *War Commentary* and the Freedom Press books) were made by consensus. Among the most frequent writers for *War Commentary* were two anarcho-syndicalists, one of them a professional journalist. These two proposed, and got it agreed, that if the members of the Anarchist Federation could not reach a consensus, a majority decision would be accepted. It was also agreed that as the war was ending, differences about whether to support for the war had become less important, and Spanish comrades were invited to join. In December 1944, the editors of *War Commentary* left a Federation meeting before it ended, and after they had gone it was proposed under 'any other business' that they should be replaced as editors by the two anarcho-syndicalists. The motion was carried by a majority.

The plot failed. Earlier in 1944, some detectives had called at the Freedom Press office about a different case entirely, and tried to encourage co-operation by pointing out that Freedom Press was in danger of immediate closure, because its proprietors were not registered under the Business Names Act. That same day, Vero Richards and John Hewetson had visited the office of the Registrar of Business Names, and registered themselves as proprietors of Freedom Press. When they were sacked as editors, they just refused to go. The plotters were furious. A Spanish comrade told me in 1949 that he liked what was written in *Freedom* (the paper had reverted to its old name), "but not what they do".

Four men visited Richards and Berneri at their flat, pointed a pistol and refused to leave until Richards gave them a cheque for £25 (about six weeks' average wages) to start a new anarcho-syndicalist paper, *Direct Action*. Some comrades photographed the four leaving the flat. The four and two others, six in all, went to Express Printers with a sledge-hammer, evidently expecting to find a halftone block of the photograph ready for printing in the next *War Commentary*. There wasn't one because Freedom Press never published anything about the split, but they smashed the printing forme anyway, then met Richards in Angel Alley and beat him up.

The publishers of *Direct Action* called themselves the Anarchist Federation of Britain. The Freedom Press Group declared itself autonomous, but joined with others to form the Union of Anarchist Groups. At international conferences in the 1950s there were two separate British delegations, representing the AFB and the UAG. *War Commentary* (which reverted to the name *Freedom* in 1947) never mentioned *Direct Action*, but *Direct Action* was full of damaging references to *War Commentary* and *Freedom*.

People withdrew the loans they had made for the purchase of Express Printers, and Vero obtained an emergency loan from his mother, which he found quite embarrassing because his mother was not an anarchist.

In 1949 Marie-Louise Berneri died (aged 31) and George Woodcock, a prolific writer for *Freedom*, renounced anarchism and migrated to Canada. In the second edition of his Penguin book *Anarchism*, Woodcock wrote that British anarchism collapsed in the 1950s, following Berneri's death and his own departure. He was mistaken. Anarchism in Britain has always been a minority movement, but the 1950s was one of its most successful periods, with Albert Meltzer among *Freedom's* regular writers.

In 1961, while the weekly *Freedom* continued, Freedom Press began the monthly magazine *Anarchy*. In 1965, the advent of small offset printing made it possible to produce papers with little capital, and Albert Meltzer went off to start a paper closer to his own ideas, called *Wooden Shoe*, and a publishing group called Wooden Shoe Press.

In 1968, Whitechapel Art Gallery bought the Express Printers premises at 84a Whitechapel High Street. Before payment was completed, Vero borrowed the money, in his own name, to buy the freehold of 84b Whitechapel High Street, an empty building on the other side of Angel Alley. The publisher became 'Vernon Richards trading as Freedom Press'.

Albert Meltzer wrote to Vero with the proposal that Wooden Shoe Press should hire a room in the building, contributing to the mortgage repayments. Unlike the new Freedom Press building, the Wooden Shoe premises had a shop window. Jack Robinson, who was managing Freedom Bookshop and earning his living as a second-hand book dealer, visited the landlord of the vacated shop with a view to taking over the tenancy, and learned that Wooden Shoe had paid no rent for the three years and were being evicted. Vero might have written to Albert explaining what he had learned, but in the event he wrote a woffly letter, turning down Albert's offer without mentioning the real reason. Albert began a feud which lasted until both he and Vero were dead, and for some years after.

Co-operation did not entirely cease. In the early 1980s, *Freedom* and Albert's new paper *Black Flag* were both fortnightlies, published on alternate weeks. At weekends there were joint meetings in Freedom Bookshop, at which people from both publications would prepare subscription copies of whichever came out that week. Every edition of *Black Flag* contained some derogatory about *Freedom* or someone associated with Freedom Press. One of *Freedom's* editors did not entirely agree with the policy of no retaliation, and managed to sneak in a comment on *Black Flag's* attitude: 'We invite you into our house and you piss on the carpet'. Albert pretended to take the metaphor literally, as accusing himself in person of urinating on the carpet in the bookshop which had no carpet.

In 1982, Vero transferred ownership of Freedom Press to Friends of Freedom Press Limited, a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, whose registered directors were comrades long associated with Freedom Press. The existence of FFP was not made public until 1986, and Vero continued making all the business decisions. In the late 1980s he decided to pay stipends to two comrades, one (who had worked as a volunteer for years) to manage Freedom Press publishing, and the other (of whose background I know nothing) to manage Freedom Bookshop.

1986 was *Freedom's* anniversary year. A bumper anniversary number was produced and also issued as a book, *Freedom a hundred years*. Besides describing the history of Freedom Press, it was agreed that I solicit contributions from the whole anarchist movement of 1986. Of course I wrote to Albert, but he did not reply. He responded later with a pamphlet: *Black Flag Supplement No. 3, Liars and Liberals the other anarchism The Woodcock-Sansom school of falsification*, a classic of libellous abuse.

After 1968, *Freedom* was edited by a succession of editorial groups, not all of whom were very good. In the 1970s, the paper was set on an ordinary typewriter. One typist-editor took the opportunity to insert articles seen by no other editor, in praise of the Animal Liberation Front and the Irish Republican Army, until she was asked to leave by the other editors. No doubt Vero would have objected, but it seems that when he was not the editor, he did not even read *Freedom*. A feature article in a national newspaper, about the famous McLibel trial, mistook the name of one of the two defendants. The case was followed in every issue of *Freedom*, but Vero telephoned me full of praise of the defendant, using the wrong name.

Vero decided that he must return as editor, when a Christmas number featured on its front page a drawing of Death in a Santa Claus costume. The editor who commissioned the picture had resigned before the number was published, leaving as editors myself, the chap who was paid to do the books, and another comrade. Vero decided that the new *Freedom*, to his own design, should revert to being a fortnightly. Editing a fortnightly struck me as too much work, so I gave notice that I would resign as an editor. Vero published a number zero, denouncing the existing editors as incompetent, inciting another resignation. Only the comrade hired to do the books remained to be Vero's fellow editor.

Vero and Albert Meltzer met at the Anarchist Bookfair in 1995. During the twenty years they had worked together on *Spain and the World*, *Revolt*, *War Commentary*, and *Freedom*, it had been their custom to enjoy bantering arguments, and they took the opportunity to revive this custom. Among the insults, Albert told Vero he was senile (he was older than Albert by five years), and Vero replied I'll be writing your obituary. Albert died in 1996, at a conference of the syndicalist federation founded in 1945 as the Anarchist Federation of Britain, by the plotters who failed to seize *War Commentary*.

An obituary of Albert was published in *The Guardian*, written by one of Albert's legatees and evidently using Albert's reminiscences as its only source of information. It reiterated many of Albert's self-aggrandising fictions and scurrilous denunciations of the neo-liberals who dominated the movement in the late 1940s. Vero replied with an obituary in *Freedom*, headed 'Instead of an obituary', correcting some of the lies, recalling his joking prediction that he would write Albert's obituary, and deploring the damage Albert had done to the anarchist movement. Of course we would prefer anarchists not to be enemies, and Albert's malice certainly damaged the reputation of Freedom Press, and but it is not certain that it damaged the movement as a whole. Verbal attacks on Freedom Press have been a British anarchist tradition since Freedom Press was founded, and quarrels may increase the total output of anarchist propaganda.

In his last years Vero published four books of his photographs, at his own expense but with the Freedom Press imprint, and retired from activity. The editing of *Freedom* and the work of the bookshop fell to the two comrades hired by Vero. They meant well, but persisted with wasteful practices which Vero would probably have discontinued had he been present. The quarrel between Vero's friends and Albert's friends persisted, even after Vero died in 2001.

Rescue came in the form of a big, energetic, young man who had been working

with the Socialist Party of Great Britain (a Marxist party, but not Marxist-Leninist, with a constitution unchangeable since 1904). He persuaded Freedom Press to get rid of some drains on resources, and more importantly, to reach out in co-operation with other anarchist groups. Three years after he arrived he changed his allegiance again, and became an adherent of the Church of England, where we hear he is training to be a priest. This does not alter the fact of his importance to Freedom Press, while he was present.

Freedom Press is now going well, with a keen group of volunteers, and the prospect of a bright future.

Donald Room

Information for Social Change Number 27 Summer 2008

Special Issue on Radical Bookshops

All White in the Public Library

John Pateman

What are we to make of the BBC2 White Season? What does it tell us about the white working class? And what is its relevance to public libraries? The BBC should be congratulated for their bravery in airing this series which was bound to stir up a certain level of controversy. Britain, the most class riddled country in the world, does not feel comfortable talking about class. It is now safe and acceptable to discuss race, gender, sexuality, disability, age and faith, but class is the final taboo. There is an inherent problem in designing a TV series about class because the media, like all professions, is dominated by the middle class. So it was inevitable that the White series was going to be a middle class view of working class people. However, BBC2 did well to avoid the worst stereotypes (as portrayed in programmes like *Eastenders* and *Wife Swap*) and constructed a realistic and challenging view of contemporary white working class culture.

The first programme in the series, *Last Orders*, told the story of the embattled Wibsey Working Men's Club in the city of Bradford. The Wibsey Club has been operating at a loss for several years and members' worries for their club mirror wider anxieties. With high unemployment and a perception that recent Asian immigrants receive the lion's share of Government benefits, members feel that their very community is under threat and that racial tensions could erupt at any time. Once regarded as the 'backbone of the nation' white working class communities like Wibsey now feel themselves the object of ridicule. They have been forgotten by a Labour government which is reluctant to acknowledge their existence and they have fallen off the edge of the policy agenda, with the smoking ban the latest example.

What can the public library do for communities like Wibsey? First and foremost they can work with the white working class community to celebrate its history and culture. This can be achieved via local history research and projects documenting how the area has developed over the years. This will demonstrate how the community has changed over time, in common with many other parts of the UK. The reasons for these changes can then be examined. This will create a natural bridge to explore the history and culture of other communities which

have moved into the area. Library programmes which are focused on inter generational and inter cultural projects are very successful at easing community tensions, building awareness and empathy between communities and developing social cohesion.

Rivers of Blood took a historical perspective on immigration and race relations. Forty years ago Enoch Powell, the maverick Conservative MP, gave a speech on immigration in which he predicted a future of racial strife in Britain. The 'rivers of blood' speech outraged the political establishment, who considered it both racist and inflammatory. However, the speech struck a chord with the public who wrote to him in their thousands, and London's dockers came out on strike in support.

Freedom of information and freedom of expression were at the heart of Powell's speech and these are also central to public library values. What the dockers were protesting about was that Powell was sacked for speaking out on a very important subject that was of great concern to them and their families. Nobody asked the white working class if they wanted large numbers of newcomers to settle in their communities. Those decisions were made by middle class professionals who did not live in these localities. The public library can play an important part in giving white working class people a voice and a place where they can air their views and concerns. This has inherent risks and needs to be carefully and sensitively managed but if successful it can make working class people feel listened to and valued. Public libraries pride themselves on their neutrality and they are one of the very few remaining free democratic public spaces in our communities.

White Girl was a compelling film about an inspirational 11 year old girl, Leah, and her family's relocation to an entirely Muslim community in Bradford. It explored the hopes and tensions that can arise when two very different cultures collide. For Leah's mother Debbie the move is about getting away from an abusive partner but being the only white family in a wholly Asian community was not part of her plan. For Leah, the feeling of isolation is heightened at school when she discovers that she and her siblings are the only white kids. But Leah views the Muslim culture and faith with innocent fascination, finding a refuge of calm and safety which is in sharp contrast to the pain and sadness at home. Befriending Yasmin, her young Asian neighbour, and with the gentle guidance of teachers at school, Leah learns that her new world is not as alien as she first feared. However, nothing prepares Debbie for the shock of seeing her daughter wearing a hijab.

This programme follows the theme of inter cultural learning and public libraries can play a significant role in helping different communities to understand each other. This can be achieved by putting on displays and exhibitions and holding events which explore aspects of community culture. Sport and the arts provide a very safe platform for these issues to be discussed around and can lead onto more profound subjects. The popular media constantly demonises Muslims, and public libraries can help to portray more positive images of this much maligned community. Having stock relevant to both white working class and Muslim communities is also very important and this can help to promote togetherness rather than division. The recent MLA proposals on managing 'extremist' stock should be vigorously opposed by public libraries which already have stock policies for dealing with these issues.

The Poles are Coming looked at the issues created by the recent large influx of migrant workers from EU accession states. This phase of immigration is different from those that preceded it in two respects – the numbers are much larger and the immigrants are our fellow white Europeans. But this does not make it any easier for local communities to accept. Listening to some people in Peterborough it would appear that the city is being pushed to breaking point by the arrival of a huge number of Eastern Europeans. Some want the Poles, and others, to go home. So does the city of Gdansk which now cannot find enough workers to fill its shipyards or build its football stadium for Euro 2012.

There are few communities in the UK which have not been affected by this issue. Places like Lincolnshire where I work, and which have seen little demographic change, are now having to manage large numbers of new arrivals. This is a challenge to migrant workers and to local communities, and public libraries can work with both to ease tensions and build mutual understanding. Migrant workers are attracted to public libraries because they provide free internet access for them to email home and look up first language websites. Public libraries are an ideal venue for different communities to meet and build awareness of each other's needs, many of which are shared – a decent home, a good school, a secure job, health and happiness. Positive action can be taken to recruit migrant workers to public library services and work can be done with local schools to develop community solidarity.

Work with primary schools is particularly important and The Primary captured a term in the life of Welford Primary School in Birmingham's Handsworth area. Welford is a thriving school with pupils from 17 different ethnic backgrounds and only a handful of white pupils. The film followed headmaster Chris Smith and the pupils at Welford revealing what life is like for nine year old Nathaniel, 11 year old Aleyx and their diverse peer group, Mariam, Saubia, Conrad and Xhosa. The film was an inspiring example of how a charismatic head and his staff can navigate their way around the minefield of community relations and build a cohesive school based community.

Although the school library was not featured in this film, public libraries are well placed to work with local schools and raise cultural awareness through reading, story times, talks, events and displays. School Library Services can supply materials for the classroom which support national curriculum areas such as Citizenship. Public libraries can work with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service and Traveller Education Service to support pupils for whom English is not their first language or those who do not have a cultural tradition of going to school.

Working with young people is very important because this will help to shape the views and attitudes of the next generation, but working with older people is vital as well. The final programme in the White series, All White in Barking, looked at how a traditional white working class community in East London was dealing with demographic change. Lifetime Barking residents Susan and Jeff have never said hello to their Nigerian neighbours, insisting that 'they are not our people'. Dave is so angry by the influx of non white faces to Barking that he becomes a BNP activist – yet both his daughters have relationships with the very people he is lashing out against.

Public libraries can work with people like Dave to find out why he is angry and what this is based on. If it springs from popular media denigration of new arrivals then the public library can help Dave understand the real situation. This could be through the production of myth busting information giving the facts and fiction about immigration, the real numbers and the stories behind them. This can show that new arrivals are not taking our jobs, schools and health service away from us; that migrant workers do not jump the Council house queue or hospital waiting lists; that refugees often live in appalling accommodation conditions and are exploited by employers; that asylum seekers are not legally allowed to work and have to live on £35 Morrison vouchers each week. I'm sure that if Dave knew these facts, and not the hate peddled by the Daily Mail and the BNP, then an appeal could be made to his white working class sense of injustice and fair play.

The White series gives public libraries the opportunity to help build solidarity between the White working class and the new arrivals which have moved into their communities. The public library can broker these relationships and help people understand that the real enemy is not their fellow workers but the powers that be. The public library can promote positive images of the white working class and new arrivals which are attacked and denigrated in the media as 'white trash' and 'chavs' or job stealing migrants. As Andrew Anthony has pointed out:

'It's the children of people such as Dave who live cheek by jowl with new arrivals and adapt to rapid change. They are the ones who really embrace people from other countries and cultures by forming relationships and raising children together. Meanwhile, the liberal arts community, for all its eloquence in anti racism, is far more inclined to retreat to private schools and affluent enclaves, the better to maintain a homogenous culture while pronouncing on the benefits of diversity.'

[Andrew Anthony. *How Britain turned its back on the white working class*. The Observer 2 March 2008.]

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